

Exploration of India in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Heat and Dust

Dr. Twinkle B. Manavar

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Smt. B. V. Dhanak Arts and Commerce College, Bagasara - 365 440
(Guj.), India.

Email: twinklemanavar@rediffmail.com

Abstract: *The paper focuses on India with its various forms. In the novel Jhabvala highlights Indian poverty, its beauty and its heat and dust. Heat and dust become both the physical and emotional landscape in the novel. The heat of love is a sure protection against the external heat. The novel provides a significant comment on the outward heat that repels and the inward warmth that allures. It also presents the parallel love story of the Nawab with Olivia and the narrator with Inder Lal. In the novel, Jhabvala has not missed the heat of the sun and the heat of the human blood. The narrator finds nothing except flat land, broiling sky, distances and dust. The heat symbolizes that intense sexuality which India is thought to offer. The wittiest irony comes out in the narrator's husbandless state breeding a child.*

Key Words: *landscape, repels, warmth, allures, broiling sky, symbolizes, intense sexuality, husbandless state, breeding.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Jhabvala, in *Heat and Dust*, describes India in its variegated form, a country of heat and dust and moral depravity. The novel presents the parallel love story of the Nawab with Olivia and the narrator with Inder Lal. Moreover with the love story, the novelist also highlights India – its poverty, beauty and its heat and dust. There are many ways of loving India, many things to love her for – the scenery, the history, the poetry, the music and indeed the physical beauty of the men and women. But all these are dangerous for the European who allows himself to love too much.

2. DISCUSSION:

In the beginning of the novel, there is a reference to Indian poverty through the discussion on the part of the narrator with a lady in the S.M. hostel. The lady while showing the Indian streets to the narrator tells her that there are crowds of people; some are sleeping without their bedding. There are a number of crippled children and probably by day they beg but now they are off the duty and seem to be light-hearted. People are buying from the hawkers and standing there eating, while others are looking in the gutters to find what has been thrown away. And some of them do not even have the money for food; they just sleep on the street. They beg from each other and steal from each other. They are all sick, some of them dying. The lady points out:

One day I saw a terrible sight. He can't have been more than thirty, perhaps a German or Scandinavian – he was very fair and tall. His clothes were in tatters and you could see his white skin through them. He had long hair, all tangled and matted; there was a monkey sitting by him and the monkey was delousing him. Yes the monkey was taking the lice out of the man's hair. I looked in that man's face – in his eyes – and I tell you I saw a soul in hell. Oh but I've seen some terrible sights in India. I've lived through a Hindu-Muslim riot, and a smallpox epidemic, and several famines, and I think I may rightly say I've seen everything that you can see on this earth. And through it all I've learned this one thing: you can't live in India without Christ Jesus [1].

The narrator also mentions about the travelling in Indian buses. She says that the buses are full with people inside and luggage on top; and are always so old that they shake up every bone in the human body and every screw in their own. If the buses are always the same, so is the landscape through which they travel. There is nothing except flat land, broiling sky, distances and dust. Especially dust: the sides of the bus are open with only bars across them so that the hot winds blow in freely, bearing desert sands to choke up ears and nostrils and set one's teeth on edge with grit.

Above all India's poverty, Major Minnies points out various facets of India. The Major becomes sympathetic to India. According to him, the most vulnerable are always those who love her best. There are many ways of loving

India, many things to love her for – the scenery, the history, the poetry, the music and indeed the physical beauty of the men and women. But all these are dangerous for the European who allows himself to love too much. He says that India always finds out the weak spot and presses on it. He also refers to it as another element, one in which the European is not accustomed to live so that by immersion in it he becomes debilitated, or even destroyed (like Olivia). The Major concludes, it is all very well to love and admire India – intellectually, aesthetically, he does not mention sexually but he must have been aware of that factor too. He warns, one should never allow oneself to become softened by an excess of feeling. The last word Major Minnies has to say on the subject and his final conclusion:

He who loved India so much, knew her so well, chose to spend the end of his days here!
But she always remained for him an opponent, even sometimes an enemy, to be guarded and if necessary fought against from without and, especially, from within: from within one's own being [2].

In the novel, Olivia's story begins somewhere in summer with the heat and dust. Olivia used to shut all the doors and windows of her big house to keep out the heat and dust. The narrator finds nothing except flat land, broiling sky, distances and dust. The heat symbolizes that intense sexuality which India is thought to offer. The wittiest irony comes out in the narrator's husbandless state breeding a child. A witty irony shows how Olivia's pregnancy is divulged to both lover and husband.

Heat and dust become both the physical and emotional landscape in the novel. The heat of love is a sure protection against the external heat. The novel "provides a significant comment on the outward heat that repels and the inward warmth that allures" [3]. Heat and dust could not keep Douglas away from duty but after returning home, "he just wanted to be home, with Olivia, in their tasteful English bungalow, leaving outside all the heat and problems he had to contend with the whole day long" [4].

In the novel, Jhabvala has not missed the heat of the sun and the heat of the human blood. The scorching heat and suffocating dust of the Indian summer, have been described thus:

Dust storms have started blowing all day, all night. Hot winds whistle columns of dust out of the desert into the town; the air is choked with dust and so are all one's senses. Leaves that were once green are now ashen, and they toss around as in a dervish dance. Everyone is restless, irritable, on the edge of something. It is impossible to sit, stand, lie, every position is uncomfortable; and one's mind too is in turmoil [5].

3. CONCLUSION:

To conclude Jhabvala, in the novel describes India with its various forms. She highlights Indian poverty, its beauty and its heat and dust. According to critics like Shahane, India is the real heroine of the novel. Jhabvala devotes most of the passages to a discussion of India and its effect on the Westerners, in the novel. She shows heat and dust with its physical as well as emotional aspects. The novel provides a significant comment on the outward heat that repels and the inward warmth that allures. Truly, Jhabvala has given a vast picture of Indian landscape in the novel.

REFERENCES:

1. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver (1994). *Heat and Dust* (p. 5). Harmondsworth:
2. Penguin.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
4. Sarma, M.N. (Dec. 1977). "Of Emigrants and Exiles: Changed Perspective in Jhabvala's Fiction," *Littcrit*, 3(2), p. 40.
5. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver (1994). *Heat and Dust* (p. 85). Harmondsworth:
6. Penguin.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 79.