CHAPTER – I

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“Magical Jhabvala is one of those rare writers who manages to be simultaneously caustic and loving with her creation”-(1)

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala was born on May 7th, 1927 in Cologne, Germany. Her Father Marcus Prawer has a Polish Jewish origin and her mother Elonara Prawer has German Jewish origin. She and her brother attended a Jewish segregated school till 1939 and then immigrated to England as refugees on April in 1939. The family settled in Hendon, North West London, where Jhabvala attended Hendon country school and then she went to Queen Mary College, London University where she majored in English Literature. During the wars she read the works of Dickens’s. She carried Margret Mitchell’s ‘Gone with the wind’ during the bombings of London to an air raid shelter.

In 1948, she wrote a thesis titled ‘The Short Story of England’ by which she got M.A degree in 1951. Ruth Prawer’s experience of growing up in Britain included the taking of degree in English at the university of London and the writings of an M.A thesis on ‘The short Story of England’ (1700-1750). At London University, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala met Cyrus S.H Jhabvala, an Indian architect. They got married on June
16,1951. She moved to Delhi after marriage. For next Twenty Four years she lived with him in Delhi. They have three daughters Rennana, Feroza and Ava.

The achievement of Ruth Prawer Jhabala as a literary artist is distinctive and rather limited at the same time. It is distinctive because she has cultivated and demonstrated the qualities of a literary artist which are her own and which naturally emerge from a social and cultural malice peculiar to her. However, her distinction is modified and narrowed down by the rather limited quality of her literary achievement, which is in part the artistic outcome of her creativity. This peculiar paradox of her attainment as an artist, is away rooted in the environs of her literary effort and is also co-extensive with the range and quality of her fiction.

She is sometimes been described as ‘inside-outsider’. These apparently contrary expressions are more meaningful than her high sounding literary labels since they impinge on her special personal and literary situation. She is essentially an European writer who has lived and continues to live in India and who has given to her experience of life and society in India an artistic expression. From the European literary vantage point she may seem an ‘outside-insider’, while from the Indian artistic viewpoint she seems an ‘inside-outsider’.
All Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novels and short stories have been published within the last thirty years, the films for which she has written screenplays have all been released within the last twenty five and her personal history of displacement and triple excel makes her seem very representative of our own times, a period of history that will be no doubt be typified in future ages.

The India, Ruth Jhabvala entered in 1951, was the post Independence urban world of Delhi, which seems to have set herself from the very first to draw as accurately as possible in her fiction. 'Amrita'(1955) and 'The Nature of Passion'(1956) reflect her joy in her surrounding and in the subsequent novels. Even when that early delight begins to evaporate, her gaze remains steady and her work certain Social and cultural changes that have occurred in India over a quarter of a century. Ruth Jhabvala has run the risk of being regarded as a writer of dismissive satire and fictional journalism. It is not perhaps, sufficiently recognized how after and how consistently she is the object of her own ironic analysis.

Ruth Prawer's experience of growing up in Britain included the taking of degree in English at the university of London and the writing of M.A thesis on 'The Short Story of England (1700-1750)'. Until six years after her departure from Britain, Ruth Jhabvala wrote her first novel of expatriation 'Esmond in India' (1957).
This second Ruth has constantly returned tirelessly explaining the sensitivity of the western expatriate in India. It is a theme that has given her personal history of displacement, naturally transforms India into a fictional land of spirit in which her protagonist try to feel at home and only rarely succeed. It has overflowed from her fiction into her work for the cinema, and the scripts she has written for her recent films, Roseland (1977) and ‘The Europeans’ (1979), explores the theme of expatriation and alienation in American settings.

In 1951 Ruth Prawer Jhabvala left Britain for India as the 24 year old wife of Cyrus Jhabvala, a young Parsi architect. She has said, “looking back, that as a writer”, “I consider myself exceedingly fortunate to have come here when I did the way I did it come about instinctively. I was enraptured I felt I understood India so well. I loved everything” (2). Her description of this first encounter with India suggest that writing and living blended for her into an intense joy of discovery.

The first stage of Ruth Jhabvala’s experience of India, invariably described by her in terms of excitement, rapture, and love, included the birth of Jhabvala’s three daughters and the publication of four novels, ‘To Whom She Will’ (1955), ‘The Nature of Passion’ (1956), ‘Esmond in India’ (1957), and the ‘Householder’ (1960). It lasted nine years during
which time she never left India but entered with increasing delight into the experiences it held out to her.

Although she had entered a family of Indian Parses who themselves possess a history of expatriation from Persia, that is many centuries old, and live somewhat fastidiously apart from their Hindu or Muslim compatriots. The large extended family of her husband’s Punjabi business partner provided Ruth Jhabvala with an opportunity extended over many years observe Indian and particularly Hindu life at close quarters on a fooling of casual acceptance and intimacy. The fruits of this experience are to be seen in the lively recreations of Hindu family life in her first two novels, the awareness of the importance of food and of rituals of its preparation and consumption in the lives of Indian families, while hardly conventional, her presentation of directions for preparing a variety of Indian dishes at the back of her first novel, is of piece with this awareness. The first glimpse we have from her pen of an Indian family is at the home in “To Whom She Will” as Pandit Ram Bahadur Saxena’s family sits down in his ornate dining room to an elaborate Indian meal served by well-trained servants, a scene which is later contrasted with others in which the head of a poor Punjabi refugee family eats his evening meal in the courtyard of a jointly occupied and owned house while being served by his mother.
Ruth Jhabvala consistently bases the conflicts that arise between Indians and westerners in her novels upon the complexities of culture history and psychology, avoiding the sampler more obvious issue of color. Her Indian characters as seen by western eyes range from the comic to the beautiful, her westerners as seen by Indian eyes, range from the sexually titillating to the grotesque. By using descriptive terms that are non-associative in terms of color, she keeps her subject clear to the superficial, the boring and a trap into which many third world writers fall the merely roust or sensational once they have crossed the initial bossier set up by what is unfamiliar foreign, her characters respond to one another as individuals. Those who are unable or reluctant to do so reveal their immaturity or the falseness of their claims to liberalism or spirituality.

Prem (The Householder), Gopi (A New Dominion), Nalini (A Course of English Studies), Beckerman (The Man with dog) and the swami in (An experience of India) are characters on both sides of the cultural fence who, when angry or uncertain or excited, comically reveal cultural prejudices that betray their immaturity insulator and superficiality of their vaunted sophistication or spiritual poise. The prejudices that distorted human relationships in India’s colonial past and are reflected in E.M. Forster’s ‘A Passage to India’ and the novels that emerged from that past are dwarfed in Ruth Jhabvala’s picture of the new India, a theme that finds
equally impressive and personally more moving in its tragic implications for our world and our times. They begin to emerge as early as in her second novel, ‘The Nature of Passion’ an impression of India as mysterious presence, spiritual, immensely old scarred by an inescapable poverty that looks ironically down through its tired centuries upon the unheroic and of the present breed of gazette Government officers business tycoons artistic scroungers and shallow socialites who multiply in her new society. As time and experience revealed how much there is and always will be to learn about India, Ruth Jhabvala shifts from the comic incongruities of Indian life to four more searchingly as those who pretend that such knowledge is easily acquired or inherited by birth. Her Second novel ‘The Nature of Passion’, an impression of Indian as a mysterious presence, half medieval, half modern intensely old and seared by in escapable poverty, that looks ironically down through its storied centuries upon the unheroic antics of the present breed of gazette government officers, business tycoons, artistic scroungers and shallow socialites who multiply in her new society.

In 1960 Ruth Jhabvala paid Britain a brief visit and found, on her return to India, that her attitude to India had altered. In her fourth novel ‘Get Ready for Battle’ (1962) focuses exclusively on India’s extreme poverty and upon the exploitation of her poor and helpless by the corrupt, the
wealthy and the hypocritical. Ruth Jhabvala has taken up the subject of corruption in business and political life in ‘The Nature of Passion’ and has shown the dishonesty of an Indian Typhoon.

Ruth Jhabvala’s disillusionment with India that she had begun by loving so passionately found additional expression between 1960 and 1975 in three collections of short stories ‘Like birds, Like fishes’ (1962), ‘An Experience of India’ (1966), and ‘A Stronger Climate’ (1968). In her essay titled ‘Myself in Indian’, Jhabvala provides a description based on her own experience and her observation of westerners in India, of a cycle of intense emotional variations to which she sees all sensitive westerners who spend any appreciable time in India as being inevitably inescapably bound.

“There is a cycle that Europeans, I mean all Westerners, including Americans tend to go through it goes like this: first stage tremendous enthusiasm everything Indian is marvelous; Second stage everything Indian not so marvelous; third stage everything Indian abominable for others, the cycle renews itself and goes on. I have been through it so many times that now I think of myself as trapped to a wheel that goes round and round sometimes. I’m up and sometimes I’m down. When I meet other Europeans, I can usually tell after a few moments conservation at what stage of the cycle they happen to be”—(3)
These feelings are mirrored in the yearnings for Europe that overtakes her Western characters in the three novels published during this period: A Backward Place (1965), A New Dominion (1972) and Heat and Dust (1975). For her novel A New Dominion, she selects a time span identical with the period of time it takes her two Western characters, Raymond and Lee, to experience the intense effects of a full turn of wheel of torture and disillusionment. Raymond and Esmond decide him to leave India: for Lee the fascination of India reasserts itself. In Heat and Dust the experience of English women in the India of 1923 are recreated and analyzed after a pause of fifty years by another of extraordinary rage for whom the cycle renews itself and poised to make another revolution.

After spending twenty four years in India, Ruth Jhabvala took up residence in New York in 1975, after she received Booker Prize for Heat and Dust. Her published work after 1975 has included numerous short stories, some of which are reprimanded in the collection how I became a holy Mother (1976) a focus on the experiences of lonely, ageing, exploit and unhappy women at every level on the Indian social scale. As many East and West have done before her, it appears that Ruth Jhabvala splits up certain modern phenomenon that interest her deeply into various aspects that she embodies in the settings and characters of her fiction.
contriving by this means not only to study the whole, but to explore with admirable abortively her own identity in its relation to India.

As an account of her literary career is concerned, the major and minor concerns that interweave in Ruth Jhabvala’s novels arise from personal or observed experience. It is no doubt tempting to speculate on the extent to which her fiction reflects her personal life. But her characters are so closely interwoven with the interests of a particular work that speculation of this kind becomes quickly irrelevant, far more rewarding than such speculation is the evaluation of the degree to which her personal life has enriched and extended the techniques of her art. In a sense, everything she has written springs from the fact that her marriage to a young Indian architect brought her to India in 1951 and kept her there for twenty-four years. That world being subject to change, Ruth Jhabvala’s Delhi necessarily reflects social and cultural developments over a period of twenty-four years that need not affect an invented community. In the days, immediately following the withdrawal of the British Raj, when traditional Indian curtsies were beginning to be revived and respected, the dividing line of society could be drawn on the point of manners and behaviour, in keeping with the thinking of other youthful liberals of her time. Amrita in ‘To Whom She will’ turns away from the vaunted Indian with simple true unostentatious people.
The Status of English and the rise of powerful business clan are too agents of social change in India that Ruth Jhabvala examines in ‘The Nature of Passion’ although Nimmi may admire England returned Pheroze Bhattiwala’s sophistication and Kanta may plan to educate her children beyond all point of contact with their grandfather’s world it is with Lanai, that real power lies in money. Money having become the source of influence and power by the 1960’s, the Gupta’s and Gulzari Lal’s dominate society, subtly supported by an ambitious and corruptible administrative services.

The influence of Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and other English writers of the 18th century is seen in Ruth Jhabvala’s writings in ‘To Whom She Will’ and ‘The Nature of Passion’, the two novels she wrote when she was still a newcomer to India and her approach to it inevitably shaped by her literary studies in Britain. ‘To Whom She Will’ resembles Pride and Prejudice, both in directing a good deal of satire at marriage in middle class society and in being a novel about gnawing up.

In writing her first novel, Ruth Jhabvala, seems to have been experimenting with styles and modes, feeling what she found in India in the 1950’s, into moulds that were familiar to her, the balanced pattern structures of English Eighteenth century drama and fiction. ‘To Whom She Will’ is an uneasy blending of two worlds not only of the
conservative and the modern in a changing society, but of materials and methods drawn from the West and Orient. The blending of different elements is uneasy because despite all the youthful author's efforts, the scenes show on a literary level the tortures that quite match and the threads interweave imperfectly. Thus uneasiness is best seen in Ruth Jhabvala's contrasting pictures of the Saxeena and Mathur households on the one hand and the Sahni and Anand households on the other.

In describing the Punjabi family clans, Ruth Jhabvala emphasizes their vigor, resourcefulness, energy and health, drawing her material from her observations of the larger Punjabi family of her husband's Hindu partner. The delight in detail and in every aspect of a rich subject that emerges in her descriptions of Indian family life both subject that emerges in her description of Indian family in both 'To Whom She Will' and 'The Nature of Passion' is a part of the rapture with which at the age of twenty-four, she first encountered India.

Ruth Jhabvala's mature novels seem to be most viewed as artistic expressions of the process of understanding life and coming to terms with it. As in real life, there are no 'answers' provided, in 'A New Dominion' and 'Heat and Dust' only ironic ambiguities that seem to point one direction at certain times in another at others, a feature that suggests Ruth Jhabvala is becoming increasingly interested by the
challenge of reflecting the hidden workings of and perplexities of real life in her fiction. Her early novels imposed neatly balanced intricately worked out patterns upon life. Indeed both ‘To Whom She Will’ and ‘The Nature of Passion’ have plots that their author manipulates so that they move with the grace and ease of stage comedy. In these first novels, too the narrator does a great deal of explaining. The technical problems besetting the novelists who write about India in English are many. There are the adoption or invention of an idiom that reflects the rhythms and tones of Indian speech patterns without comic distortion together with a means of conveying to the reader unfamiliar with the Asian society essential information he would be apt, through unfamiliarity or ignorance to miss. She conveys most of the things of Hindu tradition in directly as in ‘The Householder’ the traditional point of view through the thoughts of Prem “(Prem) frowned, for he did not like girls to be indeleate. They should be remote and soulful; like Goddesses they should be” (4) (Page No.30-31)

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala raises a knotty problem for the historians of Indian English Literature. Whether she can legitimately be called an Indian by marriage, she is virtually international. But unlike Kipling and Forster she has lived in India much longer and with far greater involvement and more importantly her marriage to an Indian gave her
access to Indian society on terms radically different from the other Western writers. Consequently her best work reveals such inwardness in her picture of certain segment of Indian social life that it is difficult not to consider her an ‘insider’ who at the same time enjoys the privilege of being an ‘outsider’. She herself has declared that she should be considered an ‘Indian Writer’ but as ‘one of those European writers who have written about India’.

She lived in Delhi from 1951-1975 and now divides her time between India and the United States. She is thus a member of that peculiarly modern category, the émigré or expatriate or international novelist. She writes of her position as a writer “The central fact of all my work is that I am a European living permanently in India. I have lived here for most of my adult life and have an Indian family. This makes me not quite an Indian but it does not leave me strictly an outsider either. I feel my position to be at a point in space where I have a good view of both sides but am myself left stranded in the middle. My work is an attempt to charter this unsheltered territory for myself. I write about Europeans in India, sometimes about Indians in India, sometimes about both, but always attempting to present Indians to myself in the hope of giving myself some kind of foothold. Her honest vowel tells us much about her work” (5).
Jhabvala is the Indian or Indo Anglican approximation to Joseph Conrad, 
but hers is a feminine contemporary urban sensibility in contrast to that of 
the masculine Victorian novelist of the sea and of lands beyond the seas. 
Having established herself as a leading woman novelists with her 
substantial output of more than ten novels , Jhabvala collaborated with 
distinguished film makers, James ivory and Ishmael Merchant writing, 
the film scripts based on her play ‘Shakespeare’s Wallah’(1965) and 
Heat and Dust (1975), which won her the Booker Prize and was 
considered a masterpiece, both as a novel and a film.

The short stories of Jhabvala show substantially the same attitude and 
response that characterize her novels. Her four collection of short stories 
‘Like Birds Like Fishes’ (1963), An experience of India (1966), A 
Stronger Climate (1968) and How I became a Holy mother (1976), 
include several tales of everyday urban suffering of Indian that people in 
the west didn’t know about as she herself puts it. The stories packed with 
fact and detail show an extraordinary knowledge of different sorts of 
people and categories of feeling. They are concerned with the tension 
between reason and feeling in a traditional European way and in the 
potency and pointlessness of passion and in the overwhelming strength of 
certain kinds of feeling which rule some to the alter bafflement of others. 
There are also stories like ‘My first Marriage, ‘The Widow’, ‘A
Spiritual Call' which tell in a style both free and controlled of the special pathos attached to the experience of women in male dominated world, experience lost and experience exploited.

Jhabvala's stories like her novels fall under three groups; stories about Indian, stories about Europeans living in India and stories about the interaction between Indians and Europeans. Her stories about Indians deal with family bound, brash social climbers, misfits garrulous women, drifters and failures. The eleven stories in 'Like Birds Like Fishes', except 'A Birthday in London', are set against an Indian background. In the very first story, 'The Old Lady', Jhabvala contrasts two attitudes to marriage, the traditional represented by the old woman and the pseudo-modern symbolized by Leila, her daughter who wants to divorce her husband. To Leila, divorce is a natural thing in enlightened society, not so to her mother nor her husband. She is bent upon wrecking her marriage just because divorce is fashionable in Europe. Leila thinks her mother is old fashioned who does not understand and thinks that marriage bond is still sacred. The story becomes poignant because it brings into focus the old woman's predicament. She knows that her daughter is wrong and she would come to grief, but feels quite helpless. Stories like 'The Widow' and 'Desecration' present the tragedy of young girls married to old men, who could provide them everything but their
physical need. The story of Durga in ‘The Widow’ and Sojia in ‘Desecration’ highlight the sexual starvation and the various forms through which it becomes manifest in their conduct. The other stories in the collection deal with parties of the well to do, the usual talk about the culture, committees and so on. The cumulative effect of these stories is an awareness of the Indian society which is inhibited but its age old complicated tradition, breaking under the impact of Western education, which in turn inhibits its members, constricts their freedom and renders them helpless.

Jhabvala’s stories about Europeans living in India, deal with people who come to India with their dreams only to be disenchanted. These stories, as in her second volume ‘A Stronger Climate’, are built around the Europeans initial expectations and their final frustrations. Westerners who no longer come to conquer but to be conquered. This theme which is elaborately treated with all its complexities in her novels forms the basis of her popular story ‘Miss Sahib’. Miss Sahib of the story is a teacher by profession and passionate by inclination. She is fond of India and her studies. After independence when most of her people had left for England, she stays back. She finds England too cold and the young boys too reserves and decides to return to her home India, only to meet with disappointment. She feels unhappy not so much for personal reasons, but
for the degeneration of the people she loved so much. She does not mind
the quality of the food nor the cheap lodging but is pained to find that the
little girl, Sharmila, the landlady’s granddaughter on whom she had
showered so much love and brought her up under her care, should after
marriage, degenerate into a heap of flesh showing no education or
discipline, but shrieking and bickering and the mother of ill mannered
children. In the story, Jhabvala presents in vivid detail the initial
expectations and ultimate frustrations of Miss Tuby through long and
slow years of life in India. ‘An experience of India’ is the title story of
her third volume of short stories. It is a story about the acceptance of
India. The English Woman came to India to assimilate all that India has
to offer her. In the process she meets people who misuse and abuse her. In
the process, she meets people who misuse and abuse her, which leaves
her mentally and physically impaired. Even the Swami at the Ashram
does not spare her. The rush in the trains, the lust of the people, the
disease that infect her does not kill her love for India. She does not
accompany her husband but decides to stay back.

The stories about the interaction between Indians and Europeans overlap
one another, though the former emphasize how the Europeans feel
trapped in India and the latter dramatizes the cross-cultural encounter. In
stories like ‘The Aliens’ and ‘The Young Couple’ Jhabvala uses the
theme of cross cultural encounter. Peggy in the ‘The Aliens’ is an English woman married to an Indian, Dev, living in a joint Hindu family. The story describes Peggy’s bewilderment at the family scenes that are familiar to every Indian but strange to her. She is an alien to the ways of an Indian household of which she is a member. The story highlights the problems of adaptations and slow absorption of an Englishwoman in an alien culture. Stories like ‘Aliens’ and ‘The Young Couple’ show that though difference in food, furniture and fashions is trivial, it is an alien though offence in food, furniture and fashions is trivial, it is on these trivial things that one’s happiness largely depends. These stories describe the estrangement and suffering of English women who marry Indians. Everyday their sensibility is offended by what seems to be the coarseness of the husband’s relatives, to stay independently without the inter-reference of theirs in-laws, but this is an alien concept, which they realize too late an idea that is unthinkable. The meeting between Europeans and Indians initially produce an irritating effect on Europeans who gradually succumb to the Indian influences. The interaction works in favour of the Indians, so much so that the Europeans are destroyed by it. In ‘A Spiritual Call’, Daphne, an Oxford graduate in England, gives up her job and follows him to India. She stays with him in a most uncomfortable place, but does not mind doing so. She is ready to wear
even a Saree to please him. The focus on the story is on the process of the
Westerner’s loss of identity and the need for the new one.

Jhabvala’s stories of the sufferings of Indian women have nothing shrill
or argumentative about them. They are quiet, factual and powerful and all
the more effective because of their insight into feelings and their
assessment of the strength of the will. It is only the women who will go to
absolute length for love as evidenced in ‘A Spiritual Call’, ‘The Widow’,
‘An experience of India’, ‘The Man with a Dog’ and ‘Passion’. In men
prudence, caution, conformity and cowardice play a more prominent role.
Her stories also show the mysterious, impossible fancies separating
human beings, men and women, the native and the expatriate. This last
obstacle to understanding and sympathy is part of our relationship with
all kinds of life around us. Her stories demonstrate again and again as
much a matter of the will, the hard centre of the self as it is of a
deficiency of feeling or lack of understanding. In stories dealing with life
in Indian joint families she shows her insight into complex personal
relationship.

Jhabvala’s stories read even better than her novels. Her stories are long
and short. They are long because they are about the slow, dull life, her
characters lead, like Chekhov, she deals with boredom and loneliness,
which culminates in sexual abandon, imbecility and helplessness. Her
stories describes the wearing off the young, their attempts at rebellion against the society, the society they find oppressive and finally their abject surrender to its norms. In all her stories, there is a note of lingering sadness which never fails to affect the readers.

Jhabvala speaks not only of her but in general the emotional stages every European, living in India undergoes. "First Stage tremendous enthusiasm, everything Indian is marvelous, second stage, everything Indian not so marvelous, third stage everything abominable"—(6)

Ruth Jhabvala's disillusionment with the India that she had begun by loving so passionately found additional expression between 1960 and 1975 in three collections of short stories, Like Birds Like Fishes (1962), An experience of India (1966) and A stronger Climate (1968). These feelings are mirrored in the yearning for Europe that overtakes her Western characters in the three novels published during this period, "A Backward Place" (1975), "A New Dominion" (1972) and "Heat and Dust" (1975).

For her novel A New Dominion, she selects a time-span identical with the period of time. It takes her two Western characters, Raymond and Lee, to experience the intense effects of a full turn of the wheel of torture and disillusionment. Raymond plans as Esmond did before him to leave
India; for Lee the fascination of Indian of 1923 are recreated and analyzed, after a pause of fifty years, by another of extraordinary courage for whom the cycle renews itself and is poised to make another revolution.

Just when India appeared to have the novelist as a source of spiritual and emotional sustenance, a new challenge directed her energies to another battle, this time of an artistic kind. She was invited to write the screenplays for a series of films directed by James Ivory in association with Ismail Merchant, beginning with a cinematic version of her own novel ‘The Householder’ which was issued in 1963. The creative association inaugurated in 1960 has survived during the twenty years that have followed and has generated eight remarkable films: ‘The Householder’ (1963), ‘Shakespearewallah’ (1965), ‘The Guru’ (1969), ‘Bombay Talkie’ (1970), ‘Autobiography of a Princess’ (1975), ‘Roseland’ (1977), ‘Hullabaloo over Georgie and Bonnie’s Pictures’ (1978), and ‘The Europeans’ (1979).

Since 1960, Ruth Jhabvala has divided her time between writing fiction and writing for cinema, and the chapter titled ‘Writing for Film’ in this book undertakes an examination of her screenplay writing in its effect upon her development as a novelist and short story writer.
The recurrence of similar characters and subjects in fiction she worked on alternately or concurrently during this period indicates the nature and intensity of Ruth Jhabvala's preoccupation as a woman and an artist in these crucial years. It will be found, for people, that a figure of a Western woman seeking self-fulfillment in India is explored successively in the characters of the American novelist Lucia Lane in 'Bombay Talkie', the narrator of 'An Experience of India', Jenny in 'The Guru' and the 'The Triple Studies' of Lee, Margret and Evie in 'A New Dominion'. It is taken up again with greater ironic complexity than before, in the characterization of the narrator of 'Heat and Dust'. Similarly, 'The Swami' or 'Guru', figure who appeared in a favorable light in the early novels like 'The Householder' and 'Get Ready of Battle' is handled again with less and less respect in 'Bombay Talkie', 'An Experience of India', 'A Spiritual Call', 'The Guru' and 'A New Dominion'. These studies of spiritual seekers and Swami although recurrent, never merely repetitive, when viewed separately and together they seem to distill the essence of Ruth Jhabvala's own early enthusiasm for and subsequent disillusionment with India. Other themes that appear to dominate the writing of this period include the exploitation of one individual by another, or the domination of one culture by another, the analysis of a sensitive personality trapped in a hostile environment, the integrity of the
creative artist and a theme stemming perhaps from Ruth Jhabvala’s personal history of displacement and expatriation the helplessness of the socially disadvantaged.

After spending twenty four years, most of her adult life in India, Ruth Jhabvala took up residence in New York in 1975. Interviewed in London, soon after receiving the Booker Prize for ‘Heat and Dust’ that year, she said; “I’d like to live much more in the West, going back to India sometimes but not as much as before. Having assimilated all this Indian experience I don’t want to forget it or cast it off; what I want to do is to take it out again as westerner, enriched by what I have learnt there … I can’t throw away the past twenty-four years, nor do I want to. What I’d really like to do is record the journey back. I don’t know if it’s possible. It’s also a matter of age. I was twenty-four when I went to India, I’m now forty-eight and one is not so flexible. But it’s not as if I’m going to a new place; I am going back West, so it might work out. I don’t know, we’ll have just to see”—(7)

Her published work after 1975 has included numerous short stories, some of which are reprinted in the collection ‘How I became a Holy Mother’ (1976) and focus on the experiences of lonely, ageing, exploited and unhappy women at every level on the Indian Social Scale.
In New York, as in Delhi, Ruth Jhabvala writes in complete isolation. Her habit of living like a recluse while residing in Delhi had raised doubts in some critical minds chiefly Indian as to the authenticity of her picture of India, doubts of which she seems to have been well aware. As many authors of both East and West have done before her, it appears that Ruth Jhabvala splits up certain modern phenomena that interest her deeply into various aspects that she embodies in the settings and characters of her fiction, contriving by this means not only to study the whole, but to explore with admirable objectivity her own identity in its relation to India. Her approach to writing in and about India could well be explained in terms of the Indian concept of avatar, the manifestation of the divine personality, according to which Shiva and other deities manifest themselves in various forms across time and space while mankind worshipping them in one form or another finds paths opening to the divine nature as a whole.

Despite her claim to write as a Westerner mainly for Western readers, the stages of her literary career form with unexpected neatness, the several phases into which Indian philosophical tradition divides the human lifespan, an interesting fact in the light which strengthens the impression conveyed by her deliberate choice after 1975 of an unencumbered way of life that on an artistic level, in some ways parallel vanprashtha, that she
has become more Indian that she suspects or her critics are willing to admit.

Although in her first novel ‘To Whom She Will’ Ruth Jhabvala notes that all characters are entirely fictitious, there is no need to insist on the point. In her later works, like most novelists ‘I mix up a number of people I know (or have witnessed) in order to arrive at one character’.—(7)

Far more rewarding than such speculation is the evaluation of the degree to which her personal life has enriched and extending the techniques of her art. In a sense, everything she has written springs from the fact that her marriage to a young Indian architect brought her to India in 1951 and kept her there for twenty-four years that need not affect an invented community.

In Ruth Jhabvala’s novels such discoveries are constantly made. Although they are made less often and with increasing ambiguity, when the novels are encountered in the chronological order of their publication. Hope begins to seem to lay much, more in individual qualities of character are true worth in her fiction, despite many weaknesses and failings are the inconspicuous and unsung, but gallant, nonconformists Krishna Sen Gupta in ‘To Whom She will’. Sunder Banerjee in ‘A Backward Place’ Narayan in ‘Esmond in India’, Sarla

In turning to examine the techniques that make fiction out of real life in Ruth Jhabvala’s writing, she is not only an analyst of life in India but as student of the European masters of the novel and short story. Literary parody and literary allusion are sources of constant delight in her work, and are used for the most serious as well as for straightforwardly comic purposes. Her early satiric studies of middle and upper class Indian society prompted the comparison of her work by readers and Jane Austen’s sunnier novels.

In fact, even her earliest novels resembles Jane Austen’s not only in their setting and social background but in theme. Acid satirical portraits of Indian snobs, social workers and literary lions are woven into plots concerning the amusing errors made by youthful misguided, but ultimately maturing or contended lovers that inevitably recall ‘Pride and Prejudice’ and ‘Emma’. The similarity goes beyond even these externals to the language of these early works, a habit of ironic undercutting within a sentence frequently brings Jane Austen to mind as in the following description of an Indian party in ‘Get Ready for Battle’.
The influence of Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and other English writers of the Eighteenth century on Ruth Prawer's writing is most clearly visible in 'To Whom She Will' and 'The Nature of Passion' the two novels she wrote when she was still a newcomer to India and her approach to it inevitably shaped by her literary studies in directing a good deal of satire at marriage in middle-class society and in being a novel about growing up.

Ruth Jhabvala's development of the characters of Krishna and Amrita and of their relationship with each other, has much in common with Jane Austen's treatment of her more sensitive heroes and heroines.

In describing the Punjabi family clans, Ruth Jhabvala's emphasis on vigour, resourcefulness, energy and health, drawing her material from her observations of the large Punjabi family of her husband's Hindu partner. The delightful in detail and in every aspect of a rich subject that emerges in her descriptions of Indian family life in both 'To Whom She Will' and 'The Nature of Passion' is a part of the rapture with which at the age of twenty four, she first encountered India.

Ruth Jhabvala first made her mark as a satirist with a sharp eye for hypocrisy and inconsistency. Her novels make consistent use of a character whose astringent habit of mind critical of flaws in society and
in himself and carefully controlled behavior denote a person of
sensitivity. This character Krishna Sen Gupta in 'To Whom She Will',
Sudhir Banerjee in 'A Backward Palace', Ram Nath in 'Esmond in India'
and Raymond in 'A New Dominion' are examples in a sense and at
certain times, the author's representative in the novel's fictional world
establishing through his thoughts, actions, and the words he usually
refrains from uttering a standard by which the behavior of other
characters may be assessed.

They are, in fact the classic targets of the satirist, selfishness, vanity and
egotism that interpret the world in correctly because they place the self
at its centre, affection and insensitivity, hypocrisy that manipulates other
for selfish or immoral ends.

Although Ruth Jhabvala's narrative tone remains cool and studiedly
polite, provided by her personal, leave the reader in little doubt as to the
positions or her scale of moral values occupied by the shallow sentiments
which are depicted by Hari Sahni whose self-deceiving protests of
undying love for Amrita while moving towards marriage with another
young woman contrasts with Krishna's unobtrusive but genuine concern
for her happiness by Mrs. Kaul.
Ruth Jhabvala’s method of satiric exposure is to describe in the Hochstadts own words, on the last pages of ‘A Backward Place’ a cultural occasion they have attended. By going on to express, in narrative style that blends imperceptibly with their characteristics’ mode of expression, the enthusiasm the Hochstadts feels for the cultural heights achieved by this travesty of Ibsen, Ruth Jhabvala exposes their lack of sense and judgment and the superficiality of their contact with his fabled land.

Ruth Jhabvala’s later fiction finds himself satiric techniques, the reader of sympathetic understanding of a morally confused character than he finds himself pitched into easy laughter or tempted into rage and annoyance. The cool detachment of her tone in ‘A Backward Place’ as she takes the Hochstadts apart for her reader’s instruction and pleasure and the flexibility of a narrative style that can appear to take on the colors of character’s voice and habits of thought are features of Ruth Jhabvala’s writing that develop increasing subtlety with each published novel. It is not long before the confident satire with which the Hochstadts are exposed gives way as her writing opens up to a kinder, ironic view.

Ruth Jhabvala’s movement from the comparative simplicities of satire towards the complexities of an ironic mode can be seen from a literary point of view as maturing process and from a personal one as means of
survival. The satiric mind, moved by intense feeling to a hatred only thinly masked by a casual tone and a polite manner, is only too apt to turn destructively upon itself. The irony to which she subjects the satiric personae of her novels and short stories indicates that they are not only externalizations of her moral viewpoint, but projections of her personal dilemma. The use of irony becomes for her as it is for many satirists and ironists a means of self discipline and self chastisement. Ruth Jhabvala prefers at any rate, the cooler regions. She has symbolically represented in ‘Heat and Dust’ by Olivia’s choosing to live the Nawab in a mountain area from which she significantly never leaves.

Ruth Jhabvala’s mature novels seem to be most properly viewed as artistic expressions of the process of understanding life and of coming to terms with it. As in real life, there are no answers provided in either ‘A New Dominion’ or ‘Heat and Dust’ only ironic ambiguities that seem to point in one direction at certain times in another at others, a feature that suggests Ruth Jhabvala’s is becoming increasingly interested by the challenge of reflecting the hidden workings and perplexities of real life in her fiction. Her early novels imposed neatly, balanced intricately, worked out patterns upon life. Indeed both ‘To Whom She Will’ and ‘The Nature of Passion’ have plots that their author manipulates so that they move with the grace and ease of stage comedy. In these first novels,
too, the narrator does a great deal of explaining. The technical problems, besetting the novelists who writes about India in English, are many. They include the adoption or invention of an idiom that reflects the rhythms and tones of Indian speech patterns without comic distortion, together with a means of conveying to the reader, unfamiliar with Asian society, essential information he would apt through unfamiliarity or ignorance to miss.

The vividness of the images she presses into her service indicates the intensity of her Indian agony and the strength of her compulsion to work and rework it in her fiction. Etta in 'A Backward Place', Raymond in 'A New Dominion' and Harry in 'Heat and Dust' are all, in part, expressions of this personal need. But as her own account and the record of her novels and stories make clear, rapture, joy and love are also part of her experience of India her intention and her artistic method are so closely related and their unity in turn so intricately interwoven with such other aspects of her writings as its timeliness and timeliness it's a value as social documentation and the sensitivity with which she interprets character and motive in relation to both individual temperament and cultural conditioning that some such tool becomes indispensable.

Ruth Jhabvala declared in 1966 that she was no longer interested in India except it affected her and her kind. Yet the social, cultural and political
climate of Delhi comes in for a good measure of criticism and scorn in her novel in 1965. That the condition of India adversely affects not only the foreigners but her own people as well is depicted through the personalities of Sudhir and Jaykar in ‘A Backward Place’. The novelists observation of the socio-political scene is conveyed through the character of Jayker who like Raymond of Esmond in India finds himself at odds with the India he has helped to create. Ruth Jhabvala’s European characters of the 1975 section are seen either as damaged by India and in ignominious retreat or suffused with new life and blessed with a new vision of the universe. Whether they succeed or fail, whether they are destroyed or created and depends on the quality of sensibility they have bought to their Indian experience. The English boy chide and the young couple who came out to India to find peace and found dysentery instead, fail to pass the test because of the superficiality of their involvement with India. In a swift revolution of the wheel of response, they have their feel of India and hasten back to where they belong. If Heat and Dust may be said to convey a message, it is this that only some of her aliens are meaningfully absorbed by India while the rest are rejected. With her courage to own her limitations, Ruth Jhabvala has admitted in ‘Myself in India’ that her own approach to India is analogous in spirit to the one she makes Major Minnies advocate in Heat and Dust and that she counted
herself among those who were rejected by India. Yet her imaginative projections of Westerners in Heat and Dust includes 'among people like herself', two strong women possess the valuation are essential in India. The divergence between the subjective and the imaginative approaches to India creates a drama quite unique in Expatriate fiction. Characters like Olivia and the narrator come closer to Ruth Jahbvala's criterion of worth regarding India that she herself and are, therefore, included, though the nature of their inclusion differs in the two different contexts of Imperial and independent India. While leading her own comfortable life in the four walls of air conditioned room, Jahbvala as an artist cannot get away from what she believes to be an overwhelming aspect of the stark reality of India. All the time I know myself to be on the back of this great animal of poverty and backwardness. It is not to pretend otherwise. Or rather one does pretend but retribution follows. The problem that India as a streak reality or as a spiritual reality presents to a European, evokes different responses. The reactions may assume the forms of affirmation or negation ambivalence. All these areas of emotive and intellectual responses to this country are endowed with fictional art in 'A Backward Place'. While Jahbvala seems dissatisfied with this unreality in the sophisticated Westernized Indians attitude to India, she feels more at home with the semi-educated but deeply
involved Indian joint families which breathe a genuine get together. Members of such families have their joys and sorrows, loves and hatred, cunning and compassion—but what is more important is that they feel they form a family, a social unit in which individuals either conform or revolt. Jhabvala’s merit as a creative writer lies in her being intensely aware of her limitations. She writes as in A Backward Place, portrays the lower middle class with sympathy and understanding. She also delineates the rising commercial bourgeois which by no means sophisticated. In fact this is the new rich class which has risen from the brink of want and bare necessities and which is hungry for culture, refinement and respectable social status.

Thus in widening the sphere of her social and cultural setting in her fiction, Jhabvala shows her awareness of the variety and complexity of the post independence Indian society. Her urban India is not urbane, in fact it is even described as a backward or more specifically a backward place. It is involved in change and ferment, and therefore, her basic literary endeavor is to portray the human portent of this society caught in the conflict of a change from tradition to modernity. Jhabvala’s art of fiction pursues the path of the comic and evolves the form of a social comedy of manners. George Meredith says that comedy depicts men and women society, that the setting of comedy is primarily urban and that the
comic writer presents a social and cultural outlook with a view to measuring man's behavior against an accepted norm. Jhabvala excels in presenting incongruities. They become the source of the comic. In 'The Nature of Passion', Nirmal speaks of other college and lecture on Keats poetry and Om makes fun of the whole business of girls going to college. This idea of sending girls to college in Lalaji's family touches the chord of the conflict between the old and the young, orthodoxy and reform, tradition and modernity. But his difference in values is presented comically and in a sarcastic mode. It seems the working of a process of isolation alienation in a mild form and its transformation into art.

Alienation is a much misused term and has several connotations, therefore the exact connotation in which it operates in Jhabvala's world, the context and connotations of alienation is primarily social. Her novels and short stories depict the breakdown of a traditional social order, thereby highlighting the alienation or isolation between one individual and another in marital relations in family life in society at large. The Marxist critic may describe it as a satirical portrayal of a decadent, capitalistic, commercial society. Alienation is an inevitable outcome of such societies. The breakdown of a world-view divinely ordained and supported by tradition is the primary source of this alienation. Its social context is one in which man is pitted against the power of money and
closeness. Alienation occurs as man is reduced to the status of a thing as he is alienated from earth and his fellowmen. Once reduced to the level of a thing, he becomes a victim of the power and the lure of money, the values of an acquisitive, commercial society and the philosophy denounced by Carlyle of making the soul synonymous with the stomach. Jhabvala's great merit as an artist is that she has eminently succeeded in giving artistic expression to this sense of mild alienation in her awareness of man and society in India. Man and society in India today are involved not merely in a change from tradition to modernity but in a process of cultural fragmentation. She portrays this change with an acute awareness and sensitivity. Jhabvala also endeavors to counterbalance her portrayal of material reality with the portrayal of aspects of India's spiritual reality.

This is indirectly an artist's endeavor to get over the process of alienation at work in her creativity. Whereas other Indian writers in English such as G.V Desani and Kamala Markandaya are also isolated to some degree from their soil, they can always successfully get back to their grassroots. Jhabvala clearly cannot achieve this objective. This journey is not for her a return to the earth but her first tentative maiden attempt to have the feel of the soil itself. The search for the sadhus and the pursuit of the spirit in her novels and short stories should be interpreted in terms of her journey
to the Indian scene is primarily epistemological of an inward understanding of Indian culture and tradition, a knowledge of its heritage and civilization. Jhabvala uses of situational segments of English language may be termed in linguistics as a register. A register is governed by the range of vocabulary and syntax particular to the occasion, or the person who speaks or is spoken to. Each register denotes a quality of speech or the speaker. Jhabvala quite often uses a single register since she assumes the role of the omniscient narrator. Although this scene describes the confusion created by the incomprehensible music, Jhabvala’s use of language shows a single register. However, she does use varied register to project the peculiarities of characters and situation and to highlight the comic tone. For example, mark the pompous use of language in Mr. Chaddha talk at the Principal’s tea party in ‘The Householder’. Mr. Chaddha’s Indian English smacks of Victorian pompousness and of ponderous moral tone. This register is of course different from Jhabvala’s own register as third person narrator. She also uses other registers marked by the philosophical ideas as reflected in some of the titles of her novels. E.g. ‘Get Ready for Battle’, ‘The Householder’, ‘The Nature of Passion’. Since Jhabvala is primarily a writer of domestic comedy, with an accent on irony or social satire her language rarely attains any poetic height. F.R Levis has spoken of novels
as dramatic poems and a few novels in Indian-English fiction such as Kamla Markandaya's 'Nectar in a Sieve', are marked by central metaphor. Imagery in fiction is rated high in modern criticism, but Jhabvala's novels bear little evidence of the use of image. Her use of imagery may at best be called casual or illustrative. It illustrates the character, it never transforms them. Jhabvala in her ironic mode succeeds in splitting her audience between those who perceive and those who cannot. Her language then becomes exclusive or private to asset of characters and the knowledge escapes others. She, however, expects the reader to receive the concealed meaning that lies beneath the surface statement, the gulf that lays between the appearances of a situation and the reality that underlies it. Jhabvala uses different forms of irony such as verbal irony or rhetorical irony, but her fiction does not provide many examples of dramatic or tragic irony. She is also ironic in the general sense of that word sometimes used by the New Critics to indicate the total context of a poem projecting several desperate elements of experience. Her fiction is ironic partly because it recognizes and registers the complexities and incongruities of her aesthetic experience.

Jhabvala's style is the subject and the subject is Indian in relation to a Western creative writer's sensibility. This amorphous Indian landscape, natural as well as human, comes within the range of her descriptive and
narrative ability and she projects upon it her visionary power, greatly circumscribed by her naturalistic and ironic traits. Although technique in certain sense discovery or vision after a point, technique and talent seem to go their own ways in different directions. Modern fiction in English is peculiarly conscious of its technique and tools. The modern novelist tries to explore and interpret the complexity of the modern spirit and in this context almost all Indian–English writers with the exception of Raja Rao seem to register an odd failure. In a realist like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala we find a very sensitive creative writer, however, she is mostly preoccupied with the environment only with India as its focal point. The vision of Lawrence, an objectification in his technique projecting a passionate private world values. But in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala the bushes are neat green, but they never seem to bloom. There may be writers in whose work there is burning but no ash, whereas in Jhabvala there is a bush, but it does not burn. Jhabvala’s literary career now stands at an interesting crossword between her experiences of India felt as an interesting crossroad between her experiences of India it as a firsthand in all her agony and joy. In both these phases, in his fiction Taylor, makes a strong plea for the cultural synthesis Jhabvala does not share Taylor’s romantic fervor. In her art and vision Jhabvala is closer to Rudyard Kipling than to any other Anglo-Indian writer. Kipling’s realism, his art
of creating characters and his concerns are close to Jhabvala's own fiction echoes Kipling's famous line "Oh East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet". But Kipling was fascinated by the mystic the occult the supernatural and spiritual. His art is more variegated than Jhabvala. He uses beast fables, allegory and fantasy with unequal ease. Jhabvala's interests do not lie that way like Kipling, E.M. Forster also was not unduly optimistic about the possibility of a cultural synthesis between the East and the West though he was definitely drawn to many things on the Indian scene. Forster reaches this conclusion in spite of his Bloomsbury breeding and liberalism. The ending of A Passage to India suggests that the differences in the personalities of the two coming together was remote. Jhabvala's gifts are of another kind. She is mundane and matter of fact. She possesses a sharp, cool intelligence which can see through pretension and humbug. She is too down to earth and realistic a writer to be carried by sentiment. She views things ironically and her handling of the material is more drastic, straightforward and prosaic than that of the big three Anglo-Indian masters. Jhabvala belongs to the tradition of the nineteenth-century comic English novelists like Dickens, Thackeray and Trollope. Jhabvala shows an admirable awareness of the problems implicit in her practice of the art of the novel in the Indian situation. Jhabvala's writing becomes
more and more serious as he becomes more and more aware of the Indian realities. Indian poverty material and spiritual is Jhabvala's central preoccupation. Indian heat and time are Jhabvala's other preoccupations. Jhabvala is preoccupied with Indian poverty. She seems to believe that in a tropical country heat becomes the most dominant single element that determines the character of the place.

However, Jhabvala as craftsman, tends unconsciously to identify herself with India, objective correlative of her artistic emotions and in my view this aesthetic identification will unfold the great artist in her in relation to her experience of India, the created world of her fiction.

References:-

1. Wall Street Journal – Taken from website on Ruth Prawer Jhabvala


5. Ibid, p. 25
6. Ibid, p. 38
7. Ibid, p. 45
8. Ibid, p. 69