

DISGUST AND DISILLUSIONMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF JHABVALA'S SECOND PHASE NOVEL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *HEAT & DUST*

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Abstract

The phase of euphoric response to India in Jhabvala's life gradually gave way to disenchantment with the Indian experiences and withdrawal from whatever empathic feelings she has had with the country of her adoption. While in phase one, she is superficially objective or sympathetic, in phase two, the spiral of negativity become tighter with every next novel until it reaches its apotheosis in heat and dust, which incidentally exposes her real feelings for India. The present research paper reveals the theme of disgust and disillusionment in Ruth Jhabvala's novel Heat and Dust.

vision of India. In Esmond in India, the major part of the blame in the disruption of Esmond-Gulab relationship lies on Esmond himself. He is bully, a cad, a hypocrite and by and large a negative character. Even his creator does not contest this assessment of his character though she does throw subtle hints of extenuating circumstances here and there to shield him from outright condemnation. The presentation of Gulab as an unintelligent and slothful character is one such 'extenuating circumstances' which work in Esmond's favour. He could also be seen as an exceptional character who does not represent the Westerners in India as a whole.

In A Backward Place, the blame almost entirely shifts to India. In this novel, Etta, Clarissa and Judy are attracted by the mystique of India and land up here in different ways and with different objectives. At the present stage, however, Etta is distraught and Clarissa is disillusioned. They are India's 'victims' and represent a large number of such expatriates who come to India in search of ineluctable objectives but end up being its 'victims' condemned to live out their none-too-favourable existence here. If Judy has been able to

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Content: From Esmond in India to Heat and Dust, we find a rising crescendo of negativity in Ruth Jhabvala's

escape this fate and to 'merge' with India, it has been at great cost to her rational self, her identify as a perceptive and thinking individual. Moreover, like Etta and Clarissa, she has now where to go as she has a disturbed background. In these circumstances, she has no alternative but to "give up and wear a sari and be meek and accepting and see God in a cow ... and then who will say that I have not truly merged with India?"

In *A New Dominion*, the image of India gets bleaker as it "convey with astonishing intensity the psychic sum-total of her twenty years' exile" However, the negative vision at its most intense as well as its most complex is embodied in *Heat and Dust*, Ruth Jhabvala's last novel written in India. The novel represents an apotheosis of negativity, a dead-end after which the writer does not find the light of creativity to take her forward.

While we may not agree with Nissim Ezekiel that while working on *Heat and Dust*, Ruth Jhabvala was "overheated by hatred" and that "she needs a holiday from her hatred," there is no running away from the fact that *Heat and Dust* embodies a negative image of India at its intensest. Also, in *Heat and Dust*, in the structural device of two parallel story-lines—one operating in 1923 during the British Raj and the other in 1973 in free India—Ruth Jhabvala offers an image of India and of the inter-cultural relationship between the British and the Indians both during the period of British domination of India and the Anglo-India in which Olivia's transgression of the social and political code of the time created a hornet's nest of trouble for herself and for the insular Anglo-India community. Similarly in the 1973 story running along parallel lines, she offers us a view of India and inter-cultural relation in the modern resurgent India. The image of India as portrayed in *Heat and Dust* can thus be analyzed in two parts—that of British India as embodied in Olivia's story and that of post-independence India as reflected in the young narrator's peregrinations and experiences.

There are, however, certain points that ought to be noted before an evaluation of the image of India in *Heat and Dust* is attempted. Once, there are certain aspects of India or inter-cultural relation that are common in both epochs. Thus, for example, the image of India as a land of heat and dust both in its physical as well as metaphorical connotations is common in both epochs. Both Olivia and the young protagonist in the latter story share this assessment of the country of their long sojourn. Secondly, there does not seem to be basic change in the image of the country as it passes from the colonial to the post-colonial shorn of contextual features and incidental details. There is almost one same image of India as a land of exoticism and mystery of irrational attitudes and devious ways, of spiritual heights and physical degradations continues. India continues to remain as a land of contradictions and there being an ingrained incompatibility between the East and the West even in a radically changed context continues. Thirdly, the British image of India, as Greenberger has underlined and patiently worked out, is complemented by the British self-image. The two are umbilical linked and the one cannot be separated from the other.

The very title of the novel embodies the central vision of Ruth Jhabvala vis-à-vis India—the country of her adoption. Using the double though related metaphor of heat and dust, it brings out that the twin phenomenon of this country. But beyond the weather conditions that heat and dust represent, the terms also stand for something more perhaps spiritual aridity or a metaphor for the negative vision of the country for its western seekers.

In the tradition of Anglo-Indian writing, the climate of the country is shown as unbearably hot. This image of a country known for its diversity of climate ranging from tropical heat to arctic cold is intriguing. For instance, in Douglas' spacious house, Olivia gets bored. She has been here for several months and it is only in the evenings or on Sundays that she happens to

meet a handful of stereotyped Anglo-Indian officials' families in town. "The rest of the time Olivia was alone in her big house with all the doors and windows shut to keep out the heat and dust." Similarly, when the Nawab takes Olivia to Baba Firdaus' Shrine, they experience terrible heat. "The country they drove through lay broiling in the sun... At one point the Nawab reached across Olivia to pull down the blind on her window, as if wanting to spare her the sight of all that parched land."

Ironically, Olivia's irritability and supposed weak nerves are ascribed to sweltering heat which "no English woman is meant to stand (it)." Douglas is excessively considering to Olivia and is even guilt-ridden that he is responsible for her supposed suffering in the hot Indian climate. He repeatedly offers her a sojourn in the salubrious climate of a hill-station:

He said: "it'll be all right once you get to the hills. It's the heat, darling, that's getting you."

"I know it is But when will you be able to get away?"

It is obvious that Olivia's tantrums have more to do with lack of sexual fulfillment (she is craving for a child) and her fascination for the young Nawab than with the hot Indian climate. But the myth of India as an unbearably hot country is made to persist.

Significantly, Ruth Jhabvala's personal experiences in India regarding this facet of Indian life correspond exactly with the experiences of the Anglo-Indian community in British India as also the unnamed British traveler-cum-narrator in post-independence India. In *Myself in India*, Jhabvala gives a vivid account of the effect of the sultry Indian weather on her. She writes that many European tourists who come to India meet her and talk about life in Europe. After listening to such tourists and nostalgically recreating her 'English' past, she is "back again in my room with the blinds drawn and the air-conditioner on, the oppression of such afternoons is intolerable for her.

It is a physical oppression-heat pressing down on me and pressing in the walls and the ceiling and congealing together with time which has stood still and will never move again.... India swallows me up and now it seems to me that I am no longer in my room but in the white-hot city street under a white-hot sky; people cannot live in such heat so everything is deserted.... The river has dried up and stretches in miles of flat cracked earth; it is not possible to make out where the river ceases and the land begins for this too is as flat, as cracked, as dry as the river bed and stretches on for ever.

She admits that it is a "hyperbole" but adds that "I need hyperbole to express my feelings about these countless afternoons spent over what now seems to me countless years in a country for which I was not born." In V.A. Shahane's words, "the Heat and Dust, thus stand for an aspect of India, the one which the Olivias and Jhabvalas alike seem to react against."

The topographical and physical characteristics of the country (e.g. its heat and dust) affect of heat, in particular, is such that they become irritable and quarrelsome. The only escape is to some hill-station like Simla where the frayed tempers and irascibility of these pucca sahibs and memsahibs could be soothed. But the men often posted at far-off places would not avail of such easy options. These conscientious and duty-bound officers would instead remain at their posts of duty and even in such inhospitable terrains and weather-conditions would devote themselves to their work. However the option is open for the ladies and they generally make use of it to spend half the year at Simla leaving "the poor old sahibs who had to stay and sweat it out in the plains." (HD, p.37) Mrs. Saunders and Mrs. Minnies are planning to go to Simla and they invite Olivia to accompany them. Douglas also ascribes Olivia's irritability to unrelenting heat and facetiously says that "that's only natural, it happens to all of us." (HD, p.44)

These qualities are physical strength, tenacity of purpose and moral uprightness that all Britishers are supposed to possess in ample measure. Douglas is the prime example of such an image in this novel. His wife Olivia loves him “for his imperturbability, his English solidness and strength, his manliness.”(HD,p.120) In the party given by the Nawab, Olivia noted : “Only Douglas was different. She stole a look at him : yes, he was right. As always, he was sitting up very straight: his evening jacket fitted impeccably. He was noble and fair.” (HD,p.20)

Douglas’ firm and business-like behavior as an administrator is shown when some local rich men come to meet him “with their offerings to the sahib which were baskets of fruits and trays of sweetmeats and pistachio nuts.” (HD,p.41) Douglas’ character comes out vividly when it is contrasted with these people. Thus while Douglas has a robust individuality, all these people “seemed to look the same: they all were fat, and wore spotless loose muslin clothes, and shone with oil and jewellery.” (HD,p.41) These people are obsequious and are gratified that a sahib has deigned to talk to them. “When Douglas went out to greet them, they simpered and joined their hands together and seemed so overcome with the honour he was doing them that they could barely stammer out their appreciation of it.” (HD,p.41) A significant part of Douglas’ Charisma lies in the quality of his voice and his authoritative manner of speech. “Douglas’ voice, firm and manly rose above the rest. When he spoke, the others confined themselves so murmurs of agreement....”(HD,p.41)

Since Douglas represents such ideal qualities, a whole lot of Douglasses is needed to people in the world. Both Douglas and Olivia are keen to have children. “Olivia felt that someone as handsome, as perfect as Douglas should be procreated many times over. She teased him about it – She said she had married him so as to people the world with a whole lot of Douglasses.” (HD,p.93) Time passes but Olivia does

not conceive. She herself is worried about it. “She could not believe it: she was sure that a couple like herself and Douglas were meant to have children, to be the founders of a beautiful line. He too was sure of it.” (HD,p.109) she says that she could not conceive because “she had been so frightened by all the little babies in the graveyard, dead of smallpox, dead of cholera, dead of enteric fever.” (HD,p.109) Thus the rate of child mortality is exaggerated and the country is seen as afflicted with terrible fevers and diseases.

But as a writer Ruth Jhabvala maintains an ambiguous stance towards the supposedly ‘manly’ qualities of Douglas. In spite of his fitting completely in the mantle of an ideal Britisher, there is an ironical hint that he has not been able to make Olivia pregnant. It is suggested that it is the Nawab and not Douglas who makes her pregnant finally. Such reflections affect the portrayal of Douglas as a virile Anglo-Indian official. Olivia’s disenchantment with him and her gradual involvement with the Nawab is due, in part, to an intuitive realization of the hollowness of his character. There is enough evidence in the text to show that Olivia was different from the general lot of Anglo-Indian memsahibs that thrived in Anglo-India. Ever since she comes to India, she feels out of sync with the environment in which she is placed. In spite of all the love and care she gets from Douglas, she is ill at ease with the kind of sterile life she is leading. While other memsahibs devised their own flippant ways of engaging themselves. Olivia chose her own world of fantasy. When she finally devises a way of ‘amusing’ herself, it turns out to be very unconventional one and its ramifications become to serious for the Anglo-Indian society. Thus one part of Olivia’s complex personality conforms to the standards of an average memsahib’s attitudes in the Anglo-Indian Situation. But the other part of it still retains the characteristics of a raw British girl’s fascination for the exotic ‘Eastern’ way of life. When there is an option between a wooden British official and a charming Nawab, she prefers the

latter. Even Marcia (Olivia's sister) confides to Harry that she did not understand what Olivia had seen in Douglas to marry him. For Marcia, Douglas was "just a stick and she was not in the least surprised that Olivia should have got bored to death with him and gone off with someone more interesting." (HD,p.183) It is the raw British girl aspect of Olivia's personality which dominates the pucca memsahib aspect and leads to her revolting against the unwritten code of behavior in Anglo-India.

In the anti-pucca memsahib aspect of her personality, Olivia typifies the image of a young, raw British girl-passionate, aesthetic, spontaneous and unencumbered by the mindset that was typical of Anglo-India. Like Adela Quested of Forster's *A Passage to India*, her response to the Indian phenomena has a naïve romantic quality about it. Thus she is charmed by aspects of life in India which are imbued with the flavor of exotica. She is charmed by the Nawab, his romantic and courteous manner, his mellifluousness in reciting romantic Urdu poetry, his luxurious palace and its inscrutable interiors, his lavish parties and finally the mystique that is a part of his personal life. As a young European girl, it is such exotic Oriental aspects which impress her much. As compared to the charming Nawab, the other Anglo-Indian officials appear quite boring to Olivia. "She kept asking herself how it was possible to lead such exciting lives- administering whole provinces, fighting border battles, advising rulers- and at the same time to remain so dull." (HD,p.19) The Anglo-Indian memsahibs are well aware of Olivia's antipathy towards them. When she refuses to accompany them to Shimla, they half-humourously put it to their being "like a couple of old hens doing matronly things and being comfortable with each other". (HD,p.37) Thus one aspect of her personality finds it difficult to adjust in the ambience of Anglo-India and wants to escape from being dubbed in the mould of stereotyped pucca memsahib – a species found in abundance in Anglo-

India. But in different way, she is herself a prisoner of another kind of delusion. Olivia's tragedy does not emanate from her attempts to escape from getting stereotyped like the other memsahibs in Anglo-India but her being a prisoner of another sort of delusion, a different stereotype. To elaborate, from the Anglo-Indian perspective, Olivia was guilty of stepping over too far into "the other dimension" (HD,p.152) which means allowing oneself to be fascinated by one or the other aspect of India. She had crossed the Rubicon that divided the East from the West, or to be more specific, the Anglo-Indian community from the Indians in general. In Malashri Lal's critical framework of 'the law of the threshold: "Olivia's transgress from one to the other necessitates intrigue, cunning and a dabbling in local politics of power". This finally ends up in her being banished from both sides of the divide and her taking refuge in the tragic solitariness of the Himalayas.

In Anglo-India, India is still seen as the mysterious Orient which has layers and layers of dark mysteries which the rational west can never hope to comprehend. So the best policy is never to cross the Rubicon of social and political divide that separates the west from the East. This policy is best embodied in Beth Crawford who "knew where lines had to be drawn, not only in speech and behavior but also in one's thought." (HD,p.172-73) She was convinced that "there were oriental privacies –mysteries-that should not be disturbed, whether they lay within the place, the bazaar of satipur, or the alleys of khatm. All these dark regions were outside her sphere of action or imagination as was Olivia once she has crossed over into them." (HD,p.173)

While Beth Crawford's strategy was to put Olivia outside her sphere of action or imagination after she had crossed the Rubicon, Dr. Saunders was more vitriolic in his response. It was he who had found her out. Like all members of the Anglo-Indian community, he was outraged. Dr. Saunders criticizes Olivia for her

tragedy. He had always known that there was something rotten about Olivia: something weak and rotten which of course the Nawab (rotten himself) had found out and used to his advantage. (HD,p.174)

Perhaps the most significant and revealing response to Olivia's transgression comes from Major Minnies, the most liberal and sympathetic of the Anglo-Indian fraternity at Satipur. A liberal and a lover of India, Major Minnie was constrained to come to the conclusion that "one has to be very determined to withstand – to stand up to-India. And the most vulnerable... are always those who love her best." (HD,p.174) Major Minnies' thesis on India is expounded by the narrator thus:

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, said the major, are dangerous for the European who allows himself to love too much. India always, he said, finds out the weak spot and presses on it... it is there that India seeks them out and pulls them over with what the Major called the other dimension. He also referred to it as another element, one in which the European is not accustomed to live so that by immersion in it he became debilitated or even (like Olivia) destroyed. Yes. Concluded for Major, It is all very well to love and admire India – intellectually, aesthetically, he did not mention sexually but he must have been aware of that factor too-but always with a virile, measured, European feeling. One should never, he warned, allow oneself to become softened (like Indians) by an excess of feelings: because the moment that happens – the moment one exceeds one's measure- one is in danger of being dragged over to the other side. That seems to be the last word major Minnies had to say on the subject and his final conclusion. (HD,p.174-75)

Among his peers, Major Minnies was most knowledgeable and most sympathetic towards India. And yet, in spite of his empathic affection for the

county, "India always remained for him an opponent even sometimes an enemy, to be guarded and if necessary fought against from without, and especially, from within one's own being." (HD,p.175)

The image of Indians as 'children', so popular in Anglo-Indian fiction, continues in Ruth Jhabvala. Since children are by nature petulant, volatile and imprudent, it is essential to be strict with them and this is supposed to be in their own long-term interest. In *Heat and Dust*, Indians are often reported as adopting cunning and devious ways of hoodwinking the Anglo-Indian officials, like children do with their parents. When a delegation of Indians merchants, who had come to pay respect of Douglas, leaves, Olivia asks Douglas the purpose of the visit, Douglas replies: "there usual tricks. They are full of them. They think they are frightfully cunning but really they're like children (HD,P.42) when Olivia says, "they look like very grown up men to me." (HD,p.42) Douglas replies:" it is very misleading. But once you know them-and they know what you know-well, you have a good time with them. Just as long as you're not fooled. It rather fun really, (HD,p.42) he later tells them in Hindustani "in a roundabout way, that they were pack of rouges." (HD,p.42)

The image of Indian princes and nawabs is two folds Ruth Jhabvala . The first is envisioned by Olivia- a glamorous and enchanting image of the princely India. It is a image of luxury and opulence, of courtesy and rhetoric as also of mystery and exoticism. The image is in itself a stereotype. Olivia is obsessed with this stereotypical image of the princely India and fails to see its observe side-that of decadence, cruelty, venality, etc. but it is these latter aspects which are predominant in the minds of Douglas, major Minnies, Saunders and other Anglo-India and officials who deal with the native nawabs and princes during the course of their professional duties. For then, the nawabs are the bankrupt ruler of a state who, by his vulgar extravagance, has drained the exchequer of the poor

state to its last pie. And when state coffers are not in a position to support his decadent style of living, he joins notorious Bandits to rob and plunder his own people.

Senseless and sadistic violence is another aspect of the princely India in the novel. The two macabre instances highlighting this aspect relate to Amanullah Khan by not offering him opium out of the correct silver chalice. In relationship, Amanullah Khan “invited this Marwar prince and all his retainers to a feast. A ceremonial tent was put up and all preparation made and the guest came ready to eat and drink. Amanullah Khan greeted his enemy at the door of the tent and folded him to his heart. But when they were all inside, he gave a secret sign and his men cut the ropes of the tent and the Marwar prince and all his party were entangled within the canvas. When they were trapped there like animals, Amanullah Khan and his men took their daggers and stabbed with them through the canvas again and again till there was not one enemy left alive. There is an element of bravado in the narration which seems to justify the cruel acts. Thus Karim says that, “there are lots of stories about him and people still sing about him-folksongs and such.” (HD,p.104) The Nawabs brags that still “we still have that tent and the blood is so fresh and new... it is as if it had happened yesterday.” (HD,p.141)

In *Heat and Dust*, certain specific instances of social iniquity are taken and from these broad generalizations about the religious and cultural life of Hindus are made. There is the practice of suttee, for instance, A grain merchant’s wife has burnt herself on the pyre of her dead husband. Different visits are expressed by the Anglo-Indians on the incident of Sati. Thus Olivia says, “the only dissenter is Olivia who argues that in theory at least it is “a noble idea”: “it part of their religion, isn’t it? I thought one wasn’t supposed to meddle with that “, (HD,p.62-63) etc. but the final verdict in the case is pronounced by Dr. Saunders who makes use of this case to revile Hindu religion as a whole:

Its savagery, Dr. Saunders declared. “like everything else in this country, plain savagery and barbarism. I’ve seen some sights in my hospitals I wouldn’t like to tell you about, not with ladies present I wouldn’t most gruesome and horrible mutilations- and all, mind you, in the name of religion. If this religion, then by gad!” he said, so loudly and strongly that the old-bearer with the hennaed beard trembled from head to foot. “I’d be proud to call myself an atheist. (HD,p.63)

Ruth Jhabvala’s stance, here as elsewhere, is detached and ambivalent. Thus whether the Anglo-Indian community treats the suttee practice as a part of oriental savagery of Olivia sees something ‘noble’ involved in it, the image of the bizarre custom being a part of Hindu religious culture is fostered.

In *Heat and Dust*, servants are treated with contempt. Sometimes they are even denied their normal human emotions, attitudes and ways of life. Mrs. Saunders tells Olivia that, “these servants really were devils and that they could drive anyone crazy, that it was stupidity on their part-on the contrary they were clever enough when it suited their purpose-but it was all done deliberately to torment their masters. She gave example of their thieving, drinking and other bad habits.”(HD,p.32)

On her next visit to the Saunders, Olivia hears yet another diatribe against India in general and Indian servants and other menials in particular. This time the focus is on the alleged sexual perversity of the servants. She narrates incident which turn out to be plain hearsay but which seem to have formed part of Anglo-Indian collective memory. Mrs. Saunders speaks of “one lady in Muzaffarabad or one of these places.” (HD,p121) “Her dhobi”, Mrs. Saunders whispered, leaning closer to Olivia. “he was ironing her undoes and it must have been too much for him. They’re very excitable, it’s there constitution. I’ve heard their spicy food got something to do with it-I wouldn’t know if there any truth in that but of this I’m

sure. Mrs. Rivers: they've got only one thought in their heads and that's to you-know-what with a white woman. (HD,p.123)

Ruth Jhabvala's uniqueness as a writer lies in the fact that she writes in and about post-independence India. From *To Whom She Will* (1965) to *Heat and Dust* (1975), all her novels are set in India of the post-independence phase. But then, as we have noted earlier, *Heat and Dust* offers us a double vision in terms of the image of the country that it portrays. While one half of the novel (Olivia's story) is located in the days of the British Raj, the other half is based on the peregrinations and experiences of Olivia Junior in post-independence India. This double vision offers constant comparisons – similarities as well as contrasts – and offers a perspective on the evolution of the western image of India. *Heat and Dust* is Ruth Jhabvala's any novel in which the double vision is present.

In *Heat and Dust*, the experiences of Olivia Junior during the course of her peregrinations in India to put the record straight in her grandmother Olivia's Strange story constitutes an image of new Indian. Such an India is "vast and varied, harmonious and discordant, noble and profane... almost inexhaustible in its range and inscrutable in its depth." The 'research' on Olivia's strange destiny fifty years ago in British India offers her a peep on to mores and manners of the time and being young, intelligent and level-headed; she does demolish the many shibboleths of that era.

Like Olivia, the young narrator as well feels disgusted with the heat and dust of India. The central image of India as a land of heat and dust continues in Ruth Jhabvala's recreation of the new dominion called India. Thus, when Olivia Junior goes with Inder Lal to visit the Nawab's palace at Khatm, her response to the landscape is not much unlike that of her step-grandmother Olivia. For her, once a town is left behind, "there is nothing till the next one 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". (HD,p.15) Later in the novel, she describes the weather and the landscape in India and how it disturbs the mental peace of an individual. She says: "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 everyone is restless, irritable, on the edge of something. It is impossible to sit, stand, lie, every position is uncomfortable and one's mind to is in turmoil." (HD,p.83)

If there are rajahs and nawabs in Olivia's story, they are middle class people, like Inder Lal in Olivia Junior's narrative. Inder Lal in *Heat and Dust* comes from lower middle class and in many ways he is a representative specimen of the new India. In this role, he offers a contrast to the rajahs and nawabs of British India. But the image of the middle class as represented in Inder Lal is far from flattering. The members of this class are depicted as sensual, hypocritical, pretentious and ambivalent and so on. In this way, the image is not much different from the image of the middle class in Anglo-Indian fiction. Olivia Junior records her impressions of Inder Lal thus:

Inder Lal walked close behind me and told me about the goings on in his office. There is a lot of intrigue and jealousy. Inder Lal would like not to get involved ... but this is impossible, people will not let him alone, one is forced to take sides. As a matter of fact, there is a lot of jealousy and intrigue against him too as the head of the department is favourably disposed towards him. This is very galling to Inder Lal's fellow officers who would do anything-such is their nature – to pull him down. (HD,p.16) Inder Lal's living conditions at home are representative of the living conditions of the middle classes in India. After her first visit to Inder Lal's house, the narrator wonders: "I don't know whether I caught them at a

moment of unusual confusion or whether this is the way they always live but the place was certainly very untidy. Of course, the rooms are poly and the children still at the messy stage". (HD,p.12)

The response of the Europeans to the Indian phenomena even in post-independence phase continues to be negative. Perhaps the most odious is the reaction of a young man and a young girl the narrator meets shortly after her arrival in Delhi. The young couple, it seems, had come to India in search of spiritual exaltation after meeting a swami in London. But in India they had been subject to certain negative experiences that had put them off India. The epitome of this young couple's reaction to India comes out in the following conversation they have with the narrator:

"Why did you come?" I asked her,

"To find peace." She laughed grimly: "But all I found was dysentery."

Her young man said: "That's all anyone ever finds here." (HD.p.25)

The reaction of the old missionary that Olivia Junior meets on her arrival in India towards India and Indians is equally hostile-this in spite of her 30 years stay in India. For instance, even after this long stay in India, she hates Indian food and cautions the newly-arrived Olivia Junior on it :

You have to be very careful with your food in the beginning: Boiled water only, and whatever you do no food from these street stalls. Afterwards you get immune. I can eat anything now if I want to. Not that I'd want to – I hate their food. I wouldn't touch it for anything. (HD,p.7)

Actually, the general perception of a European is not much different from that of a child. It is marked by incomprehension, aloofness and even disdain. This response is typified by Olivia Junior's reactions when she is taken to visit a little Hindu shrine made out in a small room. For Olivia Junior "it was no more than a hole in the wall and one had to stop to get

through the opening. Several other people crowded in with us". (HD,p.47) Regarding the deities in the shrine: "The principal god – he was in his monkey aspect, as Hanuman- was kept in glass case: there were two other gods with him, each in a separate glass case. All were made of Plaster-of-Paris and dressed in bits of silk and pearl necklace." (HD,p.17) while Inder Lal was making his obeisance to the three gods and the watchman expectantly looked on, Olivia Junior "was anxious to get out as it was stifling in there with no ventilation and all these people crowded in." (HD,p.17) As a final ritual, Olivia Junior is given "bits of rock sugar and a few flower petals which I did not of course like to throw away so that I was still clutching them on the bus back to Satipur. When I thought Inder Lal was not looking, I respectfully tipped them out the side of the bus, but they have left the palm of my hand sticky and with a lingering smell of sweetness and decay that is still there as I write." (HD,p.17-18) This disdainful attitude towards Hindu religion and ritual betrays a negative view of Indian religions, especially Hindu religion, in Anglo-India.

In Anglo-India, the members of the India royalty lived a luxurious though decadent life. This is typified in the persona of the Nawab of Khatm who drained and impoverished his state to finance his extravagant and dissolute way of life. His degeneration reportedly went to the extent of his being in collusion with dacoits and outlaws who would loot his subjects and share the booty with him in return for the state protection he would offer them.

There may not be actual instances of the Sutte practice in Ruth Jhabvala's new India but there is still a lot of veneration among the people for this old custom. Women still speak of it with a lot of admiration and the act of burning itself is taken as heroic. In the novel, Inder Lal's mother takes Olivia Junior to a cluster of little shrines under some trees. The sight of the shrine along-with the thought of the woman who must have immolated themselves gives

Olivia Junior “ an eerie feeling, but Inder Lal’s mother devoutly joined her hands before the shrines. She decorated one of them with a little string of roses and marigolds she had bought. She told me that, on certain days of the year, she and her friend come with the sweets, milk and flowers to worship these widows who have made the highest sacrifice. “She sounded really respectful and seemed to have the greatest reverence for that ancient custom”. (HD,p.59) Inder Lal’s mother is ever regretful that the custom has been discontinued by legislation.

While *Heat and Dust* marks the pinnacle of Ruth Jhabvala’s literary achievement, it also registers an apotheosis in terms of her negative vision of India. The negativity also signals the dead-end of her creative potential as a writer. In other words, it blocks the way for her growth as a literary artist who must have a rich texture of experience and a positive attitude to life around her to create new works of fiction. Somehow, in Ruth Jhabvala’s case, the source-spring of creativity had died or had been overshadowed by her negative stance. From this point onward, She had two options- to stop writing altogether or to change track and continue exploring and writing on newer areas of human experience. She chose the latter course which involved breaking with the past and starting in a new direction. In specific terms, It meant snapping of her relations with India which had been her creative source-spring for 25 years and to branch out along fresher and greener pastures. In an interview with Paul Grimes of *The New York Times*, she candidly confesses: “Obviously, I have lost my subject.” In this confessional statement, the ‘subject’ is India. With her negative vision reaching a crescendo, it was no longer possible to write on and in relation to the subject with which she no longer identified. In the same interview, she admits: “ I just couldn’t come to terms with India at all anymore, ‘she added . ‘Eventually I decided that I just couldn’t stay in India any longer. I’d just been there too long.’ In 1976, Ruth Jhabvala moved to the

United States with the Intention of staying there permanently.

But while saying good-bye to India, Ruth Jhabvala also feels that “she cannot discard her 25 years in India.” She adds:

That experience has been added,” she said, “to what I bought to India with me, and now I’ve taken it out again. But I certainly want to continue the two if I can. After all, there are not many writers who have spent that long in India.

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