

RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA:
FROM ENTHUSIASM TO
DISILLUSIONMENT

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *The Householder* received a lukewarm response as both novel and film, but her *Heat and Dust* enjoyed immense popularity both as novel and as film in the art circles. Although the two works are separated by several years both have features characteristic of Jhabvala's writing, her humor, her subtlety, her unfailing sarcasm, and a number of other literary techniques that show her growth over the years.

This study on Jhabvala is divided into two parts. The first part tries to examine closely the two novels: *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust*. In my chapter on *The Householder* I deal with themes that depict the manner in which she paints her characters that are very often governed by their social strata, her treatment of extended Indian families, and the East-West encounter.

In my chapter on *Heat and Dust* I trace how Jhabvala's vision has changed over the period of years, and how she has grown as a writer, and written a novel spanning two continents using novel techniques which she learned while observing another artistic medium, that of film making, from close quarters. Although this section also looks at the themes mentioned in the chapter above, it mainly looks at her world of characters who are no longer the simple middle-class people of India like they used to be in her earlier

novels, but also people who comprise the Indian royal families, before and after India gained its independence. Besides examining the lives of the British officers posted in India, this study also looks at her various writing techniques followed by how she deals with the treatment of some of the religious and spiritual customs in India.

All in all the thesis traces how Jhabvala's picture of India goes from enthusiasm to disillusionment. While the novel *The Householder* is an attempt at drawing a balance between the comic and the tragic, the novel *Heat and Dust* borders more on the tragic fate of its two protagonists. The thesis looks at how Jhabvala captures a society that houses unheroic people such as Prem and Indu beside the heroic ones such as Olivia and the narrator of *Heat and Dust*. It studies people through their situations in a country that is undergoing a transition, and differentiates people who welcome change gladly from the ones who are not only averse to it but are also unable to cope with it. Finally, this study tries to see how faithful Jhabvala is in writing about her impressions of India. Although she writes mainly about Indian people and Indian settings, the thesis tries to determine whether she does justice to her novels by writing about Indian themes from an outsider's point of view, as her sensibilities are very Western.

In the second part I look at the two films, *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust*, which have been based on her novels. The film adaptations have definitely enabled a wider acclaim for Jhabvala from audiences across the world that have had the opportunity to become familiar with her work. This study looks at Jhabvala's interests in screenplay writing and how she managed to write for the two media, keeping the differences distinct without letting go of her fine distinguishing qualities as a writer. It is important that I mention at this point the confusion that arose in my findings regarding the screenplay writer of *Heat and Dust*. While researching the film *Heat and Dust*, I came across a book

Silence, Exile and Cunning written by eminent critic, Yasmine Gooneratne, in which she mentioned that Jhabvala did not write the screenplay for the film *Heat and Dust*.

However, after seeing that she was making a reference to John Pym's article "Where could I meet other screenwriters?" that had been written years before the release of the film I concluded that at the time Pym was writing, the film had not been made, and consequently as Gooneratne's research for her book was done much before the film was released she would not have any means of knowing whether Jhabvala later went on to write the screenplay or not. After confirming from other sources, namely Bernard Weinraub's article "The artistry of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala" and Merchant Ivory Productions' official website <[http:// www.merchantivory.com](http://www.merchantivory.com)> that it is indeed Jhabvala who wrote the screenplay for the film, *Heat and Dust* and also went on to win a BAFTA award for best screenplay adaptation of *Heat and Dust* in 1984, I have carried on with the final part of my thesis. (In fact every other source points to Jhabvala as the screenwriter for the film *Heat and Dust*, aside from Gooneratne's chapter.) This section also looks at the films and studies how Jhabvala's subtle writing is captured and transferred from the novel mode into the film mode. Finally it looks at speech patterns in the films, different methods used to express thoughts and ideas, Indian images that abound in the films, the sounds, various techniques employed throughout the film, and concludes with the differences between her novels and the films.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSEHOLDER

Jhabvala's novel *The Householder* has been described as having "a tenderness that goes straight, not to the head, but to the heart" (Godden 20). Besides dealing with the humdrum of everyday life it gives us an insight into the twists and turns in Prem's married and professional life. *The Householder*, however, is really a study in arranged marriages, relationships, domesticity, monetary problems, and class conflicts. Jhabvala very subtly demonstrates through comedy and irony, using both at the same time, the sadness that actually lies beneath the surface, through Prem's varied experiences where his "belief that the world is an illusion is itself an illusion that founders on the reality of his worldly – and sexual – desires." (Gorra 24)

Hindu tradition divides a man's life into four *asramas*/stages. The first *asrama* is the *brahmachariasrama*, the student, where the Hindu goes through his formal education in order to become a good member of society. The second *asrama* is *grihastasrama*, the householder, where the Hindu undertakes the responsibility of raising and supporting a family. The third *asrama* is *vanaprasthasrama*, the forest hermit, which is that stage in the Hindu's life where he, after having fulfilled all his duties towards his family, retires from his family, and social life, and gives up his wealth and other worldly possessions to

retreat to the forest as a hermit. The fourth *asrama* is *sanyasarama*, the wandering ascetic, where the Hindu renounces everything in his life, and devotes his entire time to becoming one with God in the forest. Jhabvala's protagonist is caught between two temptations, one of which has to do with this world and the other of which has to do with a transcendental world. Although Prem has just entered *grihastasrama*, he is already looking forward to *vanaprasthasrama*. Prem, after being introduced to the Swami, does become tempted to give up everything and renounce the world, but in the end realizes that it is an ill-judged idea, and without wasting any further time he goes back to his duty of being a householder, which he understands must gain precedence over his attempts at being a spiritual seeker. Moreover, the temptation of the flesh, as it turns out, becomes too hard for the newly married Prem to resist, and he goes back to his wife and unborn child to take on the responsibilities imparted to him by this stage of life. Jhabvala is "an affectionately satiric observer of the conflict between traditional passivity and westernized ambition within individuals battered by the indifferent tides of change in present-day Indian life" (Bell). Prem's troubles, as we know, are manifold and are based on monetary, marital and economical problems. The manner in which Jhabvala deals with these problems makes readers marvel at her ability to make them laugh as well as immerse them in a melancholic feeling, which pervades through most of her writing.

Furthermore, Jhabvala gives us a world of characters such as Indu, Raj, Sohan Lal, Khanna, Hans, Kitty, and the Seigals who are seen through Prem's eyes, and as she portrays them she does not lose sight of the demands that life makes from all of them, by delving in their mundane lives and encapsulating their entire outlook towards life. When Jhabvala tells a story, she tries to see to it that she renders it without any kind of partiality to her characters' basic character. At the same time she tries to remain faithful to the

follies and foibles of her characters so that they don't cease to be mere characters in her book, but appear to come forth as true people whom she has envisioned all along and who almost certainly seem to exist in some place in India, thus mirroring life and coming as close to it as possible.

Jhabvala describes in her novel three different kinds of people belonging to three different socio-economic classes. One consists of a superficial group of people who want to walk in the footsteps of the British and continue to live in the shadow of the legacy that they left behind and indeed manage to pull it off one way or the other, the second who are incapable of leading an affluent life but are desirous of it nevertheless, and the third, who cannot even envisage a comfortable life for themselves and their loved ones, as they are bogged down with other family duties and responsibilities. Mr. Khanna and Mr. Seigal belong to the first group, Prem and Mr. Chaddha to the second, and Sohan Lal to the third. While Mr. Khanna tries to ape the mannerisms of the affluent West by having an English breakfast of eggs and toast, Mr. Seigal's night parties with the radio buzzing and the lights burning and the whisky and cups of tea and the sweetmeats that are passed around reflect how they still want to bask in the light of British mannerisms. Prem, on the other hand, is busy doing the balancing act, and walking the tightrope of adopting modern ways while at the same time trying to enforce some traditional codes of behavior at home with his wife. It irks Prem to sit on the floor, yet he chooses to sit on the table and correct papers despite knowing that it rattles, he cannot afford domestic help yet he has employed a boy to help with the chores around the house, as he seems to think that it lends some sort of dignity to his "Professor" status. Mr. Chaddha, an authoritarian figure, sits in the staff-room looking through students' papers and shakes his head from time to time, in obvious disappointment, saying "senseless boys" (26) or continues to lecture

about trade in British India with “emphatic gestures” (25). Sohan Lal, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in Indian mannerisms. He comes to College cycling from a far-off place with his food packed in the traditional Indian way, in a tin tiffin carrier, as he cannot afford to pay Mrs. Khanna the exorbitant sum that she charges the other professors for the daily tea service that she provides.

Critics such as Eunice De Souza and Vasant A. Shahne point out that Jhabvala’s characters and their personality traits are shaped and to a large extent governed by the socio-economic circumstances that they find themselves in. Furthermore, Prem is a weakling of sorts and he “is a little afraid of his students, incapable of enforcing discipline in class, and unable to assert himself anywhere except in his house” (Shahne). All his attempts at self-assertion are seen being constantly nullified by the dominant personalities of Mr. Seigal, his landlord, and Mr. Khanna, the Principal of the college where he works. Prem knows that his main concerns are rent and salary, and somewhere along the line he realizes that he cannot achieve what he has set out to accomplish and seems to bear a resigned demeanor for some time. However, this state of resignation doesn’t last long and finally Prem makes up on the personal front, where the relationship between him and his wife comes full circle towards the end and things begin to look up for him.

Thus, we see that Jhabvala indeed presents her characters through their social strata in society. By mentioning far-off places such as Kasauli, which offer cheaper housing in comparison to Delhi, and by touching on the constant conversation about pay hikes, she hits directly at the socio-economic situation of India’s working middle class.

Jhabvala presents to the Western readers a slice of life as represented by India’s middle classes. She uses the best set of her skills to make her readers laugh at the

eccentricities of her characters, and she does so in more ways than one. One of the most common methods she uses is employing the Indian English dialect for the speech of her Indian characters, which shows the Indians in a lighter vein, resulting in her readers getting a taste of her wry humor.

Furthermore, Jhabvala also pokes fun at the mannerisms of India's working middle class. Jhabvala shows us that while Prem, Sohan Lal, and Raj struggle to make ends meet, Mr. Khanna and Mr. Chaddha seem to be lucky enough to enjoy the finer luxuries of life. On the one hand, is Sohan Lal, a meek man burdened with several responsibilities, who has no time to eat his breakfast before leaving home in order to be on time for his lectures, and on the other hand, is the principal of his college, Mr. Khanna, a well-fed man, who lectures Prem about the importance of a sumptuous breakfast to kick-start the day. Two different people divided by their social positions in society are seen here. While Mr. Khanna is privileged enough to enjoy a flat provided by the college just above the college building, Sohan Lal has to ride his bicycle and travel a long distance in order to be on time for his lectures.

By writing about the life-styles and mannerisms of the people of India, Jhabvala captures the essence of the burgeoning Indian society during the seventies. However, while she does not leave out minute details while writing about the life of her characters, some of her writing almost comes across as though she is poking fun at the available resources in India, Indians, and their poverty. This is evident in the way she describes the college building as "an ordinary residential house" (10) with demarcated classrooms where students are taught or where staffrooms are converted into guestrooms to accommodate Mr. Khanna's visitors. Furthermore, we also see that themes such as real-

estate prices and housing accommodations are dealt with in an almost nonchalant manner in different parts of the book.

Having lived in India extensively and having had the opportunity to observe the manner in which the dynamics of housing and family types are closely connected Jhabvala has done a remarkable job in writing about the extended Indian family in her novel. “Unlike any other foreign novelist in English, Mrs. Jhabvala writes from within the extended Indian-family structure” (Bell). The manner in which she displays insight into the interwoven relationships of the extended Indian family is truly astonishing. Although Prem’s is not a typical extended Indian family, when his mother comes to visit him and Indu it does turn into a typical extended Indian family, temporarily. An example of how Jhabvala captures the interwoven relationships in such families is seen when Prem’s mother comes to visit her son and daughter-in-law at his home in Delhi. From the moment of her arrival Jhabvala’s vigilant eye does not leave a single detail out. From counting the paraphernalia that consists of her steel trunk, her roll of bedding, her earthenware water container, all of which is very typical of an Indian middle-class traveler, Jhabvala goes on to show us how the mother fusses over her son and expresses her dislike of her daughter-in-law’s treatment of her.

A typical Indian mother-in-law trying to assert her authority over her son and her daughter-in-law is what we get to see through Jhabvala’s portrayal of Prem’s mother from the moment she enters her son, Prem’s and daughter-in-law, Indu’s lives. From rebuking Prem for overpaying the porter at the railway station to greeting Indu with a “you don’t show” (60) almost tells the readers what to expect in the following pages. From the sighing that tells us about how much labor has gone into preparing Prem’s

favorite delicacies to the wiping of her eyes with the corner of her sari as she remembers Prem's father, we see how Jhabvala captures typical Indian traits of mothers in reunions with their sons.

Prem's mother is seen in two different shades: either always vying with Indu for Prem's attention by always calling out to Prem when he retires for the night, or on the other hand very magnanimously permitting Prem and Indu to go out and "enjoy" (71) themselves, while she volunteers to guard everything at home for them. What we also get to see here is how Jhabvala, very articulately, describes a mother's behavior, and also depicts how Prem and Indu react to their mother's behavior in a rather comical way. We see that as Prem and his mother are sitting and having a conversation on the night of her arrival, Indu is missing from the conversation because she decides to go to bed earlier than usual that night, and when Prem's mother makes a comment about Indu to Prem, Prem is so embarrassed that he fixes his gaze on the leg of the cane table pretending that it requires his immediate attention.

The author handles the large design of her story with as much deftness as she does these specific episodes. Mrs. Jhabvala is not a humorist who confines herself to ludicrous misunderstandings and family-life mix-ups. She stakes out a human province to work in, and she wants her characters to grow (Fitzgibbon), which indeed does happen at least for Prem towards the end of her novel.

Not only is her portrayal of Indians in India noteworthy, but in this novel her portrayal of European characters is remarkable too. Jhabvala, in *The Householder*, gives us not only an Indian perspective of what Indians think of the Europeans, but also of what Europeans think of Indians. Her depiction of the relationship shared by Prem and Hans is

unique as compared to the other European-Indian relationships in her other novels. While it seems to be deep and sincere at one level, it also comes forth as a sham at another level. We see an overenthusiastic European (Hans) who leaves Europe and travels all the way to India only on a whim, because he has seen the face of his guru in a dream and is on his lookout. He meets Prem, an unsuccessful person in life, whom he not only idolizes, but also greatly respects and reveres because he unknowingly assumes Prem to be a practicing Hindu spiritualist. By depicting two European characters, Hans, who has left Europe and all its materialistic wealth behind, in order to seek spiritual calm, and Kitty who is contented giving lawn parties to her European friends, Jhabvala introduces a bunch of idle and jobless Europeans who are comparable to most of the lazy and slothful Indians whom she so fondly portrays in her novels. While Hans is engrossed in talking about spirituality, Prem embarks on a discussion about the political and economic policies and the standpoint of the Indian government on those matters, thus reiterating the fact that he, Prem, who represents the East has nothing in common with Ernest, who represents the West thus once again depicting how the East and the West have almost no meeting ground.

The gap between East and West is wide and there is room for much folly in the attempt to jump it. A natural satirist, Mrs. Jhabvala catches the pompousness, insincerity, stupidity and simple bewilderment of people attempting the jump and she pins it down with a deceptively gentle, but often rather acid irony, which at times reminds one of Jane Austen. (Rutherford and Petersen 373)

This is seen in the way she introduces us to Hans. Prem's meeting with Hans is incidental in the novel. Just as the readers begin to get comfortable with Prem's

professional life at the Khanna college and his personal life at home, which is limited to his wife, his mother, and to the Seigals downstairs, Jhabvala startles us with Prem's chance meeting with Hans. Hans is a young man from Europe who wants to reach the heights that Indian Yogis reach through meditation. Hans in return introduces Prem to Kitty, the landlady, who tells him about the benefits that can be reaped by practicing Yoga, which leads to a discussion about the East's spirituality as compared to the West's materialism.

Jhabvala goes on to blur the boundaries of spirituality and materialism in terms of the East and the West, and at times, it almost seems as if the East is as materialistic as the West and the West, at some point in time, is depicted as having more knowledge about the concept of spirituality than the Easterners do.

Jhabvala attempts to sketch portraits of people from all rungs of society. Her "sharpest and most fully realized portraits are those of Indian parents and children, masters and servants, husbands and wives, whom she knows with the unthinking familiarity of an insider, but scrutinizes with the frequently amused detachment of a privileged stranger" (Bell). On the one hand is the description of Indu, and on the other hand is the description of the beggar woman, both of which can safely be called classic examples used to depict Indian women to Western audiences in the most clichéd manner. She describes Indu in a sari, smelling of perspiration and hair oil, with a strand of hair fluttering on her cheek. She is portrayed as a typical Indian housewife kneading dough for *parathas* in the kitchen for her hard-working husband, to the accompaniment of the jingling of bangles, which is a typical Indian fashion accessory especially worn by newly married women. Then, on the other hand we see Jhabvala observing beauty even in

poverty in *The Householder*. Jhabvala's description of the beggar woman in the makeshift stall where Prem and Raj are sipping their tea as "a beggar woman with a pretty face and merry eyes" speaks volumes about Jhabvala's attitude in terms of viewing India's poor, and India's poverty, where Jhabvala, instead of regarding the beggar woman with loathing and spite, as most people would ordinarily do, decides to see her inner beauty, which as we shall see, changes in her later works. This is also seen when she describes Sohan Lal as a man with an enchanting smile despite his large and protruding teeth, which ordinarily wouldn't cut a very pleasing picture. The question to consider then is this: Is Jhabvala writing only for the Western audiences? Is she trying to arrest the attention of Western audiences "who were not intrigued with India in the first place" (Weinraub 64). If not, then we must content ourselves with the fact that this kind of thinking and consequently writing comes from Jhabvala's place in time.

The Householder came at a time when Jhabvala was in the first stage of the cycle which she later went on to write about, describing it as a phase that all Westerners experienced while in India which made them admire and appreciate everything about India and Indians. Weinraub, in his article "The Artistry of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala," quotes Orville Prescott as having written that "anyone reading her novels, would have naturally assumed "that their author was an Indian probably a high caste Hindu educated at Wellesley," and why not? However, we must not allow ourselves to forget the fact that Jhabvala married into a Parsee family in India, and Parsees are known to be a very affluent and elite community in India. Whether marrying into an elite Parsee family colored her outlook towards India and Indians to a considerable extent or not is a matter that her readers should definitely consider.

Jhabvala has an extraordinary ear for speech and her use of Indian-English dialect in a way lends more authenticity to her novels and her characters. By employing Indian-English dialect along with a pre-colonial and post-colonial backdrop we get to see how she builds and presents her characters before her readers. Prem's reply on learning about the time, "So much," after Mr. Khanna has told him that it is ten fifteen and that he is late for class, is quite a literal translation of a reaction by almost any Indian speaker of the Hindi language. Jhabvala infuses her novels with Indian-English for all her Indian characters, including the Indian intellectuals, the Indian middle class, and the Indian labor class. Her speech only varies for foreigners in India and she colors their speech differently. This is evident during Hans' interaction with Prem and we see how Jhabvala lends a German tone to Hans' speech patterns. Hans' question "I may sit with you?" (30) instead of the conventional "May I sit with you?" and "Explain me please" (30), instead of "Can you please explain this to me?" almost seems to be translated from German directly.

Jhabvala makes very clever use of sensory images throughout the novel where she shows us Prem's moods through the smells and sounds he experiences around him. These images that she chooses to use in her novel are very typical of India and Indians. The fragrance of Indu's body, her "special woman smell" (85) combined with the hair oil and vanilla essence that she uses is enough to transport Prem into a different world altogether. However, while Jhabvala uses these lovely fragrances to describe Prem's sincere feelings for Indu, as he is reminiscing over his wife's absence, she plays with her readers, and brings them back to reality with a startling jolt, by employing the same sensory images and telling us how all the pleasant fragrances that remind Prem of Indu are later harshly

replaced by “the smell of the disinfectant soap with which his mother had had the floor washed” (91). On another occasion, we see Prem’s moods stirred by his emotions for Indu, and not knowing what to do he goes to visit the swami. Again Jhabvala creates the atmosphere at the swami’s place through the employment of sensory images. She tells us how “the room was sweet and heavy with incense, and a little wisp of smoke still came from the last smouldering remains of joss-stick which had been stuck into the window frame” (93). Not only does she capture the typical fragrances that are common to India but she also does a splendid job capturing the locales through sounds and smells, in which her characters live and move about. From describing Raj’s house amidst “a row of shops, a chemist, a dry-cleaner lit up by neon lighting, a grocer with rice and lentils and red chillies kept in tall tins, a barber and a dried-fruits store. A radio played loud wailing music from out of the barber’s shop” (66) to describing the market place in the evening where Prem buys Indu a pink satin material for a blouse “all the booths were lit up by electric light bulbs dangling from their wooden roofs. By the side of the road stood men with little barrows, illuminated by bright flares of naphtha light, selling cheap fruits or sugar cane juice or colored drinks in second-hand bottles” (85) we see Jhabvala making extremely good use of sights, smells, and sounds to capture India and Indians living in a very exotic manner for her readers.

Jhabvala’s eye for detail is especially noteworthy and she magnificently creates for her readers an India painted with colors that are deep and rich in their hue. It is almost as though Jhabvala’s India, especially Delhi, is her masterpiece in terms of its description. Perhaps no other writer captures the sights, sounds, and smells of Delhi as Jhabvala does. She captures the pulse of the city which is still in its nascent stage, on the brink of a

change after having recently acquired independence, and by placing her characters in this multi-dimensional city she goes on to define them through their position in society.

Weinraub in his article “The Artistry of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala” quotes Orville Prescott writing that “it was astonishing that in only a few years, Mrs. Jhabvala had soaked up her seemingly intimate and comprehensive knowledge of Delhi society.” Her description of cinema halls with little glass windows where young, idle men in bush-shirts drinking Coca-Cola, and eating potato chips out of plastic bags making snide comments at girls who pass by in order to kill time before the show begins is as realistic and representative of modern-day India as is her pointed observation of the milkman’s buffaloes and the Family Planning Clinics which were mushrooming throughout the country at the time Jhabvala was writing *The Householder*. Also remarkable is her casual observation, almost in a matter-of-fact manner, where makeshift stalls in the little lanes and by-lanes of Delhi have names of international cities such as “Paris Hotel,” which are contrasted with names of national cities such as “Punjab Hotel,” where Prem and Raj have tea and fritters.

Her humor cannot be ignored in the “delightfully sly story,” (Hitrec) *The Householder*. “The humor is of the quietest kind and is woven into an excellent portrayal of character” (Fitzgibbon). The discomfort level experienced by Prem at the tea party is almost comical, which makes him oscillate between “status seeker” and “status regretter” (Hitrec). Being a not-so-successful lecturer at the Khanna College, seated at the Principal’s tea party along with his wife and the wives of his not-so-friendly colleagues, makes Prem extremely uncomfortable. Prem’s brushing imaginary specks of dust on his knees, and his growing concern about how the genteel society is going to

perceive Indu's obsession with sweetmeats demonstrates very cleverly Jhabvala's use of humor in the book.

Jhabvala shows us Prem's growth through various means. On one occasion she "uses an insult to help Prem's transformation along. The terrifying Mr. Chaddha criticizes Prem publicly for the slackness of his class. Prem, stung, stands up to him. A realization of his strengths and weaknesses begins to set in Prem's mind" (Fitzgibbon). However, it is only after meeting the spiritual seeker that the awareness becomes a realization which enables him to see that he is actually caught up in a whirlpool of duties and responsibilities towards his family. It is only after meeting the swami that Prem realizes that he is not yet ready to give up everything that the swami is asking him to, and it is at this point that it dawns on him for the first time that he has to try to improve his social and financial positions. It is at this point that Prem begins to see the inconsistency in his own temperament; he realizes that his carefree days of roaming around with Raj, like he had done in the past, are finally over, and that his responsibilities towards his wife and his unborn child must gain precedence over everything else. The realization that his days as a householder have just begun finally sets in. "The burden of supporting a family, the thought of which had so oppressed him, had lifted from him. But now he missed it. Now that it was gone from him, he craved again for the sensation of being a family man with duties and responsibilities" (92).

With the passage of time and reality sinking in, Prem realizes that things cannot stand as they are, and that if he has to change his situation, he must take some steps in the right direction. From handing Mrs. Khanna an application, half-heartedly, to be given to Mr. Khanna for a pay-hike, a half-botched attempt at trying to use Indu in order to get the

rent reduced by talking to Mrs. Seigal, shooting off a letter to Bangalore to his sister to send for their mother who cannot bear the heat of Delhi, and inviting Raj and his family over for dinner, we see that Prem has embarked on his journey as a householder, and even though his destination may still be a long way away, we find contentment in the fact that he has at least set out on the journey. Thus we see that although Jhabvala has been accused of creating flat characters Prem is clearly not one. We see that Jhabvala's protagonist Prem does eventually embark on a journey, albeit at a very slow pace. It is this pace that Jhabvala maintains for her characters in the novel that has also received criticism. Weinraub quotes Jhabvala's editor, at *The New Yorker*, Roger Angell, as having said that "one of the marvelous things about Ruth's Indian stories and novels is that they seem to have the pace of Indian life." As if there is such a thing as "the pace of Indian life" which is different from the pace of life of any other householders who successfully manage to make the transition from one stage of life into another. What is this pace then that Jhabvala's pen reserves for her Indian characters? If Jhabvala is depicting "the pace of Indian life" in her novels, is she, along with her editor being condescending while implying that most things in India do occur according to a certain pace which is characteristically Indian? If this is what Jhabvala means, then her writing not only goes on to portray India as a backward, sluggish, and third world nation, but also one where there is no action but only stagnation, thus once again adding to the Occident's misconceptions or preconceived notions of the Orient.

Although Jhabvala's novel is considered to be a novel that "is so well written that it appears not to have been written at all. And it is not limited by its Indian setting. It is set in life" (Fitzgibbon) it is the treatment that she imparts to her novels which shows us

how alienated she is from the real Indian society, from the crux of most matters that really need to be dealt with instead. For instance, Jhabvala displays the inability to delve deeper into the emotional turmoil faced by Prem's and Hans' quest for an inner peace. Furthermore, as critics point out she is unable to probe deeper into the recesses of the human mind in order to capture the goings-on there. For instance, there is never an attempt made at writing about why Indu feels and acts in the way she does with both Prem and Prem's mother. Similarly, while the readers know about Sohan Lal's financial condition they never learn about his own inner feelings. This clearly demonstrates that she is only able to write about what the eye sees on a surface level. The lack of knowledge about what actually are the real issues and the refusal to delve deeper into understanding what really causes these inner conflicts and discords in the minds and hearts of her young and old characters is what further alienates her from India and Indians. She almost comes across as someone who greatly dislikes the ways and mannerisms of the Indian middle-class and finds them vile and detestable. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why she isn't widely read in India and why her films haven't enjoyed immense popularity in the country in which she sets her characters.

CHAPTER III

HEAT AND DUST

A noteworthy observation that can be made about Jhabvala at the outset, in the writing of *Heat and Dust*, is how her attitude towards India has undergone a tremendous change after her stay of twenty-four years in India. From an initial liking for everything that has to do with India and Indians to becoming distanced, cautious, and to a certain extent, jaded, Jhabvala's responses to India definitely see an alteration in *Heat and Dust*. Jhabvala laughs innocently and portrays things wittily, and although they seem at one level almost trivial to an Indian reader, they are of paramount importance to Jhabvala's writing (especially writing that characterizes her initial years in India) which enables us to safely state that Jhabvala has traversed a great distance. It's almost as though Jhabvala's tone changes with the passage of time and from being enthusiastic and buoyant in most of her early writing, she becomes gloomy and cheerless in her later works.

Critic Ralph Crane points out how Jhabvala's vision changes as she journeys through her novels, from her earlier novels, which show things in a humorous vein, to her more somber later novels. This shift in her writing, as she herself acknowledges in the Introduction of *Out of India* comes from a shift in her perception of India after spending so many years in the country. This is distinctly noticeable in the two novels that we are looking at: *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust*. While *The Householder* deals with the

protagonist's innocence, happiness, and triumph at being finally independent, *Heat and Dust* examines the increasing disillusionment and dissatisfaction in the lives of its characters.

Jhabvala sketches characters from two different worlds in *Heat and Dust*. One is a world that is inhabited by British civil servants where they are often presented with opportunities to rub shoulders with Indian royalty on special occasions. Jhabvala's fascination with Indian royalty is seen in the way she sketches the characters in her book, not missing out a single detail about their lifestyle. Her characters in *Heat and Dust* are mainly large-hearted, rich people, who entertain Europeans a great deal, always amidst well-arranged flowers, well-laid-out dining tables with "Sèvres dinner service, silver, crystal flowers" (15) in large well-lit rooms that have chandeliers, where eating out of "little golden bowls of crystallized fruits" (15) is a way of life. The other is a world of poverty and misery which Jhabvala also poignantly describes as one which is full of petty thugs and thieves where misadventures occur and where foreigners are conned by Indian conmen who are constantly enticing gullible foreigners and stealing valuables from them, or hoodwinking them with false promises of better exchange rates, cheaper housing, and other such enticing offers.

Heat and Dust starts off with a series of entangling relationships, and a vivid recollection of names from the past by various characters in the book. The narrator, who remains without a name, rattles off a host of names, mainly of people from two continents, Europe and Asia, alive as well as dead, and their relationship to each other which we see unfolding in the first few pages of the book. Jhabvala's unnamed narrator comes to India, enthralled by the well-preserved letters of Olivia that have been

bequeathed to her by her ancestors. The narrator wants to demystify the mystery that surrounds Olivia as well as get a glimpse of the colonial and royal lifestyle that Olivia enjoyed during her years in India with both Douglas and the Nawab in the capacity of both wife and mistress. The similarities between Olivia and the narrator are uncanny, and the dissimilarities between the two seem almost striking, as the narrator very aptly describes Olivia as “everything I’m not” (7).

She [the narrator] has journeyed to India, like many other floating supplicants from the West, bolstered with immunity serums and fat letters of credit, yearning for mystical submission to the spirituality of India that her ancestors had scorned and feared. Her pursuit of visionary Hindu exaltation is rather ambiguously bound up with her quest for the woman that Olivia became after she crossed over to the other side and was devoured by India (Bell).

Harry, the strange friend of the Nawab’s who is introduced pretty early in the novel by Jhabvala, goes on to become a friend of Olivia’s. Although he can be looked upon as one of the hanger-ons around the Nawab, he enjoys special privileges during his stay at the palace. In the process of enlightening Olivia about the Nawab’s likes, dislikes, and temperament, Harry sub-consciously reveals his personal story about meeting the Nawab and how he was lured to India by the friendship of an Indian Prince and has more or less been trapped in India for the past three years. Jhabvala does not tell us whether Harry is a gay friend of the Nawab’s or not, and it is never known for certain in the novel, but there are several episodes that occur in the book which lead us to suspect that he may be the Nawab’s secret lover.

One of the most striking episodes which directly throws light on this ambiguous relationship between Harry and the Nawab is narrated by Harry himself. He almost grumbles to Olivia about how he has “been with him” (35) in Khatm for the past three years and has never been to see the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal, as we know, is a monument built in the memory of true love and is the first destination of lovers and couples from all over the world on their trips to India. Moreover, he adds how the Begum has always been an obstacle whenever the two have set out to other places too, and it is usually she who doesn’t want them to go. This somehow indicates to us that the Begum is aware of the relationship between Harry and the Nawab, and Harry’s grudging almost gives her the status of the typical Indian mother-in-law disallowing the lovers to be together.

Jhabvala’s presentation of two Indian rulers in the book is extremely interesting as well. The relationship that the two rulers share with the British officials is simply fascinating and it is here that we get to see how cleverly Jhabvala has sketched these two characters in her book, who are insolence and audacity personified. While the Maharajah of Dhung gets away with calling Major Minnies “an old fuddy-duddy,” the Nawab has in his court an Englishman who is spineless, whom he not only orders around but also keeps in his palace, in Khatm, against his wishes. That the British hate the fact that one of their kith and kin is dancing to the tunes of an Indian Nawab is evident throughout the book, and the silent war between the British officials and the Nawab is a source of great entertainment and suspense for the readers.

What is interesting is that amongst the various categories that Jhabvala divides her Indians into, we also get to see some people who are constantly undermining the

achievements and accomplishments of India and Indians by either criticizing India's development rate after independence or others bearing a resigned demeanor and surrendering everything to fate silently reconciling with whatever India dishes out to people. Two examples of this appear in *Heat and Dust*. One is Inder Lal, who is totally in awe of the progress of the western world as compared to his own country's, so much so that he is almost ashamed of his own country's progress and development. The other is the doctor who tends to the old lady Leelavati but considers himself to be of a superior species primarily because he is a doctor. Not only is he extremely desirous of practicing his English-speaking skills at every opportunity that presents itself but he also has very strong opinions about how only Indians are fit to live and survive the harsh Indian climate: "let us admit for the sake of our argument that we Indians are fit to live here – where else are we fit for?" (159).

Then there are the other people in the book making candid confessions about India, and expressing their apprehension and distaste for it. We have Major Minnies "making a confession: Sometimes I feel that I'm not quite the right kind of person to be in India, " (148) and later going on to publish a book about India which despite his being sympathetic to India sounded almost "like a warning" (170). The narrator, herself, talks about "open gutters flowing through the streets. They often overflowed, especially during the rains, and were probably the cause, or one of them, of the frequent epidemics that broke out in Khatm (165).

In *Heat and Dust* the "presentation of characters is related to various traditional images of India and its culture. These are set against the reality of India in the modern world" (King 226). Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's

European characters of the 1975 section are seen either as damaged by India and in ignominious retreat, or suffused with new life and blessed with a new vision of the Universe. Whether they succeed or fail; whether they are destroyed or created anew depends on the quality of sensibility they have brought to their Indian experience. The English boy Chid and the young couple who came out to India to find peace and found dysentery instead, fail to pass the test because of the superficiality of their involvement with India. In a swift revolution of the wheel of response, they have their fill of India and hasten back to where they belong. If *Heat and Dust* may be said to convey a message, it is this that only some of her aliens are meaningfully absorbed by India while the rest are rejected.

(Chakravarti)

Jhabvala's shift from writing about middle-class Indian families to royal Indian families also speaks volumes about the change in her economic status that she must have experienced after the commercial success of her novels. (This shift to writing about the royalty of India was perhaps prompted by the criticism that she could only write about middle-class Indian families.) After Jhabvala arrived in India as a foreign bride, she wrote about the society that she was most familiar with. Later, at the behest of Merchant-Ivory she explored and wrote extensively on the royal families of India. We see in her writings that Jhabvala's tone, from being full of enthusiasm and optimism in her earlier works, goes on to become remorseful and almost rueful in her later works. One has to wonder if that has to do with the old saying about money bringing momentary happiness but killing the inner joy and spirit within us because this is the feeling that most of the characters in Jhabvala's later novels seem to display. The more comforts they surround

themselves with the more discontented they seem with their inner selves. Prem, in *The Householder*, is happy merely buying sweets for his wife, whereas in *Heat and Dust* even lavish banquets thrown by Indian princes in honor of British officials serving in India are unable to make people happy and there is always the feeling of doom looming large on such occasions.

Jhabvala has also been accused of portraying people in her novels in circumstances where they are seen doing things which would perhaps seem strange to a western reader. However, it is usually a very normal thing and most of the time almost a way of life for an Indian. This is because she fails in depicting the social conditions of India clearly which leads to an unclear portrayal of her characters that act and behave in the ways they do. Her flaw lies in the fact that she does not establish a firm ground before placing her characters on it, and as a result a lot of her writing seems to be superficial and thus disconnected. De Souza goes on to say that “indeed, the writer shows no inclination whatsoever even to attempt to go beyond the facile emotional reactions to what she observes on the Indian social scene” (2).

Her work primarily focuses on the settings in her novels, and this is seen in the vivid portrayal of her characters’ homes and workplaces. The setting is laid before the readers in the first few pages and the readers learn that the entire book is going to contain not only a great story, but also one that is physically set (mostly) amidst a scorching, dusty, and grimy landscape, which both Olivia and the narrator are subjected to. Throughout the novel, we see how Jhabvala beautifully captures all the elements of heat and dust in different modes. We see the British employing various methods to combat Indian heat. From putting up *Khastatti* screens in their homes to escaping to Simla, the

British are seen doing everything to keep themselves cool. So much so that Olivia's house is literally called an oasis by Harry, a "friend" of the Nawab's, who, perhaps bored with the sherbets of the palace of Khatm, stops at Olivia's to refresh himself with sherries from time to time.

What Jhabvala does in this novel is not only explore in detail the lives of British civil servants and their families but also their code of conduct while employed in India, and compares them with the lives of royalty and the manner in which they conduct themselves on a day-to-day basis. From looking at the way in which Douglas conducts his business with the local merchants to the manner in which the Nawab sets about enticing Olivia, everything has a certain charm of the Raj period that shows through Jhabvala's distinct style of writing.

Mrs. Jhabvala is ruthless about the complacent Anglo-Indians of the Raj, uptight little islands of unalterably English domesticity and self-esteem in a threatening Oriental sea. Pleased with their patronizing devotion to the Indians they govern, these shirty administrators faithfully carry out their imperial obligations in a country that bewilders and repels them, yet holds them fast in its hot and sticky embrace, as it did their dutiful fathers and grandfathers before them (Bell).

Jhabvala's critics question her themes. While some of them write about her work being thematically limited, others write about how she has developed a series of themes which deal with a variety of issues from families adjusting to the changes in newly independent India to foreigners who visit the country in order to get away from the materialism of the west, some who go there in the pursuit of knowledge and self-

discovery and others who are interested in exploring the western world's fascination with the enchanting east.

Is Jhabvala trying to escape from "the back of this great animal of poverty and backwardness" (Jhabvala, *Introduction* 19) through her writing and trying to find refuge in writing about the exotic and royal India that she wishes she were a part of?

Interestingly, her own mind has grown and changed over the years and sadly even she is unable to go back to the Europe of her dreams and live the way she once wanted to. She has, perhaps quite deliberately, accustomed herself to the Indian weather and goes on to write about how "I also find it hard now to stand the European climate. I have got used to intense heat and seem to need it" (Jhabvala, *Introduction* 21).

Jhabvala, through her writing, like most Europeans, seems to be totally captivated by the pomp and splendor of Indian Maharajas who seem to squander their wealth on their loved ones in a style that can be called nothing short of exorbitant. She writes about the stately palaces that the Maharajas construct, to parallel the ones at Versailles, or about the nonchalant manner where Olivia notices expensive camera equipment is left lying unopened, in the basement of the Nawab's palace, merely because the person for whom it was ordered lost interest by the time it arrived. Later she also writes about expensive family heirlooms in the form of miniature paintings that people had forgotten to even catalogue, now adorning the walls of a posh flat in Knightsbridge. This describes Jhabvala's love affair with the prosperous and moneyed class of India.

On the other hand, Jhabvala in her portrayal of India's infirm, ill and destitute seems to do a heart-wrenching job with her portrayal of the town's beggars or the teenage crippled boy, in particular, who "cannot stand upright but drags the crippled under part of

his body behind him in the dust” (96). The manner in which she writes about the illness of the town’s beggar woman who takes ill and dies is a particularly important episode as it comes shortly after Jhabvala’s elaborate description of the affluent lifestyle of Karim and Kitty in their Knightsbridge flat. Jhabvala’s narrator, we see, becomes a tool in her hands, which she uses to show the disparity in the two different kinds of Indias that co-exist. While at one level the narrator is enamored by Karim’s “eyes which were deep and yearning” (101), at another level that very narrator is appalled by the state of the town’s old beggar woman, who is dying next to a concrete refuse dump, and after coming in contact with her, she realizes the “Hindu fear of pollution” (110), and goes home and bathes and rinses herself thoroughly, so as not to contract any infection from the flies which could have been possible carriers of the disease from the old beggar woman to her, the narrator.

Another unsolved mystery is the reason Sandy (the Nawab’s wife) has left him. Moreover, Olivia’s attempts to extricate anything out of Douglas about Harry and his position at the palace turn out to be futile, almost leading us to believe that Douglas has an idea about what relationship the two might share but is unwilling to explain anything to Olivia.

Jhabvala also dabbles with religious and spiritual issues in the book. Right at the beginning we see how the narrator takes refuge in a “Society of Missionaries” (3) that is based in Bombay and spends her first few days with other people who have been there for several years and have devoted their lives to the “Christian Sisterhood” (3) and consequently to “Society of Missionaries.” (3) These people go on to tell her about how they have “been through a Hindu-Muslim riot” (3) and have learnt only one thing, that

“you can’t live in India without Christ Jesus” (3). Still later we see Jhabvala writing about Indian ascetics who travel abroad in order to entice Westerners with lectures on topics as banal as “Universal Love” (22) who in turn on listening to the lectures feel that their lives have been enriched, and have found spiritual contentment. Many of the Westerners end up becoming the followers of these ascetics and traveling back to India with them or travel independently to India in order to seek inner peace.

Next she embarks upon a criticism of the holy men in India:

I’ve seen them do the same with Indian holy men who often pass through the town with their ochre robes and beads and begging bowls. On the whole they look a sturdy set of rascals to me – some of them heavily drugged, others randy as can be, all it seems to me with shrewd and greedy faces. But as they pass through the streets, some half naked, some fully so, rapping their pilgrim staffs and shouting out the name of God as pedlars shout their wares, people come running out of their houses to lay offerings into the ready begging bowls. (64)

Jhabvala seems to be disrespectful not only towards the Indian holy men but also towards the people who give them alms. Why she has developed such strong and hostile feelings for them is unclear, and what is even more puzzling is that the narrator has no encounters with any Indian holy men (besides Chid), either previously or later in the book that clarify, for Jhabvala’s readers, the extreme stand that she takes. She does not stop at this. She moves on to poke fun at the worshipping of “Lord Shiva whose huge member is worshipped by devout Hindu women” (65). Next she uses her condescending manner once again to depict how ignorant, uninformed, and uneducated most Indians are

by making two people play out such roles in the novel. One is a member of the royal family of Khatm, living around 1923, a superstitious woman, the Begum, canceling journeys on account of bad omens, and performing extensive purification ceremonies to drive away evil forces that she believed gripped her and her loved ones. The second one is Inder Lal's mother, another woman, living decades apart from the Begum yet believing in this sort of mumbo-jumbo and attempting to cure her daughter-in-law's health problems through nonsensical rituals.

A very important issue in the novel that cannot be ignored is *suttee*, the ritual of the faithful wife burning herself on her husband's pyre, which Jhabvala strongly condemns and rightfully so. Brilliantly Jhabvala uses Inder Lal's mother, "this merry widow" (55), and juxtaposes her against all the *suttees* who have sacrificed their lives on their husband's pyres, decades ago, to show their faithfulness to their husband's families sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly. Unlike these faithful *suttees*, Inder Lal's mother seems to be enjoying this period of her life without her husband and she even seems to give the impression that her husband wasn't worth mentioning. The *suttee* issue, we learn, has been the bone of contention between the British civil servants in India and some of the local people in Satipur who want to continue with this appalling tradition while the British civil servants try to do everything in their power to prevent it. Jhabvala discusses the issue of *suttee* in Satipur (perhaps Satipur derived its name from this horrendous custom that people practiced for hundreds of years), and we learn about a foreigner's (Olivia's) opinion of the *suttee*. Contrary to Douglas and his other colleagues, Olivia, the foreigner, romanticizes the idea of *suttee*: "I mean to want to go with the person you care for most in the world. Not to want to be alive anymore if he wasn't" (59).

This is followed by a long discussion of how savage and barbaric Indian customs and rituals are, and this opinion is voiced by several people such as Douglas, Doctor Saunders, Major Minnies, and even the Nawab himself. However, the reason the Nawab does not back the practice of *suttee* is unclear, and there is a shadow of doubt that lingers about whether he calls it appalling because he genuinely feels so, or perhaps does so on the grounds of being a Muslim who “must” abhor anything that is a Hindu custom or ritual.

What is interesting here is that we see Olivia, the foreigner, showing a fondness for one of India’s most barbaric and horrendous customs, and on the other hand, we see Inder Lal’s mother, an Indian from Satipur, several decades later, enjoying her days after her husband’s death. It is almost as though the order is inverted and someone who should have been mourning the loss of a husband is enjoying every minute of her life, while someone who comes from a totally different culture, and has nothing to do with the *suttee* tradition, shows an inclination to commit the sacrifice for true love.

The clash of the cultures is another topic that has been explored in detail by critics. Lenta writes about King’s view saying “ for him the subject of the novel [*Heat and Dust*] is British culture, 1923 and 1975, made the more arresting by positioning in front of the exotic backdrop formed by India” (Lenta 10). Nissim Ezekiel, an eminent Indian poet and critic, on the other hand, believes that when two cultures are portrayed one is bound to be more powerful than the other. Lenta writes about how Ezekiel believes that in *Heat and Dust* Jhabvala portrays the British culture as superior to the Indian culture and that the present-day reader would form an “unfavorable verdict of the country and its people” (Lenta 11). Ezekiel further goes on to describe the novel in very harsh words as

worthless as literature, contrived in its narrative structure, obtrusive in its authorial point of view, weak in style, stereotyped in its characters, and viciously prejudiced in its vision of the Indian scene..... [*sic*] Is there not a demeaning motive in this characterizing of a country and its culture in terms of its climate and the least valuable element lying on the physical territory designated?"

(Ezekiel 5)

Jhabvala goes on to show us tradition and culture in various ways. After Olivia's visit to the Saunders house, which is not only disappointing but also heart-breaking, she is bestowed with an opportunity to call on the Nawab's mother at their palace in Khatm. This scene contrasts sharply with the scene described previously, and what we see immediately is the goings-on within the ladies' quarters of the palace. Jhabvala captures this scene within the palace in a very elegant fashion and shows the whole world what life within the ladies' quarters of an Indian palace can be like. The young ladies floating around in rich silks, serving sherbet and refreshments to the guests, give us a glimpse of Indian hospitality at its supreme best. Jhabvala brilliantly juxtaposes two scenes, where we first see Mrs. Saunders treating her Indian servants in a despicable way in front of a British guest and then we see the old, stylish chain-smoking Indian Begum not even having to instruct her servants about how to treat the British guests, who are well looked after from the minute they enter the palace at Khatm. This scene immediately brings forth the parallel method used by Jhabvala as we are shown the similarities between Olivia's visit to the palace at Khatm where she goes in order to pay respect to the Begum, which contrasts with the narrator's visit, fifty years later when she also visits Inder Lal's mother and his wife Ritu in their humble abode.

One can almost see a reversal of roles in this scene where the Begum tries to speak a foreign language, English, and laughs at herself almost immediately after her unsuccessful attempts at uttering something which is incomprehensible to Olivia. Similarly, Olivia, on the other hand, wishes that she were reclining on the floor like the other Indians present in the room instead of sitting on the hard-backed chairs that have been specially arranged for them. Both the women, seem to want what the other person has or enjoys, but both are caught up in the whole ball game of what is proper and what would be considered etiquette.

Heat and Dust uses a brilliant technique that Jhabvala says she observed in the editing room while learning about the editing process of films. Her book *Heat and Dust* not only travels back and forth in time, but also spans different continents, generations, governmental settings, and religious practices of people belonging to different faiths. The book not only blends the past and the present superbly, but also depicts a British-controlled India, which is set off magnificently against the crumbling structure of a princely-ruled state, Khatm (which ironically means ‘end’ in Hindi), and a newly emergent independent nation, India. “Mrs. Jhabvala moves nimbly between the two generations and the divergent points of time and sentiment between a vanished past that was arrogant and unyielding and a venturesome English present that is mainly confused” (Bell).

Jhabvala’s technique to reveal the passage of time is extraordinary. She does so by capturing all the wealth and the splendor that was reminiscent of the Maharaja-period, or colonial period in India, and contrasting it with the decay that has set in now, several years after the little kingdoms were abolished by the post-colonial Indian government.

The degeneration of a once-affluent palace is captured beautifully by Jhabvala through one curtain, “a rich brocade, stiff with dust and age” (13), and similarly the marble angel that “had been new and intact” (24) is now a “headless, wingless, torso with a baby that has lost its nose and one foot” (24).

Jhabvala, in this book, travels back and forth between two different periods and to do this she uses a unique method to combine the past and the present. Not only do her chapters alternate between the year 1923 and the narrator’s narration of what her life in Satipur is currently like in 1975, but Jhabvala also sprinkles her book with sentences that capture the past and the present together at the same time, in sentences such as: “Towards evening I sometimes go to the post office which is situated in what used to be Olivia’s breakfast room” (48). “This is about as far as Olivia would have got if she ventured to this side: because beyond this point the Indian part of the town began, the crowded lanes and bazaar where I now live” (50). “Typical of the way things get mixed up in India is the story of Baba Firdaus’ shrine. As the Nawab had explained to Olivia, this had originally been built by his ancestor Amanullah Khan in thanksgiving to a Muslim faqir who had given him shelter. It is now sacred to Hindu women because it is thought that offerings at this shrine will cure childlessness” (66). By planting the narrator right in between the sentences Jhabvala is able to retain, at every step, a constant command over time, that which has elapsed, with Olivia as its protagonist, and the present, which has the narrator as its protagonist. At no point in time do the readers ever get the feeling that they do not know what time period Jhabvala is writing about as she performs the act of separating and combining the two splendidly as and when required.

Jhabvala has received a lot of criticism from critics such as Eunice De Souza for merely writing about characters without actually entering the goings-on in their minds, thus creating hollow, superficial characters, and without any true inner substance. De Souza writes “indeed the writer shows no inclination whatsoever to go beyond the facile emotional reactions to what she observes on the Indian social scene” (2). Although Jhabvala, in this novel, does a fairly good job at portraying the feelings and emotions of her characters either by giving them a comical twist or sometimes coloring them with melancholic hues, depending solely on the circumstances of the characters, she is still unable to fully explore what goes on in the minds of characters such as Harry, Ritu, and Inder Lal, whom we never learn enough about.

Olivia’s pregnancy is not even mentioned until we finish the first hundred pages of the book. Perhaps Jhabvala deliberately chose to reveal this to us very slowly. This technique of Jhabvala throws light on her brilliant writing skills which in a way allow the writer as well as the reader to catch up with the narrator’s life which, as we all know by now, runs parallel to Olivia’s life only several decades later.

Yet another interesting aspect of Jhabvala’s writing is the attempt at blending the east and the west together which we do see happening in *Heat and Dust* on numerous occasions. One distinct example of east meeting west is seen when Olivia and Douglas are together at the graveyard where Olivia gets flowers for the Saunders’ baby and makes a wish “I made a wish... You know, the way they do at Baba Firdaus’ shrine on Husbands Wedding Day” (106). What we see here is both the westerners and the easterners making wishes on graves of dead people in the fond hope of them being fulfilled.

Jhabvala uses a common element in these two novels. She draws from her earlier novel *The Householder* and brings forth a facet that has been explored in her earlier work. She talks about the various stages in life. In *Heat and Dust*, we see her put Inder Lal into that bracket where she hints at *Grihastasrama* “having been thrown into that stage of life” where he probably has “no alternative but to be a good husband and father” (141) and fulfill his responsibilities dutifully. *Heat and Dust*, like *The Householder*, also “projects a vision of a genuine merger – of the alien moving spontaneously from a physical involvement with India to a spiritual one in accordance with the Indian cycle of life” (Chakravarti 203).

Several times, in *Heat and Dust*, we see Jhabvala making use of analogies very effectively, which lends more substance to her style of writing. A very good example that we see of this is when Olivia and Douglas invite Major Minnies and Mr. Crawford over for dinner, on a hot summer night, where they discuss the misdeeds of the Nawab. Jhabvala writes “A bird woke up in a tree and gave a shriek. Perhaps it had been dreaming of a snake, or perhaps there really was a snake” (92). This can be easily compared to Olivia’s state of mind, especially on that particular night, which turns out to be a rude awakening for her, as she learns that the Nawab, whom she has always considered to be a just and fair ruler, and the protector of his subjects, is in fact hand-in-glove with local dacoit gangs, orchestrating crimes all over the place, which completely shatters her image of him just as the shriek of the bird shatters the silence of the night.

The sarcastic ping-pong that takes place in *Heat and Dust* is definitely something that cannot go unnoticed. A lot is not said or vocalized in *Heat and Dust* but is often done through action or through oblique speech patterns, thus leaving it open for the reader’s

interpretation. A perfect example of this occurs when the Nawab, Harry, and Olivia are seated within the palace at Khatm, just before deciding to send Dr. Saunders back home, when the Nawab, perhaps out of disgust, mentions how all Europeans are alike and how Olivia realizes that she too is being mocked by the Nawab who suddenly says “all are the same” (122).

Jhabvala's cynical attitude towards India and Indians is depicted when she shows the narrator receiving letters from Chid while he is away on a pilgrimage in Dharmasala. Not only does she find a certain pattern in his letters which contained “a lot of philosophy with somewhere in the middle a couple of factual lines (usually to do with being ‘cheated and robbed’) and at the end a request,” but she also seems to find Chid's letters “soaked in all the characteristic odours of India, in spices, urine and betel” (95). The former impression of India has very clearly degenerated in Jhabvala's mind and this is seen through her vivid portrayal of India. It seems almost like she enjoys seeing India only in its filth and squalor.

However, later we see Jhabvala expressing how almost everyone in the book wants a taste of Indian culture. Jhabvala tells us how the British officials in India found the Nawab's father's Urdu poetry absolutely enticing. Not only is Major Minnie all praises for him but he also finds the language Urdu mellifluous and goes on to recite something in Urdu, “where his voice was full of emotion – a mixture of reverence and nostalgia” (150). Later, we also learn from the narrator that the Nawab “had in recent years become very fond of reciting Urdu couplets, especially those that dealt, as most of them did, with the transience of worldly glory” (177).

For the first time ever in *Heat and Dust*, we get a glimpse of Jhabvala's "who cares" attitude. She, through the narrator, for the first time, perhaps, tells the western readers that everything about India is not despicable after all. Despite the intense heat and the almost appalling living conditions, life in India comes with its compensations, and the manner in which she describes India just before monsoons set in is as enticing for a western reader as can be: "There are compensations too. The hotter it is the sweeter are the mangoes and the sugar melons, the more pungent the scent of the jasmine. The gulmohar tree, spreading its branches like a dancer, blooms with astonishing scarlet blossoms. All sorts of sweet sherbets are sold in the bazaar, and the glasses in which they are served (though perhaps not very clean) are packed to the top with crushed ice (also not very clean but who cares) (124).

The response to Jhabvala's work has not been very enthusiastic in India. Critics there are of the opinion that Jhabvala makes no attempts at peering below the surface and examining the factors that force the people of India to live and act in the way they do. Instead they write that Jhabvala very superficially looks at the problems that meet the eye and writes about them. Critic De Souza writes about how Jhabvala's mind "consistently fails to analyze what it observes" (5).

While some critics are all praises for Jhabvala's true depiction of the lives of the Indian middle class, a few critics are of the opinion that Jhabvala has made no efforts in the direction of understanding the socio-economic conditions of India and Indians. Although these critics accuse Jhabvala of not being aware of the social problems of India, others write about how she tries to answer the difficult questions of life by examining the

“intricacies of human relationships” (Amidon 4). It is through this examination that she seeks answers to problems that plague her mind.

On the other hand, some critics have gone on to call Jhabvala’s characters stereotypical, other critics write about how Jhabvala “takes the reader deep into her characters and juxtaposes their responses to an event or displays their ironic misrepresentations of the world around them” (Amidon 4).

The ending of *Heat and Dust* requires a special mention. As the novel draws to a close, we realize that the lives of Olivia and the narrator have been almost identical. From falling in love with Indian men, to getting pregnant, and going to live in the hills, Olivia and the narrator bear striking resemblances throughout the novel.

Jhabvala’s writing gives readers the impression that when the story is going to take a twist or when the characters are on the brink of change there is a great deal that is going to happen but very often they are dissatisfied because Jhabvala does not state clearly the events that take place in the end. Sometimes the readers feel that there is a hint of positive change about to take place, but the readers more often than not are left with a bleak vision and the task of forming their own opinions about what may have taken place.

King asks,

“Is the narrator simply another of the neurotic European women, often found in Jhabvala’s novels, who have sought in the myths of India a solution to their own emotional disturbances?” “Indeed, by any commonsense standards she has been driven to India by failure and inadequacy, and the novel shows her disintegration as she confuses romantic myths with the poverty, indifference and cruelty of actual Indian life”(King 227).

What is also more intriguing is the manner in which Jhabvala uses words to describe how time wears everything in Khatm and in the town of X, where the narrator, like Olivia, decides to stay during her pregnancy. A royal era has come to an end, and all the pomp and splendor that was reminiscent of the Indian Maharajas and Nawabs is now a thing of the past. Khatm has literally become *khatm* ('ended' in Hindi). Olivia's pregnancy has ended, the Nawab's aristocratic status has ended, Douglas' marriage to Olivia has ended, Harry's and Chid's stays in India have ended, and so has the narrator's stay in Inder Lal's house. Jhabvala describes the entire experience of the two women in the final chapter with words that talk of age, decay, and degeneration. Everything seems to crumble and fall apart, not only in memory but literally too. It is only towards the end that the narrator sees a vision which is positive and almost seems to take her into a philosophical realm from where she does not wish to look down, at least for the time being.

CHAPTER IV

THE FILMS

In 1960 came Jhabvala's novel *The Householder* for which she later went on to write the screenplay. Jhabvala wrote the script of *The Householder* in eleven days flat. Soon James Ivory began filming *The Householder*, the very first venture by Merchant-Ivory, which, after associating with Ruth Praver Jhabvala, went on to make numerous successful films, many of them adaptations from classic novels.

Writing for the cinema was a new experience for Jhabvala, especially since she had not watched too many "new films or art films or classic films or anything" (Jhabvala, "Golden Touch"). *The Householder* came at a time when Jhabvala was in the first phase of the cycle which she later went on to describe as something that all Westerners inevitably went through (Everything in India is marvelous). After fifteen years came the novel *Heat and Dust*, which was the result of a considerable amount of experience gained by writing screenplays for Merchant-Ivory Productions, a production house that turned her novels into films. This novel came when Jhabvala was in the second stage of the cycle which she described all Westerners going through (Everything in India is not so great). After her earlier novels such as *The Householder*, *Heat and Dust* was the first novel that was not geographically limited to the areas in and around Delhi, but spanned over two continents, Asia and Europe.

Jhabvala's main interest in writing the screenplay for *The Householder*, which James Ivory began shooting in 1961 for Merchant-Ivory films, was the knowledge that it enabled a larger audience to become familiar with her work. Screenplay writing, writes Yasmine Gooneratne, enabled Jhabvala to deal with issues that she personally felt strongly about and could explore fully in greater detail: "Screenplay writing seems to have allowed her to express and gradually objectify her varying approaches to India" (Gooneratne 270). Jhabvala's writing shows a major shift after her essay entitled "Myself in India," which she wrote in 1965. Jhabvala's work, back then, was in the first stage of what she described all Westerners going through, and she consistently tried to depict Indian life, as she saw it around her, in its truest sense. However, later she felt that her work was becoming more prone to analysis after more years were added to her stay in India. Earlier Jhabvala's preoccupation was with India as a whole and how Indian characters fit into the Indian social milieu. This changed to Jhabvala concentrating her energies on writing about the lives of westerners who made India their home and also to writing about how Indians perceived the Westerners in India. The carefree and optimistic tone in her earlier works gave way to a more flat and somber tone that is clearly seen in her later works. While *The Householder* relied heavily on Jhabvala's subtle humor and her delicate rendering of the experiences of the newly wed Prem and Indu, *Heat and Dust* saw the emergence of a new writer in Jhabvala whose tone was more somber and grave as compared to her earlier novels.

In *The Householder* Jhabvala captures India after its newly acquired independence and places her characters in its capital, Delhi. The characters' lives are in transitional phases, and Jhabvala very cleverly depicts this transition through a powerful

tool that she employs with great ease, subtle irony. Throughout the film we see Jhabvala's preoccupation with the inter-personal relationships which she attempts to explore through her characters. In *Heat and Dust* we see Jhabvala moving beyond India, onto foreign shores, and we see that the protagonists of her novel are two Western women who come to India and lead part of their lives there. With the skill acquired over the years in the editing room, Jhabvala demonstrates her finesse through her writing by paralleling the past and the present, where the events of the past reoccur in the present.

That Jhabvala has learnt a great deal as a writer after being associated with Merchant-Ivory Productions is well known. What we also learn is that from being a novice at writing screenplays she went on to win the Booker Prize for *Heat and Dust* after acquiring knowledge of the technical skills required in editing which she very cleverly used in the novel by arranging flashbacks and setting parallel scenes at appropriate places.

Gooneratne writes that Jhabvala did not acquire the skills easily, and numerous obstacles presented themselves in the way of screenplay writing, ranging from the difficult task of translating idioms from one language into another to presenting foreign audiences with concepts very much Indian such as *asramas*, *suttee*, and *sari*. It was an uphill climb for Jhabvala and visualizing every scene that needed to be translated into a visual required a remarkable expertise on behalf of the writer, but Jhabvala was quick to learn the ropes. *Heat and Dust* is undoubtedly a masterpiece not only in terms of an artist's exploration of writing technique but also in terms of Jhabvala's attempt to come to terms in mind and soul with India through her protagonists.

This chapter will study closely the two films, *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust*, and examine them in detail studying their narrative styles, plots, subplots, motifs, plot structures, and endings/closures in relation to the texts and comparing their filming patterns with writing techniques.

To write a screenplay for a film that has an audience which is largely different from the audience that will read the novel is a difficult task, as we all know. Moreover, very few writers are blessed with the opportunity to write both the novel and the screenplay for their own novels. Jhabvala was blessed with such an opportunity. In Jhabvala's very first screenplay, *The Householder*, she managed to clearly bring out the differences between the two media. Clearly Jhabvala's success with the screenplay of *The Householder* can be attributed to numerous factors that she paid close attention to while writing for the screen, such as speech, wit, and the ability to convert scenes that were described with words in her book by replacing them with settings and dialogues in the film. For instance, the bus rides back and forth from Mehrauli that Prem and Indu take for Sohan Lal's brother's wedding is a clear example that shows the viewers how far Mehrauli is, thus letting the viewers and the readers imagine the distance that Sohan Lal covers on his bicycle from Mehrauli to the college, as opposed to the conversation that takes place between Prem and Sohan Lal one evening when the two are returning home from college in the novel. By the time Jhabvala got down to writing *Heat and Dust*, she had acquired a great deal of experience in the editing room observing the editing skills of James Ivory during the editing sessions of other films over the years, and she decided to structure the plot for her new novel *Heat and Dust* based on two different time periods. The film travels back and forth in time between the 1920's and the present-day London

and India. Unlike *Heat and Dust*, which spanned two continents, *The Householder* was geographically limited to Delhi and the outskirts of Delhi.

How the Films Begin:

The beginnings of films are very important because they set the tone, and the mood, and they also very often give us the pace of the film. *The Householder* begins with a scene that is in reality one of the last scenes in Jhabvala's novel, appearing just a few pages before the novel concludes: the wedding ceremony of Sohan Lal's brother which is attended by Prem and his wife Indu. Unlike the novel, the film begins with a flashback technique that is employed in order to trace Prem's life as it was, exactly a year back just after his wedding. The wedding scene in the film is strategically placed and is significant as it prepares the audience to expect a picture of domestic life. The entire story, as we are to learn later, revolves around the lives of the newly married couple Prem and Indu who are attending the wedding ceremony of another couple a year later, where Prem looks back at how his own life started after his wedding. This brings us to how Prem tells his own story to Sohan Lal's brother starting the film from the first-person narrator's point of view, employing the classic Aristotelian narrative techniques used primarily in fiction but here employed in film as well: mimesis (showing) and diegesis (telling) (Giannetti 334).

While *Heat and Dust*, the Booker-Prize winning novel, starts off with the narrator telling us about Olivia's going away with the Nawab, the film starts off with a scene at the Nawab's palace at Khatm where the Nawab is playing host to the British officers posted in India along with their wives at an opulent ceremony. Unlike *The Householder*, the narrator does not tell us this using the flashback technique; instead we see the film begin with the opulent ceremony. This is followed by the scene shifting from the India of

the 1920's to present-day London, where the unnamed narrator of the book, Anne in the film, is seated beside Harry, in his London home, trying to piece together information that she is researching, before embarking on a journey to India. Anne sets out on this journey, not on account of any spiritual path that she is seeking in India or as a Westerner who is fascinated by the East, but because she is intrigued by her grandmother's sister Olivia, whose life she decides to trace in Khatm and Satipur. Although the film does not begin with the flashback technique like *The Householder*, it does employ the technique in a very unconventional manner. Instead of making use of the flashback as it is ordinarily done when filmmakers want to show someone narrating or recalling an incident from the past, *Heat and Dust* uses the technique to create a horror scene that scares Olivia. This daydream occurs when she's out with the Nawab where she visualizes Amanullah Khan and his people stabbing their guests to death in a tent.

Speech:

As we know, Jhabvala has a good ear for speech. It is perhaps because of all the years she spent living in various countries throughout her life that she can easily recognize and grasp the speech patterns and dialects of people belonging to different places. It is her ear which can be called her biggest asset as it is with this ear that she captures the speech patterns and the rhythms of people's speech. She not only envisages her characters but also supplies each of them with characteristic jargon and dialogues so that they go on to become memorable characters in her novels. The speech that each character is infused with also helps in spelling out the socio-economic class that most of them belong to, which is a distinguishing feature of Jhabvala's writing. In writing the screenplay for the film *The Householder* she does a marvelous job by placing the most

authoritarian words in the mouths of the most authoritative characters such as Mr. Chaddha, Mr. Khanna, and Prem's mother. The scene where Mr. Chaddha reads aloud about idlers while seated in the staff room in order to mock Prem and another scene where his strong words coerce Prem into apologizing for his conduct are powerful scenes and dialect-heavy, carrying the power of shaming Prem. "How dare you talk to me in this impudent manner?" "Mr. Khanna shall hear of this matter." "I insist on an immediate apology." Later, we also see Prem's mother using Indian English words on her arrival at Prem's place. While getting off from the *tonga* she tells Prem in a very colloquial fashion "Look, look, look what he is doing," which is almost a literal translation from the Hindi language.

What is also intelligently portrayed is how speech gets mixed up in the film. Jhabvala chooses an interesting manner to depict a chaos of words. On one occasion speech is mixed up among three Indian characters and on another occasion there is a series of exchanges where again speech is seen getting mixed up between an Indian (Prem) and a foreigner Ernest (called Hans in the novel). On the first occasion where the three Indian characters, Prem, Mr. Khanna, and Mrs. Khanna are present, a futile attempt at making sense of a conversation only leads to a comical scene in the film where the three are present, and are separately involved in trying to make conversation. They are completely oblivious of the fact that no one is making any sense at all, and are in fact talking about three different topics, where Prem is discussing the hardships of Mr. Sohan Lal, Mr. Khanna is discussing the merits of a healthy mind and a healthy body, and Mrs. Khanna is harping on the maintenance of her recently dry-cleaned carpet. What is really striking about this scene is that Jhabvala's subtle sense of humor is at its best here where

she manages to make each speaker come off as victorious during this conversation. Each speaker present feels that he or she has achieved what he or she set out to do, except for Prem, whom we know has not been able to achieve what he wanted to do. Therein lies Jhabvala's expertise in depicting just that, and Jhabvala triumphs in the end and is seen coming off as victorious. The second occasion is when Prem and Ernest meet and Ernest starts a conversation about illusion and *maya* while Prem goes off on a tangent about India's five-year plan. This is yet another comical scene which is very wittily written and further aids in bringing out Jhabvala's subtle sense of humor.

Heat and Dust, the film, on the other hand, because it mainly includes characters that belong to Indian Royal families and British officers who are serving in India, is filled with speech that can almost be called grandiose. This is also on account of it being a partial period film. The manner in which the authoritative characters such as the Nawab and the British officers talk to each other is almost haughty and can also be called lofty to a certain extent. However, Jhabvala's present-day Indian characters such as Inder Lal and *Maji* have a different kind of speech, which is characteristically Indian. Another interesting aspect is the fact that a lot of the dialogues in the film are uttered in Hindi and Urdu. This is a very different exercise from *The Householder*, where it was painstakingly ensured that not a single bit of dialogue was in Hindi. In *Heat and Dust*, perhaps the use of Hindi and Urdu is deliberate in order to throw light on the socio-economic differences and show the hierarchical relationship between Anne and the native English speakers. An emphasis on speech is seen in the film on several different occasions. The most direct example is when Anne addresses Chid for the first time. She asks him if he's American because of his accent. Hindi is also spoken by the *ayah* who is in charge of following

Olivia around, and also by Inder Lal, who translates everything that Anne speaks in English into Hindi for his mother. However, speech does not get mixed up in *Heat and Dust* and that is because, unlike Olivia, Anne actually makes an attempt to learn Hindi and tries to communicate in Hindi whenever presented with an opportunity.

Indian Images:

Although Jhabvala does a splendid job in displaying her talent for speech, using novel ideas such as letters to describe her protagonists' thoughts and feelings, and flashback techniques to travel back and forth in time, sometimes one wonders while watching the film whether she is indeed writing only for the western audiences. The manner in which she uses some very Indian images lends an exotic quality to the film and comes across as deliberate. For instance, right from the beginning of the film in *The Householder* we see bullock carts on the roads, *Khasttati* curtains in the staffroom of Prem's college, bangle sellers selling bangles on the doorstep, Indu swinging on swings in the farms and sucking sugarcane with her friends, Mr. Seigal being massaged with oil by a masseur, *rudraksha* beads worn by the swami, and incense, fruit and flower offerings to the swami as well as the deities; all of these are distinctly Indian images that have a characteristic Indianness about them.

Heat and Dust, on the other hand, does not have any Indian images in it that seem deliberate. The whole setting at the palace of Khatm, the portrayal of Indian royalty, and the manner in which the entire setting of the 1920's is created is a part of the novel, and nothing seems to be overdone.

Stereotyping Indians:

Jhabvala's novels and consequently the films often stereotype Indians and this is done in more ways than one. Indians are depicted as inferior when compared to the Westerners in terms of their education, and their skin color, and they are looked down upon due to their supposedly backward way of thinking. Jhabvala describes this to us in *The Householder* when Ernest's friend asks Prem about which form of yoga he practices, and Prem responds by saying that he does not practice any form of yoga. This statement of Prem's is almost met with disbelief and he is told that he should be practicing some form of yoga or the other.

In *Heat and Dust* there are several instances when this stereotyping comes forth through Jhabvala's characters. One incident is when one of the *memsahibs* mentions the *dhobi* incident where she says that Indians have only one thing on their minds. The second incident is when Dr. Saunders tells the Nawab, who is an Indian himself, about how Indians aren't intelligent enough to understand things. "Its no use arguing with them, they're not amenable to reason. They haven't got it here, you see, up here, the way we have" (121). Similarly through Inder Lal's family we see what Anne thinks about Indians and their belief in the modern medical system. Jhabvala brilliantly uses Indian superstitious beliefs to depict how outdated and backward Indian thought is as compared to the Western modern scientific approach to medicine. The manner in which she depicts Ritu's illness and Inder Lal's refusal to get her treated by a doctor because of his reliance on some superstitious ways to ward off evil spirits is another example of Jhabvala's depiction of Indians and as backward.

Symbolism in the films:

In *The Householder* there are scenes that convey symbolic meanings distinctly. Indu and her friends swinging on the swing not only clearly depicts the carefree days of Indu's youth, but the swing's movement back and forth also depicts a shift in the scene from the present to the past and back to the present. In yet another scene two birds are seen trapped between a semi-shut window and a ceiling fan. Just as the birds cannot escape to a place of safety, similarly Indu also seems trapped at home with nothing much to do in her spare time.

Several scenes in the film are loaded with symbolic meanings. Right at the beginning the nurse in Dr. Saunders' hospital parts the curtain to see Mr. Rivers arrive on his horse to meet his wife, Olivia. The parting of the curtain can be seen as a symbolic lifting of the veil from the catastrophe that Mr. Rivers is soon going to learn about. Another scene where the Begum is first introduced to us is also noteworthy because the Begum is not directly introduced to us. Instead the camera goes through a *Khashtati* curtain and we see the Begum sitting in the *pardah* quarters amidst other womenfolk of the house. This indirect approach to depicting the Begum represents two things: one, that she wields an indirect control over the governing of the state of Khatm through her son the Nawab, and two, that she is not directly approachable by the British women such as Olivia, not just because of her status as the queen, but also because of the language barrier. Finally, we come to the most interesting symbol in the film that is represented through birds in a cage when Olivia is seen writing one of her long letters to Marcia. The birds in the cage represent entrapment against their will, which is just what Olivia feels

her position is, trapped in a hollow marriage, and consequently torn between Douglas and the Nawab.

Expressing thoughts and ideas:

As films are known to be a difficult medium when it comes to depicting the thought flow and the inner workings of the mind, most of the inner action that takes place within the characters' minds has to be depicted with artistic skill, and the onus of projecting this on screen rests heavily on the screenwriter's shoulders. The techniques that Jhabvala employs in *The Householder* to project such abstract ideas is nothing short of brilliant, and for this purpose she makes use of several methods to show the audience what the characters are feeling inside. First, we see her placing a popular sad Hindi song on Prem's lips to depict how unhappy Prem is, and as he hums the song in the staff room recalling the good old days when he watched newly released Hindi films along with his friends (back in Ankhpur), he ends the conversation with how these days he cannot afford going to the cinema anymore. Second, she makes use of a letter that Prem writes to Indu during her absence but never musters the courage to mail. The letter conveys to the audience Prem's innermost desires about how he misses Indu and how badly he wants her back. Besides telling the audience about the inner feelings of Prem's mind, this letter is also instrumental in moving the action forward.

In *Heat and Dust*, once again we see how Jhabvala takes the help of letters in order to express the inner workings of the mind and help move the story further. Olivia's letters to Marcia reveal not only Olivia's character to us but we also learn exactly how Olivia feels about Mrs. Crawford and the other *memsahibs* who lived in Satipur. Similarly we see Anne recording every conversation with Harry on a tape recorder in the

film, so that she can compare Olivia's letters with what Harry has said. This technique will help her in piecing together information on Olivia's life for her research during her stay in India. In this way, whatever Harry speaks into the recorder helps move the film forward, giving the audience a picture of Olivia's life back in India as seen through Harry's eyes.

In the film, much is conveyed to the audiences through the use of mirrors. On several occasions mirrors are used in order to describe the inner feelings of the characters. The first time we see the use of a mirror is when Ritu dresses Anne up in Indian clothes. After Ritu has finished dressing Anne up, both of them look in the mirror, which for a moment becomes a medium that depicts the joy of the two women. A sense of bonding is established at that instant between the two as they gaze happily into the mirror. During one occasion when Olivia is visiting Harry in his suite, both Harry and Olivia together look into a mirror and the mirror reflects a sense of dissatisfaction on both their faces as they both know that Olivia's presence is not approved of by the Begum and hence Olivia is never taken to the Purdah quarters. Once again a large antique mirror is used when Anne and Inder Lal go to the palace at Khatm. Through the mirror we are given to see the inner feelings of both Anne and Inder Lal for each other, just before they consummate their love.

Also another interesting technique adopted by Jhabvala to depict the turbulent times and to place her characters in a historical context is making use of political figures who were at that time fighting for the independence of India. While explaining a riot that had taken place, one of her characters lays blame for the political upheaval on Mr. Gandhi. Furthermore, the manner in which the heat of Satipur and Khatm is depicted in

the film is very interesting. On numerous occasions we see Douglas wiping sweat from his brow with handkerchiefs; throughout the film we also see several characters drinking beverages in order to keep themselves cool. However, one scene that really captures the heat in the film is the one shot at the palace at Khatm. This scene shows the Indian boy half asleep on duty with exhaustion and heat while he manually operates the fan in Harry's room.

Sounds:

What cannot go unnoticed throughout in the film, *The Householder*, is the brilliant use of sounds made at every step in the film. The passage of time is more than once described by employing music very cleverly. A medley of sounds occurs throughout the film, which is a pleasure to both hear and watch. Starting at the beginning where Prem and Indu attend the wedding of Sohan Lal's brother, the Indian classical instrument *shehnai* that is played at Indian weddings is heard while approaching the wedding house, but upon entering the wedding house where the guests are received a popular number from a Hindi commercial film is heard and the place reverberates with one of the 70's greatest hits, "Yahoo." This is a splendid method to depict the change that is taking place in society and very beautifully captures, in a nutshell, all that Jhabvala's writing represents: Indian society on the brink of change, where the traditional gives way to the modern. Next, we see how sound is once again brilliantly employed during the tea party at Mr. Khanna's residence. The shame on Indu's face at having eaten more than her fair share, and the disgust on Prem's face at seeing Indu eat like a glutton is beautifully portrayed as Mr. Chaddha's classical Indian song, which he breaks into, rises and falls in its pitch. The emotions on Prem's and Indu's faces also rise to a crescendo and drop after

it is finally over. Furthermore, we also see how Western classical music finds its way into the film when Prem goes to meet his friend Ernest. In order to depict a change in the setting, that is to show the house of a Westerner, Western classical music is playing in the background while Prem is directed to Ernest's room. Another scene in which we hear and see sound being effectively employed is when Prem returns home after visiting the swami. On his return, as he enters the Seigals' home, to enter his own, we hear laughter in the alley, which stops as soon as he enters and then starts the gleeful laughter of the children who are running in circles around a bed that is placed in the courtyard, to the accompaniment of a radio jingle. However, Jhabvala's subtle sense of humor is best depicted in a scene with the help of a jubilant song that is buzzing on the radio while Prem and Raj are sipping tea at a tea stall. What is comical about this scene is that the song playing on the radio is about the impossibility of losing a beloved one. Unfortunately, Prem's attempts at clinging on to Raj, his dearest friend, turn out to be futile, and Raj dashes off and Prem once again foots the bill in order to buy some time from Raj so that he can enjoy the pleasure of his company.

Heat and Dust also employs different kinds of sound very effectively to say the least. At the very beginning of the film we hear classical Indian music playing in the background when we are introduced to the Nawab of Khatm. This is followed by the Royal band that plays the welcome note for the British officers and their wives present at the Palace at Khatm. Furthermore, the gun salute for the British officers that is heard later can also be seen as a symbolic auditory representation of the unrest that we later see between the Nawab and the British officers. The scene in which Anne is shown entering Inder Lal's home from the busy bazaar captures all kinds of noises from radios buzzing to

the honking of motorists' horns to the speech of shoppers and sellers to the sounds of children playing in the alley. All of them are captured brilliantly and used superbly in order to show the difference between outdoor and indoor shots. On two occasions we hear Western music playing in the background. One is when the hangers-on in the Begum's *purdah* quarters are dancing around in Western style and the other occasion is when Olivia plays Schumann for Harry when he comes there to escape the heat from Khatm.

Techniques used in the films:

The dissolves and wipes used in *The Householder* to show the transitions between the scenes are very intelligently employed. For instance, the dissolve that shows Prem sitting on the bed and writing a letter to his wife with the BBC English news being read by a woman news reader dissolves into a male voice, that of Mr. Chaddha, in the classroom, lecturing further on the glories of the British Empire. This depicts a change of scene from Prem's home to his workplace in a very effective manner. Also the manual fodder-cutting machine which Indu turns around (during her flashback about her youthful carefree days before she is married off to Prem) dissolves into the noisy whirring of the ceiling fan which, with its spinning motion, turns time around and brings Indu from her thoughts of the past to the reality of the present.

In *Heat and Dust*, of the first three scenes in the film, two are faithfully taken from the novel. The interesting aspect about the manner in which this film starts off is the fact that the film tells us three different stories from three different time periods to begin with. The three stories later go on to merge and become two stories that are thereafter told simultaneously. The film starts off with the introduction of the Nawab of Khatm

presiding over a large ceremony where he sees Olivia for the first time. This scene is followed by a leap in time where Douglas, Olivia's husband, mourns the loss of his wife on discovering that his wife, after her miscarriage, has left him, and instead of coming home has gone off to the Nawab of Khatm. This is further followed by a scene where the camera shifts to Harry's home in London where Anne (the unnamed narrator in the novel) is seated with Harry, trying to go over some of the facts before her journey to India. So we see that the three time periods depict three different states of mind: the Nawab's secret pleasure at meeting Olivia, Douglas' realization that Olivia will never come back to him, and Anne's inclination to leave for India and trace Olivia's life there.

The film, like the book, makes use of the narrator in order to have a voice-over on several different occasions. The first time we see this technique being employed is to show the shift from Anne's location as she travels from London to India. This is depicted through a scene where the camera travels through a busy marketplace capturing the hustle-bustle of the busy place as Anne, who provides the voice-over in the film, makes her way from the marketplace to her landlord Inder Lal's home. During this walk from the bazaar to home she describes (with the help of the voice-over technique) a little about her new boarding arrangement with Inder Lal's family. Another time we see the use of voice-over technique is when Anne goes to Maji's house for the special massage that midwives give in order to terminate pregnancies for women who desire of get rid of children that are growing in their wombs. The voice-over is used effectively here once again in order to show us Anne's visit to the ramshackle hut where Maji lives by herself, practicing her art in order to support herself.

Differences between the novels and the films:

The film *The Householder* is a faithful adaptation from the novel and the entire credit for this goes to Jhabvala. As the writer of the novel, Jhabvala, manages to display her fidelity by staying very close to the subject even while writing for a different medium.

In *Heat and Dust* what is seen in the novel as a cautioning to the Westerner traveling to India, in terms of Miss Tietz's (from the Women's dormitory of the Society of Missionaries hostel) warning to the unnamed narrator about India and Indians, is translated into Harry's warning in the film to Anne, reminding her not to travel to India without the necessary injections and how to avoid certain kinds of food. Contrary to the novel, the film skips the entire episode of the unnamed narrator of the novel arriving in India and living in the Women's dormitory of the Society of Missionaries hostel all together. Instead, the film shows Anne as a paying guest at Inder Lal's house from the moment of her arrival in India. There are several differences between the novel and the film. For instance, the scene in the film that depicts Douglas' agony is in fact the first sentence in the novel and establishes the reason for Douglas' suffering. Although the first line of the novel does not depict Douglas' reaction for the readers of the book, it does start off by giving them the reason Douglas mourns in the film. Another interesting scene in the novel is the one where, during the Nawab's picnic, he, along with his retinue and Olivia, plays a game of musical chairs. Although the Nawab wins the round of musical chairs, perhaps by using guile distracting Olivia with his courtesy, in the novel, the same is not true of the film. The film deviates a little from the novel, and in the film the Nawab deliberately offers Olivia the last cushion as an act of courtesy and lets her win the game.

Thus we see that the films have given Jhabvala's writing a totally different dimension. Although she has written for the two different media she has gone on to express her preference for novels in various interviews. The film adaptations only show us how Jhabvala's world is lifted from her books and infused with life using another medium with the necessary changes for the film medium. This adaptability of Jhabvala's is where her greatness lies, and the dexterity with which she manages the two media is commendable, making her audiences desire more great literature from her.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Through this thesis I have examined the ambivalent feelings of Jhabvala which she harbored regarding India and Indians over the period of years that she lived in India. By closely examining the two novels *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust* and also drawing information from her own essay entitled “Myself in India,” I have shown how she truly felt and regarded India as well as Indians from the time she came to live in India until the time she left it. The thesis traces her journey from enthusiasm to disillusionment.

This thesis has demonstrated that although Jhabvala began with writing about a world that she was most familiar with, the extended middle-class Indian families, she graduated to writing about the Indian royal families as well as the lives of the British officers who were posted in India in order to govern the Indians during the period of the Raj. We see the brilliance with which she created the settings in which she placed her characters. This is definitely praiseworthy because she is one of the few writers who is not an Indian by origin but manages to touch the soul of every reader through her realistic depictions of Indian society on the brink of change. It is capturing this transitional phase through words in her novels that can be truly regarded as her greatest achievement.

I also look at Jhabvala’s extraordinary skills as a writer. I have studied the manner in which she has employed various techniques to not only bring her characters to life, but

also to make some of her characters, along with some of the scenes in her novels, memorable, so that they'll go down as solid pieces of writing in the history of literature.

This thesis tries to study not only the characters and their social milieu but also the circumstances that surround the characters which compel them to act and behave in the ways in which they do, and how Jhabvala as an outsider perceives their actions and reactions to some of the events in their lives: both the mundane ones and the significant ones from a foreigner's gaze.

Besides looking at the manner in which her work has been received in the Western world as well as the country where she places her characters, India, and how prominent critics categorize her writing, the thesis studies the critics' reactions and why they thought the way they did. While some critics are all praises for it, a few Indian critics have concluded that her vision is limited and that she cannot venture beyond a certain territory.

Finally, the differences between the two media that she wrote for, novels and films, truly bring out her real colors as a writer. This chapter in the thesis proves that Jhabvala is capable of writing not only about the comic side of life, but also writing about the more austere and solemn things in life. She leaves an indelible mark in both media and will always be reckoned as a writer who has a blend of sincerity and subtlety in her writing and who is able to write magnificently about tradition and modernity, the conventional and the aberrant.

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VITA

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