CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Feminism spoke to our lived and our literary experience with the fierce urgency of a revelation or a Great Awakening. (Elaine Showalter The New Feminist Criticism 5)

Feminism, as a concept in the sociological and literary studies, is a recent phenomenon. It has been gaining prominence day-by-day. The strong waves of feminism have resulted in various theories regarding the plight of women in the society. Feminism does not belong to one particular field or region. Feminists, wherever they are, try to achieve equality for women. The universal appeal of feminism is well-observed by Arshia Sattar:

Feminism is no longer a single voice that speaks for all women irrespective of creed and colour. It is, rather, a 'rainbow coalition' of rights, desires, agendas, struggles, victories. Not all issues apply to all women, our battles need not be the same and, more and more, we tend to speak for ourselves rather than for all of us. To the untrained ear, the
multiple voices may seem cacophonous, but there is, below the surface, a harmony that holds the many tones together: that we are all sisters, that what I do and what happens to me necessarily affects us all. ("Backlash and Upsurge: The Feminist Multitude" xiii)

Tensions experienced by feminists are those of living in the vortex of man-woman relationship. It assumes different configurations in accordance with different racial, cultural and class variations. Though it poses a battle between the sexes, the battle is being fought only to have a reaffirmation of life, to enhance the living condition of human life. Many social organizations and political parties raise voices and go on processions to express their protest against the suppressed state of women. They work hard to achieve equality for women. Various feminist movements demand a re-orientation of social system and try to reform it. They restrain the male strategies of oppression. Hence, as Sushila Singh observes "the very basis of feminism is reformist" (Feminism and Recent Fiction in English 8). While women's movements engage themselves in various social activities to improve the status of women, women writers present the predicament of women through their writings.
They begin to question the traditional roles of women and try to present how women are engaged in activities that are not traditionally feminine. They often emphasize that they "want a new social order founded on 'humanistic values'" (Cheri Register "Bibliographical Introduction" 20). Their initiation is well-observed by Polly N. Chenoy:

Women were beginning to question their roles, functions, attitudes, and behavior. They decided it was time they unshackled themselves from their bondage to the feminine mystique, and that women be valued as human beings instead of simply as the wives, mothers, daughters and caretakers of men. ("Why Are You Crying We Are Sisters" 165)

While discussing women's issues, women writers reflect, consciously or unconsciously, their own reaction to the problem. The problems and sufferings of women are not only observed but also emotionally felt by women writers. Therefore, women writings, more often, tend to become subjective, emotional and sincere. Women writers have successfully handled the form novel since they find it to be the most convenient form to express their grievances, their inner urges and their hopes. As Ian Watt puts it, "the
feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and was therefore at a real advantage in the realm of the novel" (The Rise of the Novel 57). The same view is echoed by Shirley Foster:

Women, it was argued, wrote best about what they knew best; since as a recent critic has put it, the central, defining preoccupation of the novel is 'the elaboration of an intensely personal experience,' the most obvious female fictional material is the treatment of emotions within a domestic context. (Victorian Women's Fiction 1)

Women writers feel that their prime function is to reform the society and to improve the status of women through writing. Their passion to establish better atmosphere for women in society makes them take the role of the social satirist. They satirize the male-oriented society which engulfs women's identity. They lament over the social derogation of women. They disapporve of the traditional values, customs and ritual practices. For, they feel that these traditional taboos impose unnecessary restriction on women. Their satire is not only directed upon the practices
of traditional values and customs but also the male-dominance in conjugal life. Hence, in their writings, they provide new roles for women, which question the traditional duties and roles of women and establish the fact that women are equal to men in their capacity and capability of doing things and can compete with men. By emphasizing on such traits, they try to establish feminine identity. This becomes true in the case of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, who gives a clarion call for women's emancipation in her writings. In this sense, her works lend themselves to a feminist interpretation.

Feminism, both in creation and in criticism, provides a new perspective in the study of literature. Women's writings are invariably women-centred, discussing the existing status of women and how it ought to be, in order to create an awareness among women. Feminist criticism and scholarship undertake the dual task of deconstructing predominantly male-cultural paradigms and reconstructing a female perspective and experience in an effort to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized women. Thus, feminism with its theories and ideologies becomes a critical tool. It offers a fresh perspective for critical analysis of feminist literature linking the study of literature with
real life contexts. T.N. Singh, in this regard, observes:

The discussion of feminism in literary context, particularly in the context of recent fiction in English should prove an endeavour of a highly innovative nature representing a significant departure from the traditional mode of critical evaluation... we should consider feminism as a fictional strategy forged by writers in accordance with the pressures and challenges to which they have been subject, for projecting a feminist view of life and its problems.... As a critical tool, feminism should aim at providing us an altogether new awareness of the women's role in the modern complex world. ("Feminism and Fiction: Some Reflections" 11)

Any literary theory becomes validated when it is related to life or art experience. Feminist literary theory is no exception. At this context, the discussion of feminism and its theory in relation to literature and literary studies gains much significance.

The influence of the society on feminism and the effect of feminism on the society are reciprocal. This correlation
between cause and effect is the key factor in the sociological approach to the study of a work of art. Feminism rises from a social problem -- the sensitive problem of man-woman relationship -- and aims at offering solutions to the problem. Man-woman relationship is complex. Since feminism fights for the rights of women at various situations, feminism also has various theories and ideologies.

The term, 'feminism' defies a precise definition. For, it has different connotations to different individuals. Generally, it means "the doctrine of equal rights for women, based on the theory of the equality of the sexes" (Richard Evans The Feminists 39). Chaman Nahal defines feminism as "a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome" ("Feminism in English Fiction: Forms and Variations" 17). To a social historian like Linda Gordon, feminism is "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (qtd. in Feminism and Recent Fiction in English 8). But genuine feminism, as Maitreye Chatterjee finds it, "is a movement for human growth through equal rights and opportunities" ("The Impact of the Feminist movement on the Average Women in Calcutta" 101). Hence, feminist thought is a humanistic
thought. The term 'feminist' refers to the conviction that "traditional definitions of women are inadequate and that women suffer injustices because of their sex" (Agate Nesaule Krouse qtd. in Sharon Spencer "Feminist Criticism and Literature" 157). Whereas, the term 'feminine' when applied to literature indicates "the author's preoccupation with intimate human relationships, concern with the emotional aspects of life and with the dynamics of the psychic realm of experience" (Sharon Spencer 157). However, the last definition gains significance because of its relevance to the present study.

The history of feminism is the history of women's emancipation. A comprehensive knowledge of the growth and the development of feminism can be had through a comparative history of feminist movements and their objectives. The origin of feminism goes back to the eighteenth century, the age of reason.

The French Revolution justified the rights of man to establish liberty, fraternity and equality. Though the arguments of French Revolution did not necessarily advocate the rights of women, it was the rationalism of the French Revolution that became very important in the development of feminist ideas. Many writers like Voltaire were sympathetic
towards women and expressed their belief in equal rights for women. Gradually, the campaign for equal rights was started, making the enlightenment emphasis on reason, natural law and equality of rights. But it was Mary Wollstonecraft, influenced by the radical ideas of French Revolution, who was the first to raise voice for women in England through her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She rightly says:

> Make them [women] free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous, as men become more so; for the improvement must be mutual, or the injustice which one half of the human race are obliged to submit to, retorting on their oppressors, the virtue of men will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet. (*A Vindication* 175)

In her work, Mary Wollstonecraft places much emphasis on the power of reason and also shares the concepts of natural rights and freedom for women:

> ... make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives, and mothers; that is -- if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers. (178)
In England the feminist doctrines of the Enlightenment were advocated by a group of radical thinkers. Many were influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft. Olive Banks observes the relevance of her work to the present day:

... it remained an important ingredient in equal rights feminism throughout the whole of the nineteenth century, and has had a profound influence on feminist thinking down to the present day. (Faces of Feminism 29)

The spirit of feminism slowly gathered momentum and it was in the United States that the feminist movement was first organised in the 1840s. Though feminism spread fast in other countries as well, it was with John Stuart Mill's publication of the essay, The Subjection of Women (1869) -- which was considered as the feminist Bible by Richard Evans(18) -- that feminism evolved as a mass movement. Its appearance in many languages establish the basis of the feminist movements in France, Germany, Finland and many other countries. Having stressed on the timelessness of the work, Richard Evans explains Mill's definition of female emancipation as follows:

...'the removal of women's disabilities -- their recognition as the equals of men in all
that belongs to citizenship, the opening to them of all honourable employments and of the training and education which qualifies for those employments', and the removal of the excessive authority which the law gave to husbands over their wives. (20)

Further, Mill has claimed that women should be given freedom to discover the possibilities of their abilities. For he has argued that there are considerable evidences that women's mental and creative powers are equal to men's and therefore, they should be allowed to exercise them, thereby, starting a universal process of emancipating women. Olive Banks observes,

... in John Stuart Mill's famous essay on The Subjection of Women where we find him placing the rights of women as part of a universal process in which the rule of force is replaced by the rule of reason. Furthermore, he draws a direct analogy between the power of the husband and that of the despotic ruler or slave-owner, and sees the female struggle for independence as a continuation of the struggle of the people to be free of the rule of the tyrant. (31)
The economic crisis and the industrialization of society paved the way for demanding the economic independence of women. The growth of industrial society with its bourgeois living standards and social aspirations made men expect rich property before marrying women. And man started treating woman herself as a piece of property. Further, the economic stress during industrialization of society forced middle class women to go out of their home and earn bread for their family. As Richard Evans observes, "The emergent proletariat provided poor girls, driven to prostitution through financial need, for sexual gratification" (24). Men exploited women and infected diseases. The middle class and the working-class women were affected and humiliated. They wanted to redefine their role in the society. It was their dissatisfaction with society that evolved as a kind of a channel turning the feminist movement into a social movement demanding structural changes in the society.

The role of wealth and property in marriage made the married life loveless. The sufferings and tortures inflicted on women in their marital life forced women to bring unorthodox views on marriage and to transform society. They started advocating choice marriage on the basis of true love, which any marriage should admit, and practise it. Their demand to
restructure social and political system got approved of when they justified female suffrage on the basis of equal rights. Since women's problems existed everywhere, the women's movements spread and became powerful. The spirit of feminism got distributed all over the world before the First World War and thus, became a global movement. Richard Evans' list of the rise and the establishment of the movements would help one to have a basic idea of the global distribution of feminist movements:

National Councils were established in Germany 1894, Britain 1895, Sweden and New Zealand 1896, Italy and the Netherlands 1898, Denmark 1899, Switzerland and Argentina 1900, France 1901, Austria 1902, Hungary and Norway 1904, Belgium 1905, Bulgaria and Greece 1908, Serbia 1911, South Africa 1913, Portugal 1914 and the various states of Australia over a period stretching from 1896 to 1911.(250)

Though women's movements were established all over the world, their objectives and ideologies differed from place to place, country to country, period to period, movement to movement, depending on the nature and culture of the people
in the respective places. This difference is well-observed by Juliet Mitchell:

Women in the different countries experience a comparable oppression and the Women's Liberation Movements have comparable aims, but organizationally, and hence to some extent theoretically, they can be quite dissimilar. (Woman's Estate 43)

But these different organizations are professedly revolutionary. Their multifariousness has resulted in different ideologies of feminism and they are broadly categorized as Liberal Feminism, Moderate Feminism and Radical Feminism.

The liberals, with whom feminism originated, believed in the division of labour between the sexes. They accepted the family system as such -- man has to earn the bread for the family and woman has to stay at home and manage the family affairs. But this arrangement was accepted with the condition that both sexes are treated equally. The liberals like Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill demanded equal status for women on the basis of reason in social, legal and political spheres. In short, as Neera Desai and Maithreyi
Liberal feminism argued for equal rights for women but accepted the existing social order as valid and advocated for improvement of social customs, institutions, laws, attitudes, without altering the social structure, particularly the family. (Women and Society in India 14)

Though Mill stressed the need of knowledge and reason for women, he also advocated the socio-economic independence for women. This became one of the primary demands of moderate feminism, which gave a new set of ideologies. Moderate feminists' claim for economic freedom was rooted in the personal independence of women, both in and out of marriage. As Richard Evans enumerates,

The control of married women over their own property and the admission of unmarried women to the professions were therefore the two major initial objectives of moderate feminism, along with the improvement of educational facilities for women... which were becoming increasingly necessary for the
pursuit of a profession or the management of a household.(34)

It was their success when in New York, the Married Woman's Property Bill was passed in 1848. Many schools and colleges were opened for women in the 1850s and 1860s in countries like Britain, America, Sweden and Russia. Women also entered into professions in many countries. In 1857, the pioneer woman physician, Elizabeth Blackwell, founded a hospital in New York exclusively staffed by women. By 1880, women started practising law. Having achieved their primary demands and become progressively more independent, moderate feminism turned to new objectives and concentrated on moral reforms. They opposed the double standards of the society which encouraged alcoholic and sexual licence to men. Further, as Richard Evans observes,

The legal age for marriage was to be raised from fifteen to a higher age, and married as well as unmarried women were to attain majority at the age of twenty-one and to hold property in their own right. Unfaithfulness, ill-treatment or extreme drunkenness were to constitute legal grounds for divorce. (87)
Many moral reform organizations were started. In 1869, the English social reformer, Josephine Butler appealed to the feminists all over the world to oppose the regulated prostitution. Thus, moderate feminism covered a wider area of feminist activities.

Mere legal rights do not guarantee equality for women. Women must be made aware of their rights. Sociological atmosphere must be made conducive to this effect. In many countries, women were denied the fundamental democratic right to vote. Therefore, enfranchisement became the chief claim of the radical feminism. The radical feminists underscored the nature of injustice: "drunken or criminal men possessed the vote, while virtuous women did not" (Evans 37). For them the right to vote is more a symbol of liberation than a democratic system. Owing to their continuous efforts, women in the United States and Britain were allowed to exercise their franchise.

Having achieved their political rights and entered into politics, the radical feminists, today aim at destroying the system of patriarchy. The radical feminists like Kate Millet, Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Ellen Frankfort aim at the destruction of patriarchy. As Neera Desai and
The overthrow of male dominance requires a complete sexual revolution which would destroy traditional sex taboos; through consciousness raising, women should be made aware of this dominance, solidarity among the women be developed and women should be self-reliant so that they are not dependent on men in any sense. (15-16)

Radical feminism has evinced a deep concern for the issue of female sexuality and for male violence towards women, expressed in such issues as rape. Hence, they advocate separatism and sexual freedom and want to replace heterosexual love with celibacy or with lesbianism. Thus radical feminism entertains hostility towards man. While liberal feminists accept the existing family system, the radicals reject it.

Feminism, with all its complexities and variations, has become a universal phenomenon. When it gets reflected in literature, it is, as Evans puts it, termed as literary feminism. One can list any number of works down the centuries which dominate in the presentation of the female principle. One can cite Henrik Ibsen and Bernard Shaw as
examples of literary feminists. Feminism, when it gets reflected through literature, excels in effect, for, literature teaches through historical facts and moral precepts. For instance, critics' assertion that Nora's slamming of the door at the end of the play still reverberates all through Europe, proves Harry Levin's observation of the relationship between literature and society:

... the relations between literature and society are reciprocal. Literature is not only the effect of social causes; it is also the cause of social effects. (qtd. in *Five Approaches* 126)

Gradually, the works of literature got interpreted from a female perspective. The works of Shakespeare, Shaw, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy and the like were re-read from a female point of view. But it is from the 1960's that feminist studies became very influential. The focus of feminist studies was, then, centered exclusively on women writers for multipurposes. At one level, they try to trace the literary history of women writers that have been obscured the patriarchal values of the male-culture. And at another level, while studying
such works of women, they endeavour to bring about an awareness among the women folk about their existing social status. Therefore many women writers of the past are rediscovered and re-read. They are explored for their personal relationship with literary tradition and the social problems. Elaine Showalter rightly observes,

It is in the writing of women, moreover, that we find the fullest expression of the problematic of a feminist criticism: how to combine the theoretical and the personal. Feminist criticism reveals in its own history and form many of the patterns of influence and rebellion that mark the female literary tradition as a whole. Here too women writers searched for a language of their own, a style, a voice, and a structure with which they could enter a discipline previously dominated by men.(4)

This specific study of feminist literature evolves as a special kind of genre -- feminist studies or women studies, which is activated through special journals like Signs, Feminist studies, Feminist Review, Women Studies and the like. In modern literature, women writers like Virginia
Woolf, Edith Wharton, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Margaret Laurence are studied with much involvement. Thus feminist studies get well-established and have become a force to reckon with.

In India, women's rights were claimed by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Ranade, Karve and the like. They protested against the practice of Sati -- the practice of burning women alive on her dead husband's pyre. They also attacked child marriage. Owing to their tireless efforts the practice of Sati was abolished.

Many women's organizations were started with a view to improving the status of women. However, women's protests emerged as a movement only in the early decades of this century. During the struggle for freedom women's issues were not pressed on much. But after independence in India feminist movement grew to a greater stature. As Neera Desai and Maithreyi observe

In India... the women's movement emerged in the 1920s and lasted for twenty years. With independence a sort of apathy and quietness prevailed for nearly three decades, and in the
In India, suppression of women has continued down the ages. With the advent of Independence, law sanctions equal rights and protection for women. But in practice, the condition of women has not improved. Hence, in the post-Independence India, feminism has made its powerful revival and re-entry. Despite its western influence, feminism in India has chiefly evolved out of the contradictions of the Indian socio-economic-political-cultural system and its systematic denigration of the woman. For instance, at one level women are worshipped as Goddess khali or shakti and at another they are treated as mere commodity. In prostitution, law punishes only women and allows men to escape. Further, women suffer from masculine brutality in the form of foeticide, female infanticide, incest, rape, domestic violence, dowry harassment, dowry deaths, etc. It is against this background that Feminism has emerged in India to analyse the condition of women and to secure a place and a position equal to men in the society.

Marriages in India are mostly arranged by parents and hence institutionalised. The arranged marriage in which a stranger marries another stranger may prove to be loveless. But the
system of marriage as institution forces women to perform stoic endurance in order to keep up marital bond. Women are asked to sacrifice, to compromise and to adjust with men. For, they are psychologically programmed not to break marriages but to live with conflicts and contradictions. Freedom and individuality are denied. Hence, in India, feminism has come to question stoic endurance. Any rational move against arranged marriage is condemned. Choice marriage is considered as a violation of social order and peace. Therefore, women's studies are undertaken in India, as in the West, to create an awareness among women about their state, capacities and abilities. Suma Chitnis finds:

The Indian problem really lies in the fact that women do not make proper use of existing legal and political rights and facilities. There are several reasons for this. The mass of Indian men and women are not yet fully aware of their new rights and opportunities. ("Feminism: Indian Ethos and Indian Convictions" 89)

Since 1970s in India also feminist studies have been activated through various journals which are published in different Indian languages. Indian English Literature is probed from a female perspective. As Neera Desai and
Maithreyi observe,

... the perspectives developed in the West are not absolutely relevant to Indian conditions. The necessity to find out which concepts are applicable, and when and how newer perspectives have to be developed, provides a good justification for developing more researches in the theoretical areas. (18)

Indian feminists study western feminism and its objectives and try to arrive at a new set of ideologies from the conglomeration of western perspectives.

Most recently, Vandana Shiva in collaboration with Maria Mies has published a book, entitled *Ecofeminism* which enumerates a new set of ideologies with universal relevance. Ecofeminism as a perspective stresses the need for a new cosmology. It rejects the notion of dominance in any sense and advocates mutual love and care. While reviewing the book, Namita UnnIKrishnan observes its objectives:

Ecofeminism strives towards the establishment of a completely new set of relationships between man and nature and women and men and negates the whole gamut of relationships based
on dominance. It also sees the need for men to redefine themselves and give up their involvement in 'destructive commodity production'.

Ecofeminism calls for a sensitive appraisal of woman in relation to her survival base, which she has struggled to defend and in doing so come up against a dominant ideology which seeks to tear her from her roots and, in the name of science and modernity, wreaks havoc with the source of all human survival -- nature. ("Voice of those silenced" xviii)

Thus, Ecofeminism endeavours to enhance living on an equal ground -- on the basis of mutual love and understanding. Feminists all over the globe hold the same view. Their aim is to promote realization on the part of women and this point is well-stressed by Shantha Krishnaswamy:

... by the realization they give to women -- that they need not compete with anyone, that all they have to do is to march hand in hand with man and go forward as equal partners, sharing experiences and aspirations. (The Woman in Indian Fiction in English 364)
In India, women writers began to occupy the sensitive centre only in Post-Independence Indian English Literature. The theme of the women novelists of this period is invariably the Indian women -- the new women -- as she emerges in the fast changing society. The Post-Independence women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Shashi Deshpande have contributed a new dimension -- a new feminist perspective -- to Indian English Fiction by presenting women's predicament from various angles.

Kamala Markandaya responds to the economic crisis of women in India during the post-Independence period. She also presents women suffering from the conflicts between traditional restrictions and modern aspirations. Her novels reflect the predicament of women who are caught in cultural conflicts due to their inter-cultural marriages -- a post-independence phenomenon. Mostly, her novels bear witness to the sufferings of women and their stoic endurance and passivity. Rukmani in *A Nector in a Sieve*, Vasantha in *The Nowhere Man*, Jayamma in *A Handful of Rice* and Premala in *Some Inner Fury* are all dutiful, patient and submissive women.
On the other hand, Nayantara Sahgal's women are no longer passive, they are self-assertive and independent in nature. The protagonists, Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* and Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* reject the idea of the permanence of marriage, when their husbands fail to care for their feelings and look upon them as mere sexual objects. In order to assert their individualities, they seek divorce and evolve as new women.

Anita Desai views the women's problem from a psychological perspective. She excels in portraying the disturbed or tortured psyche of her women characters. They prefer a life of loneliness which is well-brought out in her novels, *Cry, the Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*. Most of her women characters are too sensitive to cope with the dehumanised urban world and find it difficult to survive with obsessed ideas. And finally they commit suicide or get murdered as in the case of Monisha in *Voices in the City* and Ila Das in *Fire on the Mountain*. The theme of conflict between tradition and modernity, East and West is also found in her novels.

Shashi Deshpande views the problems of women from a sociological perspective. In fact, she attacks the institutionalised system of marriage and affirms that all
marriages are misalliances. In her novels, she deals with the problems that women confront in the joint family system. She presents the struggles of women for their basic rights—as to education, to go out for a job, to decide whether to have a child or not and so on. Deshpande only voices the silent cries of these women. The titles of her novels themselves reveal the intensity of the problem: *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *That Long Silence*, *Roots and Shadows*, and the like.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the subject of the present study is a unique writer with the combination of the cultures of the East and the West. This characteristic of her life has influenced many critics to successfully establish the cultural confrontation as the predominant theme in her writings. But they have failed to see that she is primarily a woman writer who is exploring the unexplored area of the woman question with her female consciousness both in Indian and international contexts. Her mixed background—a German by birth, a British by education and an Indian by marriage—has enabled her to present the problems of women from a universal perspective, and also from different perspectives—socio-economic, cultural and spiritual perspectives. Her universal presentation of the crisis of women merits careful
study. At this juncture, a brief outline of her life, education and experience is needed for a better understanding of her works.

Ruth Prawer, the only daughter of Marcus Prawer and Eleonora Prawer, was born on May 7th, 1927, in the city of Cologne, in Germany. Her mother was a German Jew and her father, a Polish Jew who had arrived in Germany during the First World War. Ruth and her elder brother Siegbart Salomon Prawer had their elementary education in a Jewish school. Her family migrated to England when she was twelve. Ruth Prawer continued her secondary school education and college education in London. She took her M.A. degree in English Literature at Queen Mary College, London University. Ruth Prawer met Cyrus S.H. Jhabvala, an Indian student of architecture in London University and they got married on June 16th, 1951. Then she moved to India and settled in New Delhi. Three daughters were born to them in India and Ruth Jhabvala stayed in India for twenty-five years. In 1975, she migrated to New York and has settled there.

The art of writing comes to her, as she says, "as naturally as breathing" (Ramlal Agarwal "An Interview with Jhabvala" 111). Even as a child, Ruth Prawer wrote fiction in German,
but mostly it remained unpublished. She continued the process of writing all through her life, though shortly afterwards she shifted the medium from German to English. As she admits,

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. ("An Interview with Jhabvala" 111)

Therefore, the transition to India did not suppress her thirst for writing, rather as she feels, she had profited by moving to India:

As a writer I consider myself exceedingly fortunate to have come here [India] when I did and the way I did. ("An Interview with Jhabvala" 116)

Ruth Jhabvala's commitment to writing, thus, is guided by her natural instinct. Further, her study of literature at London university has developed her interest in the art of writing. Her M.A. thesis, "The Short Story in England, 1700-1750" has helped her to become a successful writer by providing her with a knowledge of the forms -- short story
and fiction. Moreover, she is also influenced by the great literary predecessors from Shakespeare to Forster. Of all, she has benefited much from her readings of Jane Austen, Chekhov, Kipling and Forster. However, the influence of Forster is predominant in her works. She happens to settle in India after her marriage to an Indian and Forster's work has become a model for her to depict India. Most of her works bear witness to the influence of Forster on her in their thematic and technical aspects. Her works echo Forsterian characterization and Chekhovian style. In delineating the themes of love, courtship and marriage Ruth Jhabvala's novels share some of the common traits with Jane Austen's as well.

Ruth Jhabvala presents Indian society from first-hand experience. She used to "go out more and meet people and learn what is going on... then the only thing to do is to try and push that aspect of India out of sight and turn to others" ("Myself in India" 10-11). She is at once an outsider and an insider who sees everything. What is normally hidden from the prying eyes of the outsider does not escape from her. She observes the deeply flawed Indian society which suppresses women's fundamental human rights and desires. She examines the problems of young women in
Indian society who are subdued by traditional values. As an outsider in India, Jhabvala also probes the state of western women living in India, like herself, who suffer from cultural tension. She observes how inter-cultural marriages lack compatibility. She also finds many western women coming to India in their spiritual quest and becoming victims to false spiritual leaders. Thus, Ruth Jhabvala views the problems of women from various perspectives -- social, cultural and spiritual.

Ruth Jhabvala's writings are grouped under different phases for the relevance of the thematic study of her novels and also to trace the different stages of her attitude towards India. Her writing career falls into three phases. In the first phase, she writes novels depicting women in Indian society. In the second, she discusses the condition of women caught in cultural conflict. And in the third, she presents the victimization of women in their spiritual quest both in the Indian and international contexts.

The first phase includes To Whom She Will (1955), The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960), Get Ready For Battle (1962). In her first two novels Ruth Jhabvala deals with the theme of tradition versus modernity, where
restrictions are imposed upon the younger generation by the older generation. She depicts how the desires of young aspiring girls like Amirta and Nimmi are subdued by their tradition-oriented family members.

In *The Householder*, she presents a middle class family with all its domestic problems. She deals with the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law in the Indian context. In this novel she advocates that man should not view woman as a cook or an obedient servant and that man should recognize his wife as a human being and should treat her as an equal to him.

*Get Ready For Battle* portrays the story of Sarla Devi who renounces family life for her social work and sacrifices her status as wife for a widow, Kusum.

Her second phase comprises *Esmond in India* (1958), *A Backward Place* (1965), and *Heat and Dust* (1975). In *Esmond in India* Ruth Jhabvala portrays the Indian girl, Gulab falling a victim to the illusion of western culture by marrying Esmond, an English man. In this novel she presents how the couple belonging to different cultures find it hard to cope with each other. Ultimately, it is the woman who becomes the sufferer and the exploited.
A Backward Place proves to be a variation of the theme dealt with in *Esmond in India*. Here, Ruth Jhabvala exchanges the partners and their cultures -- Judy as a western girl and Bal as an Indian. But the problem of the women remains the same. This only proves that Ruth Jhabvala tries to analyse the cultural problem of women from a different angle.

*Heat and Dust*, which is considered as her magnum opus and for which she is awarded the Booker Prize, also revolves around a similar problem of women. Her effective use of the technique of parallelism brings out the identical state of sufferings between two women -- Olivia and the narrator-heroine both belonging to different times. In this novel, she also attacks the cruel practice of abortion prevailing in the Indian rural areas.

The later novels -- *A New Dominion* (1972), *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983) and *Three Continents* (1987) -- constitute the third phase of her literary career. In *A New Dominion* Ruth Jhabvala satirizes the sexual exploitation of false spiritual leaders in the name of religion. The western girls -- Lee, Evie and Margaret who seek Indian spirituality in order to escape from the material west become victims to pseudo-gurus. In this novel Jhabvala's satire on pseudo-spirituality becomes very sharp.
In Search of Love and Beauty discusses the same issue, but it is done in the international context. In this novel, Ruth Jhabvala evolves as an "international novelist" (Walsh Indian Literature in English 106), as she shifts her stay from India to New York as well as the setting of her novels from India to America. In a way she crosses the regional barrier, hence, as Haydn Moore Williams observes,

Like V.S.Naipaul she became an international writer ("A Retrospective Look at Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Career as a Novelist: The Indian Novels" 2)

In Search of Love and Beauty studies the expatriate women, Louise, Regi and Marietta, who seek spirituality in order to escape from their sense of displacement, but are only further driven to despair by Leo Kellermann, the exploiter and the pseudo-spiritual leader.

In her most recent novel, Three Continents, Ruth Jhabvala presents the story of a young expatriate girl, Harriet who innocently falls a prey to the money-minded spiritual follower, Crishi. The novel also depicts the sufferings of Harriet due to the disintegration of her parents. The novel portrays the action that sweeps through three continents --
America, Europe and India -- to signify the interaction of the spiritual movement within the three cultures.

The three different phases reflect Ruth Jhabvala's life. As Yasmine Gooneratne observes, "her fiction reflects her personal life" (Silence, Exile and Cunning 11). She wrote novels about India, when she was attracted towards India. Initially as she admits,

"I was enraptured. I felt I understood India so well. I loved everything."

("A Novelist of India Reflects Two Worlds" 31)

Accordingly, the novels of her early phase reflect her optimistic outlook and her acceptance of India. She wrote everything as she observed in India. But after a few years of her stay in India, she was disillusioned and trapped in a cultural conflict. She found herself "a displaced person" ("An Interview with Jhabvala" 116). Yet she was tolerant towards the Indian milieu. Hence, the second phase of her writing is preoccupied with a cultural conflict as portrayed in Esmond in India and a cultural compromise as in A Backward Place. Many critics feel that Judy in A Backward Place is cast out in her own persona. The third phase reflects her migration to New York, where she has observed
women suffering from expatriate sensibility and from exploitation in their spiritual quest. In this phase, Jhabvala, as a matured artist, intellectualizes the problems of women. Her attitude becomes harsh while delineating the predicament of women caught in spiritual entanglement. She becomes impatient towards the harassments by the Swamijis both in India and abroad. This phase also bears witness to the fact that young western girls became victims to false gurus in the 1960's as observed by Ruth Jhabvala:

I was living in the 60's when India was a focus for everyone striving for higher principles. I used to see these idealistic Americans and Europeans attaching themselves to someone and usually coming to a bad end. People came with high ideals and then these materialistic, so-called spiritual leaders pulled them down for their own ends. (qtd. in Jane Perlez "High Ideals, Bad Ends" 3)

Thus, her fiction reflects her own experience and life. The fact remains that the autobiographical element reaches artistic heights.

Added to these ten novels, she has also five short story collections and nearly a dozen of film scripts to the credit.
of her writing career. Her short story collections are: 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), and Out of India: Selected Short Stories (1986). Her short stories make a satirical study of the state of Indian as well as Western women. As Jasper Rees observes,

Her stories are mainly about Indian women struggling for emancipation, or European women renouncing Western materialism and 'seeking something outside of themselves and their daily preoccupations'.("Becoming other"434)

She presents the helplessness and the sufferings of widows in the Indian society in "The Widow" and "A Loss of Faith". Her collection A Stronger Climate categorizes the state of western women as "Seekers" of Indian spiritual truth and "Sufferers" because of their displaced life. Her stories like "The Aliens", "Young Couple" depict the predicament of western woman trapped in the Indian joint family system. In "An Experience of India", "How I Became a Holy Mother" and "A Spiritual Call", Jhabvala portrays the western women's spiritual experience of India. Some of her short stories are later developed into novels. For instance, "A Spiritual call" is developed into A New Dominion and "In the
Mountains" has many links with Heat and Dust in the theme of self-chosen isolation.


Ruth Jhabvala has a closer affinity for the three literary forms -- novel, short story and screenplay during the period from 1960 to 1981. Like some of her short stories which are developed into novels, some of her novels are adopted to the film-making. The novels, The Householder and Heat and Dust are filmed. Ruth Jhabvala's involvement with the filmworld has enriched her technical accomplishments in the novel. It introduces her to the use of cinematic techniques like flashback and subjective camera technique. She is also benefited from the filmworld in moulding her characters. In addition to the film techniques, Jhabvala's novels exploit such techniques as parallelism, symbolism and irony.

Most of the scholarly critical articles published in literary journals try to analyse Ruth Jhabvala's expatriate sensibility. Some articles describe Jhabvala as an inside-outsider and as an outside-insider. Critics like Nissim Ezekiel, study the cross-cultural encounter and tension in Jhabvala's fiction. And a few other articles concentrate on Jhabvala's technical achievements and study the influence of Forster on Jhabvala. Writers like Shantha Krishnaswamy and Meena Shirwadkar include Jhabvala's fiction while they study the image of women presented in Indian English Literature.
Though critics so far have analysed, in addition to other themes, Jhabvala's presentation of women in her fiction, they have not discussed it from a feminist perspective. This thesis attempts to study Jhabvala's fiction from a female point of view, since there is no work done exclusively on this issue. As a woman, Ruth Jhabvala feels for the sufferings of her fellow women and that is revealed through her works.

A study of Jhabvala's works from the feminist point of view helps one to analyse her works in the right perspective. Social satire -- from a feminist perspective is what exactly is the achievement of Jhabvala. If all her works are studied from this standpoint, one can identify a steady growth in her as an artist as well -- from a young sensitive sociological writer into a mature artist.

As a feminist, she emphatically analyses the predicament of women in social, cultural and spiritual contexts. Her novels lend themselves to a study of women's issues. As Laurie Sucher observes, Jhabvala's writings offer,

... a fascinating study of women's isolation and alienation in a male-centred society; indeed, Ruth Jhabvala's chosen settings are
often aggressively dominated by a charismatic male: the ashram, or the psycho-spiritual centre. (The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: The Politics of Passion 12)

Paul Sharrad also stresses this dominant aspect of Jhabvala's works:

Jhabvala's feminism is an issue which will be as hotly debated, no doubt, as her attitude towards India itself. But I think it is a major element in her fiction. ("Passing Moments" 48).

Her female consciousness gets revealed when she portrays the helplessness of women in the society. The following chapter discusses Jhabvala's early novels that present social oppression of women prevailing in the Indian milieu.