Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

Literature expresses the intimate social awareness of any society in which it is born and it evolves. Indo-Anglian fiction or the Anglo-Indian fiction is closely intertwined with the socio-cultural-political and philosophical milieu wherein it has evolved. E.F. Oaten in his *A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature* makes no distinction between “Anglo-Indian Literature” which includes the writings of British authors on India and “Indo-Anglian Literature” or Indian English Literature, the original writings in English by Indian authors. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and C.D. Narasimhaiah have rendered a shape, recognition and reputation to Indian English Literature, which was earlier known as Anglo-Indian Literature. Their peerless patriotic fervour and sense of adventure have enabled them to explore, examine and evaluate Indian English Literature by blending the best of East-West approaches.

The Anglo-Indian creative works written during nineteen thirties and forties were replete with the contemporary Indian social, economic, political, cultural and philosophic problems. This was inevitable because the long years of struggle and sacrifice had shaped and coloured every experience of modern India. Some writers concentrate on the oppression of the individual in a ruthless society. They also focused on the historical phenomenon of juxtaposition of the two
diametrically opposite culture, namely the oriental and occidental. It is quite
natural that the writers should dwell on the cultural and psychological upheavals
and the reactions and responses that emerge as the result of the East-West
encounter.

Initially, no distinction was maintained between the two sub-genres – the
Anglo-Indian fiction and the Indian-English fiction. Both these kinds of writings
were discussed under the general rubric of “Anglo-Indian writing”. Thus
E.F.Oaten in his essay “Anglo-Indian Literature” uses this term in the wider
connotation whereby both the British as well as the Indian writers who made India
their subject matter in English were put in the same category.

Of all forms of literature, Fiction holds a unique position. It comprises both
forms of novel and short story. The origin of short story can be traced from the
anecdotes of “The Old Testament” and it runs through the works of Geoffrey
Chaucer, Boccaccio and gets a definite status in the works of Edgar Allan Poe.
R. J. Rees vividly states the origin of the short story:

Critics and literary historian sometimes speak of the short
story as though it were something new – a product of the
nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.
Although the short story did not reach the height of its
popularity until the beginning of the present century it is, one
of the oldest types of literature. In Bible, the Old Testament
is full of wonderful short stories which modern writers have
borrowed or imitated over and over again. (203)

But only in the twentieth century the short story was raised to the level of
the novel in dignity and scope. R.J. Rees rightly acclaims that “many of the
world’s best known short stories have been written in the last hundred years”
(204). A brief analysis of the aspects of a modern short story becomes vital in
this contest. A short story should always aim at producing one single vivid effect.
It has to seize the attention at the outset and gather it together more and more until
the climax is reached. As the short story evolved into the modern form, many
great writers have made sincere and serious attempts to define it.

Richard Summers in his Craft of Short Story writes, “No complete
definition can be formulated for any effect to be all inclusive is futile” (24). He
also further states:

[...] an analysis of what a short story is and what is not may
save the student from early failures. An article is not a short
story. A character sketch is not a short story […] Yet a
vignette – a short representation of one of life’s little
incidents (usually ironic) can be and often is a short story.”

(24-25)

Summers’ is a long but detailed and distinct definition of the short story. He
precisely defines it as “A character sketch, a dialogue, a record of events, even a
description can be changed into a short story by a slight alteration of the writer’s attitude and purpose” (25).

Valerie Shaw’s definition of the short story falls in line with Richard Summers’. According to him a short story must be very short which can be read at one sitting. It resists a universal definition owing to the variations in the length and content in stories. The status of the modern short story is still in question. It is said that it lacks the dignity, scope and width of the drama and the novel. Shaw explains in the introduction to his The Short Story, “The short story was considered flimsy calling for apology rather than pride” (2). He also says that the place of the short story becomes fixed and permanent only when its priority and significance are established by its recognition by great writers and he quotes Anton Chekhov who like others, asserted: “The short story like the stage has its own conventions, its own need to concentrate for the reader on the impression of the entire work at the end” (3). Though brief, the short story had to fulfill many requirements.

Another definition by Brander Matthews as quoted in Chamber’s Encyclopedia is that the short story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short. He, in an essay “The Philosophy of the Short Story” published in 1885, makes a serious attempt to define the genre. The distinction that he makes between the novel and the short story is that the short story conveys an “essential unity of impression” which the novel can afford to dispense with one
cannot read a short story with enjoyment to two sittings, whereas a novel almost
demands to be laid aside periodically. So Matthews’ view about the unity of
impression that a short story creates, is a logical analysis. Hudson in his An
Introduction to the Study of Literature says, “Short story is another kind of prose
fiction, which has grown beside the novel, and has now recognized an important
place in literature” (337). In the review of Tagore: Selected Short Stories edited
by Sukanta Chaudhin, in India Today, Jaya Chaliha says, “The short story is the
most in demand as the literary genre of the millennium” (66).

Thus the short story has come to attain its place in modern literature. The
content and form of the genre are stressed due to the severity of the rules of
modern literature. The short story has become a very distinct form with strict
methods of construction. It is now sharply defined form with a symmetrical
design. It is at its best a modern art. The singleness of aim and the singleness of
purpose are two very important canons by which the value of a short story is
judged. It can express human experiences, ideas and emotions and any of the
aspect of life quickly and immediately. In this respect Poe’s stress on “brevity”
and “unity of effects” fit very well into the frame work of the short story.

Obviously, because of its brevity, short stories can only reveal a segment of the
fleeting life and a fragment of human personality. The function of literature being
a true portrayal of life and society, the short story stands as the best means for the
purpose. H.M. Williams opines that the short story is basically “intensive, lyric,
fixing our attention on small but brilliantly perceived parts of human experience” (6).

The art of storytelling might have existed from time immemorial but shorter fiction in its present form emerged in the nineteenth century. The ancient story tradition emphasized mainly the moral and ethical living and was not much concerned with either characterization or situation. But the modern short story has begun to reflect not only the physical conflict but also the mental conflict between the forces of good and evil. Literature all over the world recorded a spate of short fiction. The nineteenth century was, indeed, an age of short story. A few renowned writers are closely associated with the history of evolution of this branch of literature, and the two most versatile among them are Guy de Maupassant of France and Chekhov of Russia. Iyengar in The Adventure of Criticism regards these two writers, “as the twin creators of modern short story” (156). In India, Premchand and Rabindranath Tagore took the lead and firmly established the short story as a creative literary form.

To cope with the present generation, which is leading a modern life of rat race and also to meet the demand of the periodical literature the novelists are bid to bring out short stories too. Short story is mainly fostered and promoted by magazines and journals. During the last few decades, the scope of the short story witnessed a significant expansion and it became a popular genre in all Indian languages. Since Independence, short fiction has matured considerably and is able
to reflect the social realities. It records with precision the blows to the traditions and the value system. The story teller is a keen observer and nothing escapes his notice like political behavior, the joint family system, the generation gap, the changing attitudes towards love, marriage and sex. They have all been subjected to incisive analysis. It is the duty of the writers to focus on the issues that concern society. C.V. Venugopal has rightly assessed the aim of Indian English short story writer:

To present an overall satisfying and unifying picture of a vast area, through a general observation of the men and the land has perhaps been the dominant motive behind every Indian short story writer in English. […] What he wanted (was) to say in a direct way and establish a quick rapport with the reader. (13)

There have been many men and some women writers who have bravely run the race and reached the goal.

Of modern Indian English short story writers no one has enjoyed a greater vogue than R.K. Narayan. Some other notable writers of the short story in India are Tagore, Khushwant Singh, Ruskin Bond, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Padmaraju, Nayantara Sahgal, Amrita Pritam and quite a few others who have created for the short story a well deserved status in the literary world. Like other artists, the short story writers hold
the mirror up to nature and life; but at times they tilt the angle or sometimes use a
plane mirror so that the reflected images seem to acquire a strange quality; though
still deriving from nature, from life. The function of literature being a true
portrayal of life and society, the short story stands as the best means for the
purpose.

Short fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment in Indian
English literature. Particularly, in their stories there is a fruitful interplay between
literature and life. Indian women writers in English from the mid nineteen fifties
onwards have been overtly expressive about women’s problems and have centred
their writings with women characters. The protagonists of almost all their novels
and short stories are women. The women writers are more concerned with
problems in the domestic sphere and the problems they face and deal with
everyday. Hence many women writers have tended to limit their characters to
achieve what they could within the confines of family life and daily routine of
Indian society.

Writers like Markandaya, Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Gita
Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Bharati Mukherjee, Nina Sobal, Deshpande, Shoba
De, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor through their writings very successfully and
skillfully capture the Indian ethos. They also show their deep insight into human
nature and their understanding of day-to-day problems. They deal with the
various themes of clash between tradition and modernity, identity crisis of their protagonists, Indian woman’s quest for independence and the East-West conflict.

In the galaxy of Indian women writing Jhabvala has already carved a niche for herself. She has a striking penchant towards Indian life and literature and she exploits it for the growth of her personality. One of the most puzzling phenomena of the literary world is the intriguing problem of Jhabvala’s identity and classification as an artist and various views have been expressed on this issue. Focusing the importance of this problem, David Rubin writes:

The solution to this puzzle of national identification is not idly speculative for on it hangs the far more complex mystery of Jhabvala’s sense of her own identity and its relation to the world she has created and ultimately of the real value and meaning of her fiction. (672)

The most authentic explanations about her national and literary identity are the frequent statements made by Jhabvala herself in her many interviews and non-fictional essays. In her essay “Myself in India”, Jhabvala refers to herself as “European” and as frequently she refers herself as an “exile” having no country to which she really belongs. She has often felt that she was practically born a displaced person.

Jhabvala’s relationship with India is an extraordinary tangled one because she remained committed to India in a way and for a course of time unusual among
the gamut of Western writers who have taken India as their subject. Jhabvala herself has said about her identity:

The central fact for all my work, as I see it, is that I am a European living permanently in India. I’ve lived here for most of my adult life and have an Indian family. This makes me not quite an insider but it does not leave me entirely an outsider either. I feel my position to be at a point in space where I have quite a good view of both sides but am myself left stranded in the middle. (270)

She also confesses herself in her autobiographical essay “Living in India”. She writes, “I have lived in India for most of my adult life. My husband is Indian and my children. I am not, and less so every year” (41). To her statement, Srinivasa Iyengar in his Indian Writing in English, points out that, “One might, however include her novels among her children, and in that sense her fiction is Indian” (742).

Vasant A Shahane in his book Ruth Prawer Jhabvala comments on her identity:

Jhabvala seems to Khuswant Singh very Indian, and he calls her the ‘adopted daughter of India’. She is sincere in resisting false labels, and desires to avoid the mere appearances such as a sari – which will make her look like an Indian. She is
also tempted to be ‘defiant and European’, but in the end she visualizes a possibility of herself merging with the Indian earth. (23)

Jhabvala can be described as an “inside-outsider” as well as an “outside-insider”. From the Indian artistic view point she appears an “inside-outsider” while from the European point of view she may seem an “outside-insider”. Bhatnagar in his “Commonwealth Literature: Genesis and Bearings” states, “there are writers who could neither inhabit the country nor reject it but continued to be nostalgic about it in their literatures from abroad” (30). Jhabvala, one of the best known women novelists of India, belongs to this category of fiction writers.

The oeuvre of Jhabvala stands in a particular ambiguous relationship with India and with the Indian literature in English. The ambiguity arises from the fact that her writings can be analysed on the grounds of two different cultures and traditions.

Pankaj Bhan shares his opinion on Jhabvala as:

Ruth Jhabvala’s alleged ‘ambivalence’ basically stems from the fact that she shares characteristics of both the Anglo-Indian and the Indian-English traditions of creative writing in English. Her ‘placement’ in a particular literary tradition has been creating problems and flummoxing both critics and lay readers alike. While normally one need not create too much
fuss over the placing of a creative writer in a particular
tradition, in Ruth Jhabvala’s case this kind of an enquiry
seems essential in arriving at an assessment of her image of
India. (3)

The writings of Jhabvala could be viewed as a criticism of modern times.
A thorough study of her short stories will convince any researcher. The short
stories of Jhabvala do affirm the possibilities of life though the artist’s perception
concerning the moral decay is gloomy and tragic. The quality of the writings of
Jhabvala appealed equally to the readers in the West and the East. Hence she has
become a writer of international repute.

Jhabvala’s contribution to literary field includes twelve novels, eight
collections of short stories and twenty three screen plays. The works are To whom
She will (1955) which was published in the United States as Amirta, The Nature
of Passion (1956), Esmond in India (1958), The Householder (1960), Get Ready
for Battle (1962), A Backward Place (1965), A New Dominion (1972) published
in the United States as Travelers, Heat and Dust (1975), In Search of Love and
Beauty (1983), Three Continents (1987), Poet and Dancer (1993), Shards of
Memory (1995), Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other Stories (1963), A Stronger
Climate (1968), An Experience of India (1971), How I Became a Holy Mother and
Other Stories (1976), Out of India (1986), East into Upper East: Plain Tales from

To her credit, Jhabvala was awarded with the Booker Prize for *Heat and Dust* in 1975, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1976, a Neil Gunn international Fellowship in 1978 and a Mac Arthur Fellowship in 1984, Writers Guild of America in 1987 & 1994, Academy Award for writing Adapted Screenplay in 1992 and O. Henry Prize Winner in 2003 for “Refuge in London”. These awards establish her as a reputed international writer.

Jhabvala was born on 7th May 1927 in Cologne, one of the German cities to a comfortable middle-class mixed family having Polish-Jewish lines of heritage. Her father was a lawyer of Polish-Jewish origin and her mother was German-Jewish. The early happy years of her life at home and happiness, as she has recalled in various interviews came to an abrupt end when Hitler and the National Socialists captured power in Germany. Like many others, Marcus Prawer the father, had fled enforced conscription in the First World War. Jhabvala was admitted only in Jewish schools because of the discrimination, where she was taught Hebrew. She developed the habit of writing even as a child. The influence of her maternal grandparents was great on her then and therefore. Shepherd remarks “her infant writings were all religious and Jewish” (8).
Following the onset of the Second World War, the family consisting of four members – Jhabvala, her parents and her brother, S.S. Prawer had to set sail to England in April 1939. They narrowly escaped the catastrophic fate of most European Jews. In the spring of 1939, Jhabvala was just only twelve years old. She and her family were among the last to escape from Nazi Germany to England. She experienced unutterable agony of losing her own kith and kin and those childhood friends she had moved closely with. In her personal letter to Yasmine Gooneratne she had mentioned about the loss in the Nazi holocaust:

My Father’s entire family, part of my family, most of the children I first went to school with, and most of my parents’ family friend [...] in fact, our entire social and family circle.

(1-2)

Jhabvala refers to herself as born a displaced person. The horrifying experience of the Nazi holocaust was to remain indelible and become a deciding factor of her outlook on life.

Life in England was not without torment too. As Sucher says, “Her childhood was lived in the shadow of terror. Just recently, in an interview, she admitted that “going to school wasn’t pleasant [...] other children would scream after us and throw stones” (226). But the young Jhabvala made best use of the opportunities offered to her. She took the degree in English at the University of London. Her transition from Hebrew to English was smooth. She made quick
strides in gaining proficiency in the creative use of the new language. Her celebrated “Chameleon or Cuckoo quality” helped her a lot at this juncture.

Jhabvala had started writing even as a school child in Germany in the German language. As the artist in her was very much alive, amidst all adverse circumstances, she continued to write. But she had not published much before she came to India. Reminiscing her growth as a writer, Jhabvala says:

I started writing as a child and never stopped. It came as naturally as breathing. I’ve always had cupboards stuffed full with unfinished novels, plays, stories. I wrote through my school years and college years and then when I came to India, I went on writing. (33)

The unsettling migratory experiences of Jhabvala’s life from Germany to England and to India and later to America might be an important factor in her response to India as embodied in the image of the country that she has formed. As a student in the University of London, Jhabvala met Cyrus S.H. Jhabvala, an Indian architect. They got married in 1951 and immediately left for Delhi where she spent the next twenty-four years of her life. Her move to India opened new vistas of experience. She started writing immediately about India or about herself in India. She was 24 years old when she came to India. India excited her tremendously and she at once, began to write about it. She followed the dictum laid for writers by James Joyce: “Silence, exile and cunning”. This dictum she
interpreted for herself, “to mean that I must keep my mouth shut, stay aloof from the world around me and carry on my business life a thief in the night, pillaging what I need and hoarding it in the secret recesses of my imagination to make of it what I can” (Foreword, Gooneratne, 1983).

From India Jhabvala migrated to the West and she has been writing from New York. The scene of action in her later works has shifted from New Delhi to New York and to London. Her literary career could be analysed under different phases. In the first phase of her career (1955-1958), her writings reflected her delight in India. She has tried to write from an insider’s perspective about joint family life, about arranged marriages versus love matches and about the conflicts which arose between a modern westernized youth and traditional older generation. Aspirations of an individual and social immobility, the clashes between the old and the new recur in almost all her early writings. The stories in the collection, Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other Stories express all the above said features effectively.

Gradually Jhabvala’s vision of India took a darker turn in the second phase of her career (1958-1975). She moves away from an interest in India and Indians to an interest in the effect India has on westerners who live in or visit India. She consistently interrogates the way “Guru” figures act on western psyche and sometimes Indians, particularly women. This kind of interest is more sustained in the two collections of short stories, An Experience of India and How I Became a
Holy Mother and Other Stories. At the end of this stage, she relocates herself both thematically and technically.

The third phase in Jhabvala’s writings (1975-2013) indicates her physical shift from India to the U.S.A. and witnesses a shift away from India. Her writings at this stage focus on such post-colonial issues like displacement and identity. She also explores the sense of alienation and expatriation that has been Jhabvala’s own experience and has been haunting her since leaving Germany at the age of twelve as well as the experience of so many of her western characters. Though the third phase of her literary career sees a physical movement away from India, many of the concerns of her Indian fiction still continue to exist.

India continues to be a vital part of Jhabvala’s consciousness. In fact, India and Indian experiences continue to be a metaphor for her explorations of certain universal themes even if these are set against American or international background. Gooneratne makes a hint that 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.

Even though the scene of action in Jhabvala’s works varies, one important engaging subject from the first to the last of her novels and short stories is the
family. Her chief preoccupations are with the themes of heritage and disinheritance and man-woman relationship, the themes which have universal significance. A few of its allied themes like loneliness, humiliation, degradation, patience and acceptance also find their place in her short stories.

It is obvious that many critics and eminent scholars have made an attempt to analyse Jhabvala’s works, mainly on her novels. But only a very few references have been made to her short stories. Laurie Sucher, in his The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: The Politics of Passion mainly concentrated on her novels and has analysed only few of her short stories. Gooneratne, a friend and critic of Jhabvala in her book, Silence, Exile and Cunning has allotted one chapter for short stories. Agarwal in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: A Study of her Fiction has focused on some of the short stories. Vasant Shahane has made a detailed thematic study of a few short stories in the book Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Some other articles on Jhabvala’s writings have been analysed and published in various books and journals. But any of these criticisms do not analyse her short stories in particular. This present thesis fills the research gap by concentrating on her short stories which ascertain her to be a universally acknowledged eminent writer.

Jhabvala is found to perceive everything that is Indian from the view point of a westerner. Moreover, the writer seems to focus the impressions of the westerners on the Indians. At the same time, she does not fail to portray the typical Indianness in the contemporary Indian middle class society without any
exaggeration. There exists a difference between actual Indian reality and the
European’s conception of Indian reality. Most of her stories arise from personal or
observed experience. Therefore it is worthwhile that her literary creations,
particularly selected short stories from four collections like, Like Birds, Like
Fishes and Other Stories, A Stronger Climate, How I Became a Holy Mother and
East into Upper East: Plain Tales from New York and New Delhi are scrutinized
in the present study.

The study examines Jhabvala’s short stories in the context of the western
influences on the psyche and the lives of Indians living with it. Being married to
an Indian, she has gained an intimate vision and understanding of the ideas, ideals
and varied life style of the Indians through her western perception. Hence the title
of this thesis is “Vision of India and Colour of Europe: A Reading of Ruth Prawer
Jhabvala’s Short Stories”. The culture, manners, attitudes and personal desires of
the Indians particularly of the females portrayed in these stories are described and
analysed.

Jhabvala’s literary works have been well received as the highest art and a
balance between subtlety, humour and beauty. The writers who have confronted
or have any personal experiences of East and West can justify East-West
encounter theme much better than others. Jhabvala takes up this theme and adopts
totally different method of dealing with it. E.M. Forster, a pioneer in treating this
theme, raises it to a religious and mystical level. But Jhabvala brings it down to
the mundane. Her unique achievement as an eminent writer lies in her lending due credibility, authenticity and seriousness to the portrayal of the theme of cross-cultural interaction in its variegated nuances and dimensions. She examines the strength and weakness of both the culture from the woman’s point of view. Her short stories present a wonderful picture gallery. She is gifted with good observation, sensitiveness and a skill to paint characters with words.

Jhabvala reaps a rich variety of female characters and analyses the problems of wives, mothers and widows. Her stories explore the man-woman relationship. So the concept of womanhood in marital life is analysed in the next chapter “Dissonance in Marital Life”. Man-woman relationship is like a delicate web. In an ideal state it is based on mutual love and understanding. The question of domination or suppression cannot undo it. But this ideal state seldom exists in the world. In practical life, generally, this ever great relationship is weighed down with many problems. The malady of modern civilization lays imperfect and ill-advised relationship between man and woman. Love has degenerated into lust and the institution of marriage has lost its sacred significance. Sex has degenerated into beastly passion and has become a tool in the hands of many to wreak vengeance on opponents. Marriage brings an entire change in girl’s attitude because after marriage she does not think of herself but prepares herself to make the necessary sacrifices as her situation and conditions demand.
In an Indian family the birth of a female child is despised. Consequently the child is rejected in its birth and it is disowned as it grows. The daughter is considered a liability on the father’s exchequer and after marriage too, neither the husband nor the members of his family take her into their circle. The married Indian woman thus is ignored and alienated. Traditional wives quietly accept their place in the family. But educated young rebellious Indian women begin to rebel and act by their romantic ideals of love and westernism. Lelia in the story “The Old Lady” can be analysed in this aspect. Women as members of social welfare committees in the stories of Jhabvala are not committed to the task of making human life better.

A married woman feels helpless because she cannot openly revolt against her husband and other family members. She has to accept the challenges of adverse customs and superstitious beliefs by her practical common sense. For countless centuries woman in India has been subordinated to man and socially does not have any individuality in her character. She could not find any other expression of her talents or desires except as a housewife and mother. These roles suit to her most. When she tries to go beyond this limit, her life ends up in tragedy as in the case of Shakuntala in “The Housewife”. A wife may try to rebel as an individual but it gives her infinite pain to be away from home as wife and mother. Therefore, she prefers to suffer in silence and remain at home though she does not like it.
In the country of oppressive tradition, a marriage between two persons does not necessarily have its foundation on love, which is important for a stable and permanent relationship. A loveless married life compels the wife and the husband to drift away from each other resulting into a total failure. A marriage without love is like a picture drained of its colour. Hamida in “In a Great Man’s House” needs to establish herself in a loving and intimate relationship. But she does not get such relationship with her husband. The Minister’s wife in “Rose Petals” longs for love and to be loved.

The cause for marital discords is often more physical and trivial than being emotional or deep. Some western women marry Indian men who come to India and get settled here out of some mystical attraction. Even the educated Indian husbands do not treat their wives as companions but only as subordinates. The foreign wives encounter only a male supremacist society in India. Those who hate the Indian society for this reason ruin themselves. But those who have the essential human virtues like love, sympathy and compassion learn to overcome these hurdles and decide to spread fast their roots here in India. Cathy in “A Young Couple” and Peggy in “The Aliens” come to India after marriage with lots of dreams but they meet with disappointment. They bring the wisdom they have gained from the past to bear upon the present and quite willingly learn from the new environment what should necessarily be learnt to make life better.
The protagonists in Jhabvala’s stories are caught in the web of familiar dualism of tradition versus change, mysticism versus materialism and morality versus free will. The vicissitudes of an arranged marriage are explored that expose their silent sufferings. Thus the chapter “Dissonance in Marital Life” probes into the strained relationship that exists between husbands and wives.

Another important aspect of women that features in the short stories of Jhabvala is that of the mother. The next chapter “Mothers and Widows” discusses about the role of mothers and widows, their sacrifices and sufferings. The Indian wife in Jhabvala’s stories is a silent suffering woman and becomes a venerable figure on becoming the mother of a son. The young wife who finds the adjustments difficult endures her bitter and unhappy frustrations silently. But a mother of a child becomes satisfied and feels a fulfilled life when she adjusts herself for her child. The stories like, “The Old Lady”, “Sixth Child”, “In the Mountains” and “A Birthday in London” discuss the mothers who worry and do better for their children.

In India, with its strong bent for tradition, woman is expected mainly to live for others than for her because “others” control and mould the social structure. Woman in life and literature herself voluntarily surrenders to the ideal of self-sacrifice. The sublimation or suppression of her natural desires and aspiration must have created a deep struggle in her, at least in her subconscious. “A Summer by the Sea’ and the story “The Man with the Dog” bring to light the desires of the
mothers and how the society and the children expect it to be suppressed without any care for the individual feelings and aspirations.

Woman suffers in multiple ways. The plight and loneliness of a widow is depicted by Jhabvala in some of her stories. The mental agony of a pathetic widow is depicted in “The Widow”. The sexual feelings of an aged widow are featured candidly in “A Summer by the Sea”. The desire of a widow to have a companion at her ripen age is discussed in “The Man with the Dog”. Some of her stories like “A Loss of Faith”, “The Biography” and “Suffering Woman” analyse the sorry state of the widows.

The fourth chapter “Quest for Spirituality” analyses Jhabvala’s views on spirituality. Through her characters in select short stories, she presents different perspectives of spirituality and focuses the impact of spirituality in the minds of the characters. The cause of the poor and the depraved is seen as the religion of Jhabvala. Man can reach the state of Godhood only by being compassionate to the fellow beings. His duty to God should be complemented by his duty to those around him. Faith without action goes in vain. So Jhabvala seems to emphasise one’s duty to the poor and the oppressed because they deserve human love and compassion. Ramkumar in “Loss of Faith” loses faith in the humanity of his fellowmen in the world itself because his lower middle-class self is utterly baffled by his bitter destiny.
The death of a husband is a major cause of suffering for a wife. When an unhappy widow has no place to turn to, she sometimes tries and at times is forced to spiritualise her sorrow into devotion to God. An aged lady of “The Old Lady” and Durga of “The Widow” try to find peace of mind through their surrender to God. Pritam of “In the Mountains” tries to spiritualise her frustration through nature.

Jhabvala shows that westerners are magnetically drawn towards Indian spiritualism. The oriental mysticism and the meditative power which give peace to mind is described in “The Temptress”. The guru-disciple relationships play an important part in some of her stories. At the same time spiritualism has been portrayed in a negative light in a few stories. The holiness of God men, who teach the philosophy of the holy text and show the path of good and bad have been portrayed as fake god-men. In the name of spiritualism, all immoral activities take place. The swamiji takes advantage to seduce his victims and then annihilate them. He believes in transformation of the old into the new by sexual exploitation when the person would totally become his. All his actions are immoral and revolting. He is a deceitful villain who has the power to attract the innocent beings. “The swamis and the sadhus of Jhabvala’s stories are not always paragons of virtues and intellect or the embodiment of the pure spirit. They are sometimes an odd combination of worldly wisdom and other worldly charm” says Shahane (148). Westerners are attracted towards them not only because the East has a
message to give but also because they are tired of their material west. Some of them come to these so called holy men and women to lose themselves in order to find themselves. They come to India in the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life.

The restless feeling of modern youth and their thirst of spiritual enlightenment are exploited by men by pose as holy personages. The narrator of “My First Marriage”, Daphne and Helga of “A Spiritual Call” the English woman, who is not given any name in the story “An Experience of India”, Katie of “How I Became a Holy Mother” and Margeret and Elizabeth of “Two More under the Indian Sun” are enslaved by the imposters in the garb of swamijis. Youth in relation to such charlatans forms the argument of the latter part of the chapter “Quest for Spirituality”.

The swamijis of course are magnetic personality. They can create illusions of hope and happiness through a skillful manipulation of words, gestures and facial expression. True heroes are needed to show humanity the right path in life. But in the modern context in which ambition for power, money and success has been substituted for values of compassion, dedication and sacrifice, the place of heroes has been usurped by anti-heroes, demon-lovers and charlatans. Young innocent women fall into the trap of charlatans who are deceitful opportunists and whose only motive is gratification of the self.
The final chapter of this thesis discusses all the foresaid analysis and also assesses Jhabvala’s overall achievement as a short story writer. She has proved herself in these collections of short stories her mastery in delineating the desires and problems of her women protagonists. Her sharp insight and keen observation of life and people around her endow her with great opportunity to create wonderful stories. She adopts and achieves a kind of subjective atmosphere in a narrative form which flows like poetry. As a writer, Jhabvala tries to piece together the memory of her experiences and that of others she has observed to arrive at a total perspective or vision of life. Image of mirror has been found occurring in some of the works of Jhabvala. This image signifies humanity being caught in traps of various kinds.

Tenacity of purpose and love which is the secret of all moral virtues is needed to redeem the world. The responsibility of finding heaven in hell lies with the younger generation. The path suggested in the stories of Jhabvala is one of quietness and receptivity and compassion to uphold human dignity. Love forgives the prodigals and avenger. It never expects anything but it only gives. It endures and suffers along. That quality is there in humble women. A woman has to allow herself to be infected with the radiance of love and joy of life that emanate from her. Jhabvala’s vision thus is female-centred.