



Study on the mastic Concerns in the Novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala

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Abstract: The present feminine novelists have advanced their style which expresses women's awareness. Each novelist is different from the other. Every novelist has her own expectations of experiences, her perspective of analyzing the things, and her narration of the persona is different. But there is one point similar in them. They focus on a deep sense of enlightening social change. The works of the Indian women novelist like Kamala Das, Shobhaa De, Anita Nair, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Sahoo, Nabaneeta Dev Sen, etc. can be compared with the present Canadian novelists, like Marie-Claire Blais, Bonnie Burnard, Heather O'Neill and Lisa Moore. All these authors write of women's life and life of affecting women.

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Introduction: Among the first-generation women novelists, Kamala Markandaya is a remarkable novelist in India. Her achievement lies both in respect of her sensible handling of cross-cultural issues and her authentic portrayal of the Indian cultural background. Her works revolve around themes like East-West encounter, disagreement between tradition and modernity as well as clash of values. Her only novel to have been published after 1980 is *Pleasure City* (1982) which is also much akin to some of her earlier works. She attends on issues like East-West contact through the characters of Tully and Rikki. Her concerns about the disturbing impact of the Western influence on the economic, social and cultural life of India are evident in this novel. Her strong dedication towards upholding the human values and moral strength is achieved by her in the novel, *Pleasure City*. The next women novelist to be analyzed is Nayantara Sahgal who is a blood relative of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nayantara Sahgal's achievement as a novelist is quite impressive. She has published four novels after 1980, *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans for Departure* (1986), *Mistaken Identity* (1988) and *Lesser Breeds* (2003). Her present works along with her earlier novels places her among the top-ranking craftsmen like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand. Nayantara Sahgal has become a significant writer in the realm of Indian English Fiction. Her association with Nehru family gave the awareness about the social and political situations that prevailed in the country. Her corpus of work provides us the insight into her preoccupation

with politics along with constant examination of marital problems. Anita Desai is one of the significant novelists among the twentieth century Indian English novelists. Her works like *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting Feasting* (1999) and *The Zig Zag Way* (2004), which appeared after 1980, give a clear understanding of her broadened composition. In her earlier novels, her themes varied from domestic disharmony in traditional Indian families to the image of suffering women in the patriarchal society, where as in her later novels one can find a distinct shift in her themes. She is equally successful in writing about male psyche, portrayal of the trauma and suffering of Indians settled abroad, self-exile and spirituality, gender discrimination etc.

Sri Aurobindo (1872 - 1950) was one of the most remarkable writers of 19th Century. He holds a strong and distinct position with the notable writers like George Moore, Lawrence Binyon and W.B. Yeats. He acquired a complete command over the different languages like English, Latin, French, Sanskrit, Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati. His taught poetry and politics. He studied Western philosophy and literature at an early age and was well acquainted with Plato and Aristotle. He was deeply influenced by Hegel, Whitehead and Bergson. His philosophy was an assimilation of Eastern and Western philosophies with new synthetic, comprehensive vision of reality known as Advaitism. He observed: It is a greater reason, a

greater logic because it is vaster, subtle, complex in its operations: it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize, it deduces from them results which neither our deduction nor induction can anticipate, because our conclusions and inferences have a meagre foundation and are fallible and brittle. (298)

Radhika Jha is a woman who chiefly analyses and presents her perspectives on culture, atmosphere and economy. Her famous novel is *Smell* (1999). She has also written for the magazines like *The Hindustan Times* and *Business world*. The protagonist of the novel, *Smell* is obsessed with a feeling that she emits obnoxious, dark and musty smell which repels those who want to come near her. Sagarika Ghose, an author and a journalist has written three novels, *The Gin Drinkers* (1998), *Blind Faith* (2006) and *Face the Nation*. Jai Nimbkar has published only one novel, *Come Rain* (1993) after 1980, which narrates the hardships faced by an Indian, when the couple returns to India. Novelists like Sohaila Abdulali, Belinder Dhanao have presented the regional diversities in their novels. Advaita Kala has written *Almost Single* in 2007, 18 which is a witty picture of an independent Indian woman working in a metropolitan city.

Ruth Praver Jhabwala: Status of Novels

Ruth Praver Jhabwala is one of the renowned women novelists of India. She belongs to a group of fiction-writers who could neither accept the country and its ways as her own nor get over her complicated, complex relationship with it. She visited and revisited India nostalgically in her fiction but written in America. Ruth Praver Jhabwala was born on May 7, 1927 in Cologne, Germany to Jewish/Polish parents. Jhabwala and her family moved for England in 1939, where they survived the constant bombing of the city by German war planes. Their lives soon darkened with sorrow when her father, saddened by the death of many of his relatives in the concentration camps, committed suicide in 1948. Jhabwala was a student of Queen Mary's College in London, when her father passed away. In the same year, she met an Indian student, Cyrus Jhabwala, at a party. Ruth Praver and architect Cyrus Jhabwala courted over long-distance and were married in 1951, after Ruth got her Master's degree in English literature. The new bride relocated to New Delhi with her husband. Her first impression of India was that it was the most wonderful place she had ever been to in her life. India seemed to her an exotic land with parrots and the dazzling blue sky. She only saw the India as a travelogue.

Jhabwala's literary career can be divided into three phases. In the first phase of her writing career, she has written some five novels and short story collections in the USA, *To Whom She Will* was published in 1955. It was the debut novel by Jhabwala. Jhabwala's satirical glance at the mores of middle-class Indians was very much appreciated by the critics and the readers. The success of *Amrita* paved the way for other discriminating novels and short stories with an Indian theme. *The Nature of Prison* was a novel written with a model based on the style of Jane Austen who was an eighteenth-century Novelist. In this novel Jhabwala writes from an insider's perspective, about joint-family system, about arranged marriages and the conflicts which arise between a modern Westernized youth and a much orthodox and older generation. But, after a trip back to Europe in 1960, she began to lose her enthusiasm for India. Following two more skillful domestic novels, *Esmond in India* (1958) and *The Householder* (1960), Jhabwala's vision of India took a different and a darker turn in *Get Ready for Get Ready for Battle* (1962) where, is the last of her novels to deal chiefly with Indian characters, she confronts India's overwhelming social problems. This novel, and the collection of stories which followed it, *Like Birds, Like Fishes* (1963), marks the end of the first phase of Jhabwala's fiction writing.

Jhabwala published *Heat and Dust* which remains till date her best known work. This work was adapted by the author for film. Not only a popular success, the book has also received a high critical acclaim too and won the Booker Prize for fiction. In twenty years of her life in India, Jhabwala began to feel suffocated and alienated in India: She could try to assimilate, wearing tricky saris and trying to walk in low-heeled Indian sandals, but boys still called her names in the street. For all her efforts, she was still as awkwardly conspicuous as those pallid, withered Westerners who came to India to find spiritual peace and caught dysentery instead. The country, she concluded, was too strong for her. After 20 years she found herself barely surviving it, shutting the windows and pulling down the blinds against the stifling poverty and misery outside. (Ruth, economist. com. web)

Jhabwala moved to a New York City apartment in 1975. Her husband remained in India but frequently visited her in New York: "She felt at home there, she said - more at home than anywhere else she had ever lived, finding many people like herself: "refugees, outsiders, interesting American discontents" (Ivory, entertainment. time. com). In the United States, Jhabwala did not lack challenging work opportunities. As a collaborator with the producers Ismail Merchant and Director James Ivory, she produced scripts on an

average of almost one per year till 1990s. The Merchant-Ivory Productions achieved fame as a producer of period dramas based on India as scripted by Jhabvala during this time. She also continued to produce novels and short story volumes till the end of her life. In *Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), *Three Continents* (1987), *Shards of Memory* (1995) and *East into Upper East: Plain Tales From New York and New Delhi* (1998) portray the lives of immigrants from post-Nazi and PostWorld War Europe. *My Nine Lives: Chapters of a Possible Past* (2005) is described by Jhabvala as her most autobiographical fiction to date. In every story she imagines the different paths her life might have taken but the end of all is a sense of loneliness desolation and exile.

Jhabvala's other films with Merchant Ivory include *Roseland* (1977), *Hullabaloo over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures* (1978), *The Europeans* (1979), *Jane Austen in Manhattan* (1980), *Quartet* (1981), *The Courtesans of Bombay* (1983), *The Bostonians* (1984), *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge* (1990), *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries* (1998), *The Golden Bowl* (2000) and *The City of Your Final Destination* (2009) and *Le Divorce* which she co-authored with James Ivory. She also wrote the screenplay for *Madame Sousatzka* (1988) but it was produced by another company. Though there are many critical perspectives and opinion about the Merchant Ivory films, one cannot deny the success of the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala partnership. In fact, they are the long-lasting filmmaking team ever. Critics have pointed out that Jhabvala's intuitive creativity as a master story teller was one of the foremost reasons for this success. Others have adapted classics but the secret of Jhabvala's scripting was that she never was afraid of changing and recreate. Jhabvala's literary perspective has often been described as that of an insider outsider as well as an outsider-insider. Jhabvala is looked upon as an "Outsider-insider" in the European point of view whereas She is an 'insider-outsider' in the Indian artistic point of view. She also has something in common with writers such as R.K Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, who write in English, though English is not their mother tongue. The problem of communicating a native sensibility in an alien language is aptly summed up by Raja Rao in his foreword to *Kanthapura*. "One has to convey the various shades and omission of certain thought-movements that looks maltreated in an alien 24 language" (postcolonial.org). Jhabvala's situation was even more complicated because she had to use a language not her own and had to write about people and culture not her own. The readers may think that Jhabvala is an Indian writer as she had stayed and lived her twenty years of life with her husband in India. But

in an interview with Ramlal Agarwal, when asked if she would like to be considered an Indian writer, she answered that she was not an Indian writer. She feels there is no escaping from the fact that she writes differently from Indian writers because her background and traditions were far different. If she must be considered anything, then it must be as one of those European writers who, having lived in India, had given the experience of life and society in India an artistic expression. Elsewhere she has said that she had had the privilege to be in a position from where she had quite a good view of both sides. Her work was an attempt to "present India to myself, in the hope of so giving myself some kind of foothold..." (King, guardian.co.uk. Web).

Jhabvala is credited and meritorious to have a vision and thought as an Indian. For it allows her to be ruthlessly critical of both traditional and modern India without incurring the wrath of the natives attached to a hostile and uninformed outsider. To use a worn out 'cliché' she may be European by birth, but at the end of the day, she was an Indian 'bahu'. Her European irony along with an insider's knowledge of detail and nuances are seen at playing in her fiction. This unique combination makes her fiction a delight to read. As a writer, she is not highly critical in exposing her opinions about India and Indians. Rather she deals effectively with the Europeans and their pretensions. The English man or woman trying to settle down in India is a standard figure in modern Indian fiction. The process of adjusting to a foreign rhythm of life, of living through 25 estrangement, alienation and misunderstanding is painful because of the pretensions and misconceptions they harbour. Jhabvala looks at these peculiarities with amused ironic tolerance to add another dimension to her social comedy of manners. In "After the Raj", David Rubin opines that Jhabvala should not be considered an Indian writer. Jhabvala's marriage to an Indian and the setting of her novels with Indian and Western characters lead critics to consider her an Indian. But similar circumstances had not led Kamala Markandaya to be considered as British. The circumstance becomes even more complex owing to Jhabvala's leaving for the United States. The final answer to this problem lies in Jhabvala's sense of her own identity and she has unequivocally clarified that "No country was truly hers. She never took root anywhere, but kept her trunks ready and her ornaments few, ready to move on" (Ruth, economist.com. Web). Perhaps this is why her fictional world is populated by exiles who had lost all sense of national distinctiveness. Jhabvala could be considered as a writer belonging to the tradition of the European-Indian writers who, for the most part, regarded India with the critical and often superior outlook of an

outsider. For a genuine comprehension of the significance of her work, its virtues, and its failings we need to take into consideration her frustrations and cynicism expressed in *Myself in India*. For it is this cynicism which spills over in her novels as bleakness in the future of all her European characters. Bhupal Singh has made a study on the uniformity of themes in the literary works of the well-known Anglo-Indian novelists like Edward Thompson, Flora, Annie Steel and Maud Diver in his "A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction."

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Conclusion:

Jhabvala focuses on love, marriage and sex in all her novels as they are the fundamental basis of human life. In *To Whom She Will*, Amrita's love for Hari borders on tragic dimensions. In *Esmond in India*, Esmond loves Gulab and marries her and however he seduces Shakuntala thinking that Betty is in his arms. In *Get Ready for Get Ready for Battle*, Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi are at the different levels. They live a married life full of dissonance and disturbance. However, Gulzari Lal desires divorce from Sarla Devi to marry Kusum. Vishnu and Mala also lead a life of disagreement, frustration and tension. *A Backward Place* deals with a failed marriage. Etta has had a failed marriage. She has had three marriages and all of them are failures. But Judy's marriage to Bal is a healthy one. In *A New Dominion*, the odd mixture of the sexuality and the spirituality does not exist only between Swamiji and the three Western women disciples but also hinted at in the relationship between Banubai and Gopi. In *Heat and Dust*, it is between Olivia and the Nawab.

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