The thesis, "Feminist as Social Satirist: A Study of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Fiction," makes a careful study of how Ruth Prawer Jhabvala views social problems, especially the problems of women in a patriarchal society, from a feminist perspective. Jhabvala's writings constitute an exploration of the predicament of woman caught in the vortex of man-woman relationship. She depicts the social derogation of women with a humanistic concern. Her works, on the whole, appear to confirm the premise of feminism while satirising the social injustice and inequality meted out to women.

Women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande have observed women's sufferings in the male-dominated world. They picture how women are being exploited in every field by men. They satirize the double standards of the society that are being adopted for men and women. They try hard to improve the social status of women through their writings. Their aim is to create an awareness among women folk about their condition and to instrumentalize equality and better understanding between the sexes.
Jhabvala belongs to this category of feminist writers who condemn the injustices done to women. Her female consciousness gets reflected in her writings which present the problems of women in a realistic way. Such a portrayal of women's sufferings makes her satire direct and sharp. Her writings reveal her vast experience which helps her to capture women's predicament in various spheres. Whether it is in the Indian milieu or in the international context, by dealing with the woman question, she tries to bring about an awareness among women.

Jhabvala is a triple-exile. She is a Polish-German by birth, English by education, Indian by marriage and at present, she is an American by domicile. She had her school education in Germany and higher education in England, taking her M.A degree in English Literature at the University of London. At the age of twelve, she emigrated to England and at twenty-four, she married Cyrus Jhabvala, an Indian architect and left for India. After her long stay in India, for about twenty-five years, she got tired of India and its heat, and finally, she has settled in New York.

Creative spirit takes possession of her even in her childhood days. She admits that the art of writing has come to her naturally. She has started writing even in her
school-days, but mostly her early works have remained unpublished. In fact, these writings mark her apprenticeship. Her study of literature has developed her interest in literary career. Further, her readings of great literary masters have shaped her artistic vision. Ruth Jhabvala matures into a committed artist, thanks to the Indian milieu. For, India has provided her with a plenty of subject-matter for writing. While her early novels register her initial reaction to women's oppression in India, her later novels bear witness to her growing perspective on the women's issues in the international arena.

Jhabvala's female consciousness quickly captures the sufferings of Indian women due to male-domination. Her early novels picture the problems of women caught between the conflicting forces of life -- conservatism and modernism. These novels excel in the presentation of domestic realism. Jhabvala also presents the influence of the unhealthy aspects of westernization on some Indian women who tend to mistake westernization for emancipation.

The author's inherited Western culture and her acquired Indian culture have helped her understand the shortcomings of both the cultures. The second phase of her writing career is dominated by the inter-cultural problems of women. Her
personal experience in adjusting with the Indian way of life has made her aware of the problems of other western women who happen to settle in India as wives of Indian men. She also witnesses how western girls, being bored of their materialistic west, seek India for spiritual solace but find themselves trapped by the false spiritual leaders. When she moves to America, she realizes that the spiritual entrapment of women is a universal phenomenon. Her feminist spirit compels her to concentrate on the exploitation of women in social, cultural and spiritual contexts of human life.

Jhabvala's technical achievements add sophistication to her works of art. Her suggestiveness through symbolism makes her satire mild and gentle. But at the same time, her employment of irony intensifies the poignancy of her satire. Further, her satire is heightened by the realistic portrayal of the problems or situations. There is no exaggeration or depreciation in her narration. She employs parallelism in order to make a comparative and a contrastive study of the problems. In this aspect, Jhabvala's themes seem to be repetitive but in fact they are variations of the same theme. At the same time, it does reveal only her preoccupation with the women's issue and she analyses it through various perspectives. Added to these literary
techniques, Jhabvala's acquaintance with the film world helps her to employ the cinematic techniques like flash back, subjective camera technique and shifting scenes abruptly. As a skilful artist, Jhabvala expresses herself clearly varying her style, depending on the need. Whether it is a short story or a novel or a film script, one can appreciate her sincerity and her attempt towards perfection.

Jhabvala's feminist consciousness gets reflected emphatically in her novels. It also finds expression in her short stories. The novels reveal her widened perspective of the woman question which the researcher has carefully studied. At the same time, some of her short stories are examined, since a few short stories have been later developed into full-fledged novels. Her novels are grouped under three broad categories, from a thematic perspective, following the chronological order, only in a broad sense. Some of her articles in which Jhabvala talks about her literary career, her life and experience are put into use.

The introductory chapter tries to establish feminism as one of the powerful tools of literary criticism. It also introduces the theories of feminism, its ideals and practitioners. In the present-day India, feminism is
accepted and treated as a separate genre studying the status of women in society with a view to improving their condition in and out of the house. Feminists find fault with the social codes and behaviour which are male-oriented and suppressing women. They become social satirists. They claim equality and liberty for women, fighting against the male-domination of the society and its exploitation and harassment of women. The first chapter exemplifies Jhabvala's feminist outlook and undertakes a brief survey of her works. Apart from tracing out Jhabvala's life, her literary progress and the formative influences on her, this chapter also emphasizes Jhabvala's treatment of the women's issue from different perspectives, namely -- social, cultural and spiritual.

The second chapter, "Societal Derogation of Women" analyses Jhabvala's early novels dealing with women's predicament in the Indian scene. It also discusses Jhabvala's satirical attack on the male-dominated society.

The condition of Indian women has been much worse than that of western women. In India, women are confined only to their home. Education, if provided, is given only reluctantly to young women and these female members, even from their
childhood, are psychologically programmed to accept marriage as the only way of life. The institutionalized marriage only traps them and further deteriorates their condition. They are not allowed to have individual thinking and freedom. Though the impact of modernity and westernization has brought about some changes in their condition, some are misled by too much of sophistication and westernization. Law sanctions equality to women. Ironically women's freedom still remains in theory alone. This can be identified in the conflict between tradition and modernity, between younger generation and older generation, which Jhabvala's early novels exemplify. Mothers are seen to identify themselves with Women's Liberation Movement and talk of emancipation but in matters relating to their daughters they cling only to traditional and old-fashioned customs. Jhabvala's novels picture this aspect of women's struggle in India and present the problem in all its intensity. She also points out the disharmonious relationship prevailing between a husband and a wife. Jhabvala never fails to explore the difficulties in arranged marriages and the dowry-problem connected therewith. While presenting these problems as they exist, Jhabvala does only expose the helpless condition of women who strive, beating their wings in the void, to achieve their individuality.
The third chapter, "Cultural Dichotomy" examines Jhabvala's novels which portray the sufferings of women due to cultural conflict. This chapter discusses the difficulties that Jhabvala has faced in getting adjusted to the Indian social life, which inspires her to write about the East-West theme.

Western women, often, come to India, getting married to Indian men. When a marriage within the same culture happens to be incompatible, a marriage between members of different cultures is subjected to much graver problems. Food habits and the way of living intensify the disharmony between the couple. The incompatibility widens the gap between the partners and the ultimate sufferer is, undoubtedly, the woman. Jhabvala's presentation of the problems of women who are caught in inter-cultural-marriages reveals her own condition of adjusting and compromising to Indian culture. She seems to suggest that if a marriage between members of different cultures should not be a failure, it is again the woman who has to suffer and sacrifice.

India has, for long, been claimed to be the land of spirituality, which attracts many western women to this country. They hope to find peace. But in India, as Jhabvala observes, these western women, unknowingly, follow Indian pseudo-gurus and become victims to these false spiritual
leaders. The fourth chapter, "Spiritual Entanglement", studies the sufferings of women in their spiritual quest as found in Jhabvala's later novels. In these novels, her satire becomes bitter and sharp. She attacks the bogus god-men who in the name of spirituality take sexual advantage of these poor victims. Her feminist spirit unveils the beast behind the saffron cloth.

Jhabvala finds, not only in India but also in the international context, how spirituality is abused by pleasure-loving gurus. Her two recent novels, *In Search of Love and Beauty* and *Three Continents*, portray how the expatriate women, in America, who seek spirituality in order to escape their sense of expatriation, are driven to despair by these false gurus. Thus, Jhabvala's discussion of women's problems in the spiritual context moves from a microcosmic to a macrocosmic level, and earns her the status of an international feminist writer.

The final chapter is one of summing-up, stressing all the arguments that have been advanced in the previous chapters. The chapter also highlights some of Jhabvala's technical accomplishments. It emphasizes the relevance of Jhabvala's artistic vision, characterized by her feminist perspective.