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Current social problems as exploitation and unemployment in the fiction of Ruth Praver Jhabvala

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Abstract

Ruth Praver Jhabvala (07 May 1927 – 03 April 2013) was a German born British and American Booker Prize – Winning novelist, short story writer and two time Academy Award winning screen writer. She is perhaps best known for her long collaboration with Merchant Ivory Productions, made up of directors, James Ivory and the late producer Ismail Merchant Jhabvala wrote a dozen novels, 23 screenplays and eight collections of short stories and was made about in 1998 and granted a joint fellowship by BAFTA in 2002 with Ivory merchant. She is only person to have won both booker Prize and an Oscar.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala seeks to uncover the ideology of patriarchal society in her works and art and how liberated are Jhabvala women characters their place and strength; the question of virginity sexual preferences and male appeasement. She also wants to unveil how Indian women are truly vulnerable to male hegemony in the relevance of feminism to the Indian society. The present research paper is about seeking harmony in the novels of R.P. Jhabvala.

Keywords: Patriarchal, vulnerable, hegemony, ivory merchants, unveil

Introduction

Being a keen observer of Indian Society R.P. Jhabvala observed minute heartbeat and pulse. R.P. Jhabvala, like Mulk Raj Anand, shows exceptional social awareness in her novels in regard to the problems of exploitation, unemployment and suffering. She has been a keen observer of shams and hypocrisy underlying the polished veneer of middle class and upper middle class social life. She paints deeper and deeper into the causes of such social evils as exploitation, unemployment and suffering, which, is like a work, eat into the vitals of progress and prosperity in human society. In her ruthless representation of such social problems, Jhabvala stands on a par with great novelists of the world—Chekhov, Turgenyev Tolstoy, Maupassant, Dickens and Thackeray. Almost all her novels are marked with a social realism. In these novels she is intolerant of social injustice of every type.

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A critic, from an interview with Jhabvala, concluded that she knew only the upper middle classes ranging from minor prince like Rao Saheb in *A New Dominion*; to the school teacher Prem in *The Householder*; that she seemed to be preoccupied with the gala and glamour of the newly rich,

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bizarre spiritualism of the Gurus and the Sawamis and the helplessness of the European living in India ^[1]. She herself lives a lovely and luxurious life in a decent way. But the fact is that all the time she is conscious of the devil of exploitation, evil of poverty and backwardness in India. She knows it well that a large number of people in India do not get enough to eat as they toil and moil day and night and live from hand to mouth. She once said, “can one lose sight of the fact (poverty): God knows, I have tried ^[2].” But the point is that she has tried in vain. She has seen exploitation and the exploited, poverty and poverty stricken man, women and children. They loom large before the eye of her mind and she expresses their poor plight and hopeless condition in her novels. She never forgets to portray the poor and the distressed in her novels. She has no time to stand and stare at the merriments of dance parties and musical concerts as all the time in the heart of her hearts she feels the animal of poverty moving ^[3].

Slums are the centres of dirt and dross, filth and faithlessness. Looking at them she is heavily moved by their ghastly sight. In *Get Ready for Battle*, she describes a slum area, its dwellers and their exploitation combined with their odd jobs and thereby rouses our sympathy. How poor and pitiable is the picture of a slum area she points in one of her novels:

“The slum area was called Gundi Busti. It was just off a busy main thoroughfare in Delhi. There was a sea of huts, side by side, row upon row, tiny squat huts crowded one against the other. The colony was built out of the salvage that came floating down from a more prosperous world—rage and old bicycle tyres, battered tins and broken bricks. Walls were made of dried mud or of battered matting, roofs were a patch work of old tiles, rage and rusty sheets of tin held down at the corners by stones. There were narrow lanes between the rows of huts. The earth was streaked with tunnels of dirty water, vegetable waste and peels were trodden into the mud and scratched up again by many dogs and pigs and a few sick chicken. And the lanes were all crowded with people carrying on their domestic lives in public-eating, cooking, washing clothes, carrying water and hordes of underpaid children playing games with guests ^[4]”. Further, in the same novel, Jhabvala draws the sketch of the women who turned a pile of old examination answer—scripts into little dolls; of the little pigs running here and there and the children going out fishing. The men sat around their huts or drank tea on credit at the tea stalls.

Thus, the novelist has drawn a moving and exciting picture of the poor. Her novels tell us that the poor wear torn and worn loin clothes ^[5]. The man slept and the woman worked hard and was unduly exploited. Woman was contemptuous of man, sleeping lying there like a stone. Her mother or mother-in-law was lean and thin and frail like a dry twig and bent almost double. She squatted on a broken string cot with a child in front of her. She was squashing lice in the child’s head with her finger nail. She seemed to enjoy the work of picking and pricking the lice, saying angrily, “There you devil get to hell”, when every time she caught a lice ^[6].

The person exploited was victimized and they were used to the role of a victim to be convinced that they had no power to act against the exploiter. The exploiting forces seemed to them as powerful and as the tempestuous tides of physical disaster which washed continually over their lives. One could not and did not speak against the exploitation and one

did not agree with diseases, with famine, with death; one accepted, for one was after all human and weak.

The poor and the exploited had started realizing their helplessness. But slowly and surely they were getting conscious of their self-respect. They said in a tone of protest, “we also have our rights, we are not dogs” ^[7]. The poor retorted when some social worker made promises to care for them, “words we can’t eat. On promises our bellies have grown good and fat ^[8].” Who cares for the poor? Some of them just pay lip services to them, while some others advise them to work and work silently, but they want ‘food’. In a mood of morbidness and tone of disgust, the poor remarked: “if you are poor, this is how you are— like this dog, to be kicked by anyone who passes ^[9].”

What sin a hungry man not commit, he can go to any extent and can be exploited. What hunger can do is well presented by the novelist in *Get Ready for Battle*; “There was one young man half-naked and entirely emaciated. He bent over a tin plate and greedily stuffed ring into his mouth while his eyes glowed and his fingers trembled mouth that most of the rice kept falling back into the plate,”

All-the rich, the bureaucrats and the high-up exploit them to the full. In *Get Ready for Battle*, the Government and Municipal officials in league with the rich wanted to exploit the poor and get them out of the way so that they could make their profit. In the name of rehabilitating them, deprived them of their homes, displaced them from the place of their work, tortured, tormented and terrified them so much so that the novelist rightly remarked: “The cruelty and wrong done to the poor can’t easily be forgotten ^[10].”

The poor comprised the cavalcade of so many classes—the labourers, the peasant, the sweepers, the coalmen, the washer- women, the cotton- corders, the butlers, the cooks and the domestic servants in the houses of the rich and also the bearers and the boy servants in hotels and shops.

As in Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Untouchable*, so in Jhabvala’s *Get Ready for Battle*, Sarla Devi’s brother, Brij Mohan contemptuously tells his sister, “I am not used to holding conversation with sweepers”, as the sweepers were considered the poorest and were looked down upon by the casterners. The condition of the cotton corders too was far from wretched. In summer he carried loads from workshop and brought home merely two rupees a day. In winter he went from door to door and fluffed out the cotton in people’s quilt. In *A New Dominion* the novelist says that the cotton-corder worked on the strings of his machine. Flakes of cotton rose and fell in fluffy clouds and entered his mouth and nose and caused hazards to his health.

The coalman in the *Heat and Dust* worked round the clock and was completely exhausted unmindful of and unconcerned with what was happening in the world he lived in. The washer- woman was also awfully busy with her household chores and washing the clothes. She was so engrossed in her work that she did not bother about or sympathize with the tragic happenings around. The poor pitiable peasants were always the same; dirty and drab bodies in dirty and drab loin cloth. The unfortunate poor and the down-trodden toiled and moiled day night as servants to the rich, to the middle class and also to the ‘whiteman’. Keeping in view their nature and nature of their work, the novelist classified the servants into three categories.

a) The ugly pock market old servant who fought book with his mistresses,

- b) An under fed lad who did not fight with his mistress, He looked eight when he was probably eighteen.
- c) A servant who wanted complete modernization in the house was an Indian, Such a servant quents: he did not like them and sometimes behaved badly as in A New Dominion.

Further, there were such servant also as the servants of the middle class people, servants of the rich men, servants of the shop-keepers, servants of the Europeans and the servants of the westernized men and women.

Most of the servants were rude and restless: they quarrelled, they got drunk and had fight with the other over a woman. To some of the English women they were dare devils. Mrs. Saunders in the Heat and Dust, describes them thus: -

“They (servants) were not stupid. They were clever enough when it suited their purposes. They had the habits of thieving, drinking and other bad habits ^[11].”

Mrs. Saunders would tell Olivia, the beloved of the Nawab of Khatm that it was not good for her to be seen by the servants in bed. In the same novel, a lady from Somerset in Muzzafrabad was assaulted by her Dhobi who ironed her chuddies which had been too much for him. She says, “They (servants) are very excitable, it’s their constitution, I have heard their spicy food got something to do with it. They had got one thought in their heads and that’s to do, you know— what with a white woman ^[12].” The servants of the rich were of somewhat different nature and magnitude as the rich had many servants with different roles to play. There was a servant to carry letters from and to the post box, another was to tie the pair of shoes on the master’s feet. There was a boy servant who slept on the floor, with bucket full of coals, dead and black. He rubbed his eyes, made kitchen fire and staggered under a load of bedding ^[13]. He was called from the kitchen to deposit the peel of the banana, his mistress handed him over. He was exploited and shouted at and cursed by his cruel mistress in the same way as Oliver Twist was shouted at by his cruel master Fagin. His mistress said of him, “He stinks with laziness, may his eyes drop out ^[14].” The servants in the rich man’s house were always set on foot. They were commanded, scolded and crushed. The servant in To Whom She Will was called an ‘owl’ though his name was Pritam.

The mistresses were very high minded and hot tempered. They treated the servants crudely and cruelly. They lullied the servants with their snobbery and showiness, snatching the cooking spoon from the cook’s hand and giving an energetic stir herself in one of the vast stainless steel utensils. When she made her appearance, the servants were awe-stricken and ran helter skelter. They all went to their duties with long grave down faces ^[15]. The rich man’s wives never relied upon the servants. They were always suspicious of them. For instance, Lalaji’s wife would say that servants had drunk all the tea and milk and sugar ^[16]. Kusum, the mistress of Gulzarilal also suspected the motives and intentions of the servants. She said to the rich man’s daughter-in-law:

Come in, and you know how their minds will work... one can never trust....The servants are robbing you ^[17].”

There is no age of retirement for the servants in the private houses. The servants of the rich would grow old and sometimes would die in harness. To Whom She Will, the servants of Pt. Ram Bahadur Saxena had been with him for a period of more than twenty five years. The bearer, cook, the coachman and the ‘butler had grown old and cold in his

service. The over all living condition of the servant was pitiable. In Get-Ready for Battle the servant in the house of Brij Mohan slept on the floor of the, kitchen. He was bed ragged, old and sleepy; he had a fever and lay simmering on the dark and dingy corner of the rear veranda.

Stupidity and fooling are the common characteristic of these servants, The servant of S. Devi was an old fool, Once when Mrs. Mehra came to see her in the novel Get Ready for Battle the servant reported thus:

There is a look on her door but I called through the door, even though I saw the look, called Bibiji, are you?

Yet Sarla was kind enough not to turn him out of Job. She has a lot of humane for him,

There were the maid-servants also working hard in the rich man’s house: In The Nature of Passion, there was a maid servant, an old woman who massaged her mistress’ feet and cracked her toes and finger. She flattered her by agreeing to every word she said against her in-laws, She took delight in Contradicting the statement of her mistress’ daughter-in-law’s parents. In A New Dominion, there was one Buhu Bulbul, the maid-servant of Asha, the sister of Rao Sahib, She belonged to the clan of singing and dancing girls none of whom had ever marked but had handed down their traditions from daughter to daughter. Bulbul would sing a lullaby in order to make Asha sleep.

“Sleep Baby asleep, you’ve eaten bread and Sugar. Now sleep.”

Thereafter, she sang a folk song about a girl looking out from her father’s fortress to see if her lover was coming over the ravines. Bulbul told her the stories of old times, of things that had happened in the old place. It was her favorites job to please the Rao Sahib’s sister,

The mood of the mistress of the house changed from moment to moment, it was highly unpredictable, So Bulbul had to show great patience in dealing with her and pleasing her mood. When Asha in a bad mood, she would go into the kitchen, wink at the other servants and tell them that it was going to be a rough and rainy day. When Asha thought of going away and started packing things in a suit case, Bulbul requested Rao Sahib to stop Asha. She would request Asha to take her in with her. Asha kicked at things that got in her way and quarrelled with Bulbul. She would massage Asha’s temples the way she liked. But, Asha would fling her off and tell her to keep out of the way for the rest of the day and perhaps for ever and leave and not to show her ugly face. But a servant is a servant afterall-all docile, meek submissive. So she would take it calmly, coolly and providentially. The rich would never be satisfied with their servants. They would always complain that it was different to train servants and say,” The more servants you have in the house, the more work there is for you to do ^[18].”

At every step the servants were called bad names, cursed, insulted and injured by their masters. The servants in the middle class families had to bear insults and at the hands of their masters or mistresses for instance, Bal in A Backward Place, shouted, “Are you getting my shoes or not ^[19]?”

The servants the westerners kept, were however treated different; they were not much exploited and insulted. A servant who worked in a white man’s family was provided with a new uniform with a high collared coat with brass buttons. American ladies equipped their bearers with white gloves for the purpose of serving guest. But on the other side, it is a paradox nevertheless true that such servants did not like servant Indians, though they themselves were

Indians. Ordinarily in a European family there was always the usual kind of hill-boy servant. Etta, one of the European ladies had such a boy servant. He bent over her bed to remove her breakfast tray, and as he did so, he looked into her apricot night dress with its nylon lace trimming ^[20].

Indian servants were not very costly; their living was very poor, they lived in slums and low quarters mainly made for them, One could have a look at the servant's quarters; they were a row of four yellow dirty huts small windows and tiled roofs which many tiles were missing Outside stood two string cots, one of them with broken leg and some tattered bedding hung up to air on a piece of string. Each quarter held a family and each family usually consisted of several brothers with their dependents; these always included a great many children, besides wives, old parents and widowed sisters-in-law. They paid rent to the landlord not timely and sometimes they would sub-let their quarters ^[21].

Jhabvala in her novel *A New Dominion* describes the house of a servant. It consisted of one airless room. He lived in a room on the first floor. It gave smell of cooking oil and urine and was packed with Women children and sick old man lying on a mat in a corner. There was an Open drain and some dangerously exposed electric wiring.

The attitudes of the Indians towards the servants was different from that of the westerners; it was no of equality or fellow feeling. They always suffered from a caste conflict and thought it in terms of caste and creed. Gopi, the friend and guest of Raymond Was very much annoyed at the bad conduct of Raymond's servant He said;

"He is only a servant, He Should not be allowed to behave in any Way he pleases, He was of a very low caste and so he fastened himself to Raymond and fleeced him mercilessly and insulted their guests ^[22]."

In an incident between Gopi and Shyam at house, the servant clearly shows the attitude of Indians towards the servants, When Gopi wanted Puns breakfast the servant said in a tone of contempt that there were many shops in the market where he could get the kind of Indian food he was habituated of and interested in. At this Gopi got angry and struck the servant at the face. He struck him again and again and called him bad names Raymond caught hold of Gopi's arms. He was very angry with Gopi who said, "such insolence from a servant could not be tolerated", Shyam was a bad servant and should be at once dismissed. It touched the sensibility of Shyam who expressed his unwillingness and inability to continue as long as Gopi was there. At this Gopi said that the servant Shyam should be asked to quit at once. He said, "Please understand my feelings."

Raymond said, "And his (servant's) feeling?" Gopi said, "Are putting him' on a level with me?" Thereafter, Raymond soothed and solaced Shyam.

Shyam came to his room, dusted noisily, sighed and made pathetic cries. Raymond with a heavy heart said, "I am very sorry, Shyam. "He requested Shyam to stay on but Gopi could not tolerate Shyam in Raymond's house. He wanted Shyam to be dismissed. When Raymond said that after his dismissal his family would starve, Gopi said; "what do I come for his family ^[23]?"

The above incident clearly confirms Jhabvala's view that Indians are rough and crude towards their servants and take to be animals. The westerner, on the other hand, treats the servants as 'Children of God' on equal footing with himself. He does, not exploit him, shout at him or storm at him. He realizes and respects the feelings of the servant also. This is

a humanitarian approach of Jhabvala towards a human being.

A novelist is an artist, an artist as a make's maker has a keen eye 'to look at various classes of people living in society. Jhabvala possesses this keen insight. Besides the poor, the slum dwellers and the servants, she feels and finds that Indian women, mainly the widows are badly neglected and uncared for and at every step they are denied their full and free life—one may go to visit the gate of the sacred Ganga and find there a concourse or cavalcade of widows on the steps of the Ganga ghats with their shaven beads. Lean bodies and white clothes. They wear white cotton saris with nothing underneath. Their thin arms and wrinkled banging breasts are visible. They come to the city for purifying themselves of all the desires of the senses and now they live only to pray to god and die peacefully ^[24]. It is indeed a life of peace and happiness to them.

Maji in the *Heat and Dust* is a widow. She is the leader of the widows She was rumoured to have some supernatural powers. She used to live a simple life in a hut under a tree. Its door was made of an old wooden plank. The roof of the hut was a sheet of tin, the walls were of mud which got sooty because of her cooking smoke. It was quite dark inside and all sorts of smells were smelled in—of dimness, the cow dung used as fuel, of lentils and of Maji herself ^[25]. The novelist does not ignore the role and position of the midwives in her novels.

The midwives were of immense help to the people of all types; they saved them from dishonour and suffering but they themselves used to live in small houses in narrow lanes. Jhabvala in the *Heat and Dust* contrasts the midwife of the Nawab's day with that of the post-independent India, yet she finds poverty, a commonly shared property amongst them.

Jhabvala daringly cares for and sympathies with the lot of another hated section of society, exclusively of women, called the prostitutes. The girls in prostitution were from all classes and castes. In *Get Ready for Battle* the prostitute girls were beautiful and buxom young girls with fleshly body and fleshly buttocks, plum arms and soft moist palms. Old prostitutes were the commanding authorities over the young girls, they had toothless betel stained mouth, their breath was hot and full of foul smell of country liquor and of betel in a decaying mouth.

The prostitutes used to live in Red Light Areas. On top of the warehouses there were long lines of verandahs partitioned into small rooms. Outside some of the rooms, hung bird's cages and flower pots. Small groups of pimps betel stuffed mouths and gold ear-ring stood with a face of dump desire for customers. A fat woman lay on a bed smoking hookah; most of the inmates were untidy and unhealthy young girls in rather gaudy dresses. The room was sub-divided by a screen curtain. Every one knew that was going on in those rooms.

In *Get Ready for Battle* the novelist describes a prostitute as one in yellow georgette or a pink sari. She wore gold ornaments in her ears, round her arms, round her neck arid in the parting of her hair. They applied heavily smelt scents and powders. They appeared with their lips painted with lipstick, forehead marked red, nails polished and their palms red.

The young prostitute visited with her old lady, the house of the old rich who had lost everything and knew he was old. The young girls were completely under the command of the

old lady. Whenever the old woman got angry with old bachelor, she would not bring the girls in his service for many days in order to make him feel more and more miserable every day. The prostitutes wanted to exploit the rich and all those who made use of them; they eyed on the purse of their customers and on gifts by them. They looted the customer with their both hands. But ultimately they had to be exploited and had to suffer miserably. They caught the infection of many incurable diseases and the society always looked down upon them.

The novelist is quite conscious of the fact that the society does not approve of the life of prostitute. When a middle aged widow of a military officer begins playing a mistress to some rich man, Jhabvala compares her to a young prostitute. In *Get Ready for Battle*, Kusum was the mistress of Gulzari Lal. The way Kusum cast her long lingering looks, it reminded the old man of Tara, the prostitute and "Kusum clapped her hands in her enthusiasm so that her golden bangle jingled, the way Taras did [26]."

These prostitutes lived a very contemptible life; they were paid meagerly as the lion's share of income would go to the great heavy woman. Jhabvala pities the poor lot of such widows and prostitutes in her novels. In *Get Ready for Battle*, through the medium of one Sarla Devi, she expresses her deepest concern for the poor and unfortunate prostitute girl who comes to meet Sarla Devi's brother. Sarla Devi says to her brother, "The poor girl does not come here for pleasure. I hope you pay her properly".

It is a fact that the poor prostitute girls neither lived for pleasure nor did they get proper money in return for their honour and soul they lost.

Some of the widows and orphans in India turned beggars. They were very common in the crowded cities. In the bazaar two little lads in *A Backward Place* trod on their toes begging for a coin. Addressing the white lady as "Memsahib", they learnt a few English words to promote better understanding, indeed, "There were loppers in hand-made carts, starving mothers with starving babies, crippled children or deformed old men [27]."

Beggars and orphans are also an unfortunate lot in India; they deserve all our love and sympathy. They can be seen sitting on the steps of temples and mosques begging for money and food. It was as evidence to the fact that it was the fate of many to suffer hunger and disease. The beggars looked like essential props placed on the steps of the mosque and the temple to remind those who were going to pray of how much there was to pray for.

In *A Backward Place*, the conclusion is that it was no use giving that was bottomless. But the reaction of the Indians was uncertain and sometimes two fold; one group called them resoles and ruffians and thought they were a burden to the society, while another group had sympathy for them.

As it has already been pointed out that Jhabvala was a European by birth but an Indian by adoption an inside outsider, in order to show her blessing heart for exploited and suffering humanity. She tells a tearful tale of a beggar woman in *Heat and Dust*, her prize winning creative work.

In the light of the above discussion, it is clear that the social interest of the novelist goes much beyond an understanding and criticism of only the middle class. On the other side it is now possible to conclude that the middle class is nearly a back-cloth against which the lower depths of the Indian society are rooted. It may be said that the contact with the

middle class only deepens her love and sharpens her sympathy for and understanding of the poor and the depressed. It may also be interesting to note what a critic observes in this connection:

"The novelist does not to the temptation which can be particularly suitable for Indian writer of attempting a class oriented analysis. Jhabvala is primarily interested not in socio-economic causes and much less in political causes but in stressing the humanity of human persons [28]."

Man has been in search of bread and butter from time immemorial and he has not been in a proper position to find ways and means of livelihood for every person. The problem of job and employment has been proving a challenge to India and we have not been able to solve it in a proper and planned way. Jhabvala in her novels has dealt adequately with the problems but has not shown or suggested any solution to it. Her job is basically that of an artist, and not as sociologist or economist. She looks at the problem like an artist, objectively and dispassionately what is going on in India and how the youth of the country is employed or not engaged in earning the livelihood. She paints and presents the realistic picture of the problem and leaves the measures of solution to the government and the people. She aims to delineate the picture faithfully and not to suggest steps to redress things.

To Jhabvala, as to any socio-economic thinker, population pressure is at the root of the problem of unemployment. The population in India is growing at a tremendous rate and the avenues of jobs are increasing at a very slow pace. Jobs are not and possibly cannot be in proportion to the number of man and woman in the country. In *A New Dominion*, she aptly observes: There seemed to be so many people, but not all that many jobs [29].

One likes to join the government job because of regular payment security of service. These who are employed in private sector prefer government jobs. Besides this, in a government job one feels that one would be getting regular increments in their salary and after retirement they would get some pension and other benefits.

In *A New Dominion*, Gopi thought that he could get a government job like uncle in Delhi, getting a pay of Rs. 450 per month with increment every five years. The novelist perhaps seems to have mentioned increment every five years instead of every year. We have yet to come across a government concern where increment is given every five years. Here it may be that the novelist has a sterile touch in this or perhaps she is making fun of the period and rate of increment or perhaps she has the 'efficiency bar' in mind.

The scheme of pension of government servant is satirized by Jhabvala. They do not get the pension in time; the mode of payment is difficult, it takes months together to get it sanctioned. Even after the death of the employees, the office clerks creates hurdles and difficulties for the heir who makes hard efforts to obtain the money. But he soon gets tired and frustrated. For instance, Jhabvala, in her novel *A Backward Place* points out to a case of a government employee:

"After the death of the person, his wife wrote many letters and petitions and twice a week she went to the office but to no avail [30]."

This is very common feature in the context of our country. It is the experience of almost every person who had been in government job. In this respect Jhabvala has succeeded in presenting faithfully her authentic experience of life.

A job is a job whether gazetted or non-gazetted. It is all routine, dull and dry. It is tiring and calls upon a lot of flattery on the part of the employee concerned. There are only a fortunate few who have not undergone this experience during their tenure as government servants; they are happy-go-lucky people; they are mostly with the government collaboration with private sectors. For instance, so in *A Backward Place* the novelist suggests that with Air India, there are nice jobs. In government offices and departments one has to be very reserved, stern and serious. There is a lot of politics and groupism in these departments. It is difficult for a person not to get involved in them. One is compelled to join one group or the other. In fact, there is much prejudice and intrigue against the employee who is a favourite of the officer. At any cost they want to pull down such a person so it happens in *Heat and Dust*. The life of a clerk in an office is worse; it is all dull and monotonous. Any moment the clerk who in the words of Charles Lamb is a 'devotee of the desk' may be sent for to do the work. He is mentally upset and financially a book number. In *The Householder*, the novelist regrets thus:

"They (clerks) cannot pay conveniently the school fees of their child every month"^[31].

Very sarcastically and bitterly she tells us about the life of the government servants that they are:

"Graded correctly accordingly to their official standing, with salaries and increments laid down precisely, with so many days sick leave a year, with a dearness allowance and family allowance applicable to them. They belonged here, among the revolving chairs and tables and glass screens; they had their allotted share in the working of files and ordinances and when they retired they were given a pension which was in a fixed and settled ratio to what they had been earning all their working lives"^[32].

The service conditions are the worst in private concerns. They are treated as temporaries to be terminated any time from the job. The novelist presents a very grim picture of the workers in a private concern who worked hard, seriously and sternly, yet they had no security of their services. No one could get a job easily without influencing the management. Once one gets in, it was not necessary that he would continue. A man with greater pull, push, pressure and power behind him was most likely to replace him. Jhabvala very powerfully presents this position thus:

"There was uncertainty about it and it was given on personal considerations. They could send one person out of a job for no better reason than they could slide another person into it"^[33].

Those who are in a private job have always a sword of dismissal hanging upon them. Jhabvala most effectively narrates such an incident of a girl in *A Backward Place*, how she was dismissed from service:

"Mrs. Kaul was sitting on a divan with her shoes off and in an easy attitude. In front of her stood a girl, dressed very neatly and carefully in a yellow sari with yellow ribbons to match in her hair. She stood there immobile while Mrs. Kaul spoke to. its courses. "The girl shot a look at Sudhir and Judy. Then she murmured, "Only one more chance." "Mrs. Kaul signed.... And told Sudhir... applications"^[34].

Mrs. Kaul read out many applications to her. The girl blinked her eyes several times. Her body seemed to cleanse itself and suddenly she broke out, in a completely sincere voice and in a kind of amazement that her very simple point was not being taken—"But I need the money". "You can see I

am busy, 'said Mrs. Kaul, "I am in conference". Almost the similar was the fate of Judy who had a job in a motor company and had been working there for the past five years honestly and sincerely. But soon to her surprise and hard luck she found that she was replaced by the nephew of some Income-Tax Inspector. She herself afterwards got a job in the Cultural Dais as an assistant to the General Secretary. Sudhir, a great favourite of Judy, himself got letters of recommendations from one powerful man to get the job and be joined as a clerk in a college office in Orissa.

Even in getting a government service, it is pressure and pull that counts much. For instance, in *A Backward Place*, the Junior Administrator of Radio got the present job with his uncle's influence. It was not an easy job to get a good job as the novelist says, "One had to do a lot of running about to get a job"^[35].

Regional, communal and caste feelings come in the way of getting the appointment in government and private services. Merit and experience were of little importance; favoritism and corruption counted much to secure a job. In *A Backward Place*, for instance, Sudhir, approached a Minister to get a job and the Minister expressed his deep sense of regionalism and communalism by telling him, "We want our Bangali boys up here in the capital"^[36].

In *The Householder* the novelist tells us that even if one were a B.A. often M.A., it is not easy to get a job. The unemployed were condemned and called as "a pack of idle loafers"^[37]. The coffee house was the only centre of the jobless graduates to assemble there and while away their time, and there, "They drank coffee, ate potato chips or nuts dipped in a lot of chutney, read and composed poetry, smoked their own cigarettes and studied the situations vacant"^[38].

All these unemployed built castles in the air. Some of them made a plan to be radio artists while some others would like to do a business. On the whole, they were the objects of both pity and sympathy. Much more sense of pity and sympathy rises when Jhabvala presents two out of many applications received by Mrs. Kaul in bad English and also in bad handwriting. One of the applications, she reads aloud:

"I beg to state I am B.A. of Ludhiana College for Girls from very good family, I am married with two children, my husband has polio and is not working for past one year... "Mrs. Kaul read out another application, "And here", Mrs. Kaul said. This one is even M.A.—"refugee from Lahore" (she screwed up her eyes with effort) "My father was killed in..." her handwriting is very bad"^[39].

It is thus clear that even in those days there was the acute problem of unemployment and it was very difficult to find a suitable job. It was got with the help of pulls and pressures. In this connection, it is rightly remarked:

"Nothing comes to the help of the jobless who like dreamers build castles on sand, talk and gossip, write bad hand, bad English and lead a bad life. The capitalists exploit them to their ends and treat them mercilessly without caring for their dignity or self-respect. The jobless poor wine and pine, moan and groan to no avail"^[40].

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