Conclusion

The 'Indianess' of Indian writers in English or European writers on India has often been raised in relevant critical forums. Sometimes this question itself has been considered pedantic and insubstantial because creative literature deals far more with the universals in human passion and reason than what may doubtfully come into the category specified as 'Indian'. At other times the problems of Indian sensibility, Indian culture and tradition, Indian value-patterns, Indian way of looking at life have been considered as the heart of the matter in creative writing. National quintessence is as important a source of literary art as universal human passion common to all mankind. It is of course true that Indian creative writing, especially fiction, has to be judged primarily as art and only secondarily as an expression of social ethic or values. However, the ethic or values are inextricably linked up with the aesthetic form of the great art of literature, and should not be considered in isolation. The Indianess of the Indian art of fiction in English is therefore very much a part of that art itself.

It is reflected that Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s personal experience of displacement and exile has had a profound effect on the fiction that she has produced. Wrenched from her original home by World War II at the
age of twelve, she has since lived in England, India and United State.

Interestingly, a recurrent theme of Jhabvala’s fiction is home and homelessness.

The Fact was that Ruth Prawer Jhabvala was European, an expatriate who had settled in India did not have to learn a new language to write, as English was one of the literary languages of India, as well as being a rival to Hindi as a lingua franca of the streets, the business houses and professions, and the universities. She wrote in ‘A Backward Place’ about an Englishwoman, Clarrisa, who had come to India on a lifelong spiritual quest, and there are other characters in her novels that approached India as a Shangri La, a religious or philosophical second home. Jhabvala herself was not like that. She was more like another of her characters in the same novel whom she called Judy, who like her creator had married an Indian, and she may have put something of herself into the third woman of the trio, Etta, a Hungarian who is described as having come to India as a young and glamorous woman only to end up regarding it as a place to escape from. In an essay entitled 'Myself in India' Jhabvala writes “I have lived in India for most of my adult life. My husband is Indian and so are my children. I am not, and less so every day” (1).
‘Heat and Dust’, was something of a watershed for this expatriate writer who wrote so much about India. Soon after its publication Jhabvala left India to live and work in U.S.A. Her purely Indian career seemed apparently to be over. Like V. S. Naipaul she became an international writer.

‘Heat and Dust’ is also curiously symbolic in other ways. A modern young girl in that novel falls in love with a ‘spiritual’ India while being involved with a potent young Indian lover. She identifies herself with the unfaithful wife of her grandfather who served in India as a family tradition. His wife had led him to become the mistress of a Muslim prince, decadent and criminal, he is said to be the leader of a gang of dacoits and detested by the British. He is very attracted to women. Such a love in British India leads inevitably to ruin and disgrace for the guilty lovers. She has an abortion so that the liaison, though passionately sexual, is fruitless. The Nawab ends up deprived of his kingdom, spending much of his time in the England. He has offended and mocked and yet always loved in his own discover her ancestor’s journal. He is also deluded about India and probably pursues a phantom of her own rather willful rebelliousness. She is like the hippies who come to India in droves in the 1960 as expatriate beggars in a land already teeming with beggars. ‘Heat and Dust’ comes at the end of a series of novels of a very
different kind. Its symbolism, the complexity of the double narrative, the theme of destructive sexual passion, the stress on human self-delusional tragedy, are not prominent features of Jhabvala's earlier Indian novels.

Her earlier novels like 'To Whom She Will' and 'The Householder' are remarkable for the way Jhabvala avoids both melodrama and excessive psychological probing. Instead they are novels of manners centered on young lovers or young married people from lower middle-class Indian families living in the North of India in the decade following Independence, Partition, Political excitement is muted. The novels deal with private life, social climbing, love and marriage, getting and keeping good jobs, the problems created by the surviving relics very powerful they are, too of caste and the extended family, Indian middle-class aspiration towards sophistication, westernization, glamour, and power.

For all this, Jhabvala employed from the first a simple narrative method, uncomplicated by modernist innovation, with more scenes than commentary or extended narration. Indeed, the novels often resemble the film scripts she was soon to write. Jhabvala the author does not intrude; the story is told through the characters themselves, largely by dialogue. There is irony and some satire achieved in this non-intrusive way - with some skill. Jhabvala is obviously, without her having to say so, on the side of honesty and sincerity of aims, and of decency against corruption.
hypocrisy, and greed. But she beats no political, social or religious drum. So she portrays hypocrisy, snobbery, deceit - in the India of Independence and freedom, where Gandhi is honored like a god but his ideals are largely ignored. In free India some basic problems remain and they are horrendous, like poverty and over-population, perennial and probably irreducible. And the young now try to free themselves not politically but in private life, in family life, reveling against parents, resenting having their marriages arranged, falling in love with unsuitable people.

This Indian society Jhabvala depicts from first-hand experience is all the more acutely observed because she is at once an outsider and a resident insider - an insider who sees everything, even what is normally hidden from the prying eyes of the outside world. It is a deeply flawed society, poverty cheek by jowl with ostentatious and conspicuous wealth, the old peasant India next to the dazzling circles of the 'Bright Young Things' looking for glamour and quick thrills, incongruous mimics of their peers in New York and London. Men of money are in control, the weak often exploited, nearly always ignored. In Jhabvala's vision, there are idealists among young and old, male and female. There are genuine religious seekers and not a few finders too, practitioners of a good and sometimes heroically virtuous life. Yet they are few and they are impotent facing up
to corrupt politicians, millionaire tycoons, cynical playboys, and bohemian artists.

These things in a novel by Mulk Raj Anand would be presented with anger, bitterness, and severe condemnation. But it is Jhabvala's way to combine subtle irony with pity.

Should Ruth Prawer Jhabvala be described as an 'inside-outsider' or 'outside-insider'? These terms impinge upon her personal and literary situation. From the European point of view she may seem an 'outside-insider' while from the Indian artistic view-point she appears an 'inside-outside.' She is essentially a European writer who has lived in India and given to her experience of life and society in this country an artistic expression. However, several critical problems arise in considering and evaluating the work of creative writers dealing with India who are not really Indian in the usual sense.

There is another dimension of this Indian familial setting which Jhabvala presents with considerable power and acute sense of inward understanding. The experience of European women married to Indians or of Indian women married to Europeans who are confronted with this inevitable situation of the Hindu joint families is sharply presented in her fiction. Gulab's marriage to Esmond has not changed her life-style. She
looks forward to the spicy food that her mother cooks and prepares for her and Esmond simply dislikes the strong smells of spices. European women such as Peggy in 'The Aliens' are in for cultural shocks when her sister-in-law enters her room and opens all the drawers without even asking her. This is not merely a minor question of social manners or surface formalities, but one which highlights the difference between the individualistic European families and the socially close-knit Indian families. Jhabvala shows her keen awareness of this difference in the characters, and the situations they are confronted with, in her fiction. In this context she is both European and Indian thereby undergirding her distinctive position among creative writers in English on India. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, is Jhabvala's special theme. In fact, it is her forte since it is in this area that her personal experience in India is transformed into art. This transparent sincerity of Jhabvala in revealing her responses to the phenomenon that is India indirectly shows the processes of her creativity. She may perhaps be considered a European writer on India, yet her creative work provides ample evidence of her Indianess, the aesthetic design of her art, moulded by her experience of life in India. It is the European's 'Passage to India,' but very different from that of Kipling, or E. M. Forster. It is reflected that when we read Jhabvala we feel that modern India has been
re-discovere for us through the eyes of an outsider who saw the
country with its people and institutions so vividly and recorded her
impressions with humor, wit, understanding and devastating honesty.

Jhabvala in the early years of her experience of this country seems to try
to transplant a little Europe of her own in India, but with the passage of
time the plant has grown into a tree, with a native.

Passage to India!

Lo, Soul, sees thou not God's purpose from the first?

The earth to be spanned, connected by network,

The races, neighbours, to marry, and be given in marriage,

The oceans to be crossed, the distant brought near,

The lands to be welded together.uiten (2)

References:

1) J Agrawal Ramlal G 'Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, a study of her fiction'

2) Gooneratne Yasmine 'Silence, Exile and cunning, the fiction of Ruth