

## Portrayal of Women in Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* Novel & its Movie Adaptation - A Study

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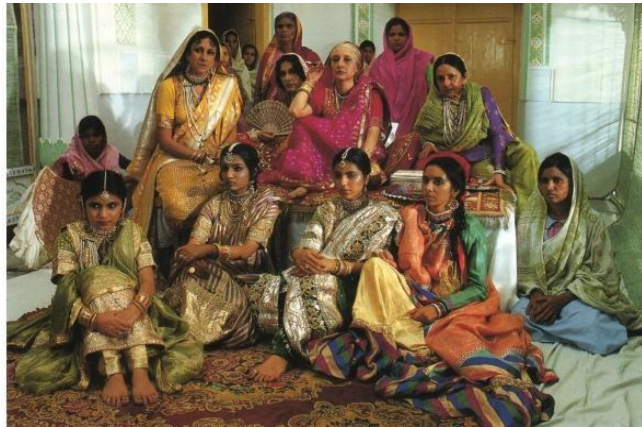
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Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a renowned novelist who has written screenplay for complex novels of Henry James (e.g., *The Europeans* and *The Golden Bowl*) and E. M. Forster (e.g., *A Room with a View* and *Howard's End*). She won Booker prize for her novel *Heat and Dust* in 1975. She also wrote screenplay for the movie adaptation of her award winning novel and won received Britain's National Film Critics Award and British Academy of Film and Television Arts

(BAFTA) Award for Best Screenplay. This study will focus on how women characters of 1920s have been portrayed by Jhabvala in her novel and its movie adaptation.

Canby (1983) describes Begum (Nawab's mother) as „the imperious begum, Nawab's chain-smoking mother“. Shakur and D'Souza (2003) observe that Begum is a „beguiling and dominating force“ in the inner sphere of the palace which is a world of feminine indulgence and a pleasure-seeking hub. These women are not mere background characters surfacing as gentle and pious but representatives of the matriarchal society taking up multiple roles (of mother, wife, or daughter) simultaneously.

### Begum's Private Sphere in the Palace



The way in which Begum receives the English women tells a lot about her unruly character. In the novel, Olivia who has just met Mrs. Saunders is visited by Mrs. Crawford. She has come to take Olivia to Khatm as the Begum (Nawab's mother) has invited them to the palace. "Three good European chairs had been arranged in the centre: these were for Mrs. Crawford and Olivia, and for the Begum herself." (*Heat and Dust* 28)

Olivia keeps quiet as she does not know the local language. The Begum tries talking in English and laughs at herself for pronouncing the English words badly. She is in the fifties. She is beautiful „except for a large wart on her cheek“. She chain-smokes cigarettes out of a holder. She does not feel comfortable sitting on the chair, so keeps shifting her legs indecently quite often. Olivia wants to recline on the floor, but resists herself as it would not have been etiquette (29).

This description on Begum is significant as it has striking similarities with Chaucer's Miller in *The Prologue to Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's Miller loves crude, bawdy jokes. Begum shamelessly laughs at her bad English. Miller has a wart on his nose while Begum has „a large wart on her cheek“ implying greed. Miller drinks hard while Begum chain-smokes. Begum shifts her legs „indecently quite often“ displaying her unsophisticated manners while Olivia resists herself from reclining on the floor as it „would not have been etiquette“ implying the English manners.

In the novel, the Palace ladies enjoy her talk while the „newcomer“ Olivia frequently checks on the door if Nawab would join them or not. When both of them are about to leave,