

## **A Stylistic Approach to Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *The Award***

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### **Abstract**

In this paper stylistic analysis of Jhabvala's story "The Award" is done using the selected tools and methods propounded by Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* (1981). The study of formative elements of the story, such as point of view, characters and allegorical elements, give a better insight of the story. The story is analyzed comprehensively in terms of Lexis, Grammar, Figures of Speech, Context and Cohesion. Since studying stylistics in terms of writers or time periods can be overly broad and may lead to generalization so Leech and Short recommend that, to take style as "the linguistic characteristics of a particular text" is the most appropriate. Finally, the findings and conclusion are given to sum up the discussion.

Keywords – Stylistic Analysis, Lexis, Grammar, Figures of Speech, Context, Cohesion, Jhabvala, The Award

### **I. Introduction**

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics. It has originated as a way of applying linguistic models to literary text. According to Widdowson (1975) stylistics is "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". Short and Candlin (1989) define stylistics as an approach to the analysis of literary texts using linguistic description. However, the term has been controversial so as suggested by Leech and Short it simply can be taken as the study of style.

The stylistic study aims at exploring and investigating how particular choices made by the writer contribute to create particular meanings. It is widely accepted by the critics that a literary text can be comprehended better if it is studied in parallel with stylistic analysis. Leech and Short

state that style is a relational concept, of which the aim of literary stylistics is “to relate the critic’s concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist’s concern of linguistic description” (13).

In *Style in Fiction* Leech and Short provide a checklist of stylistic categories (p. 75-82) which enable us to collect data on a fairly systematic basis. The categories are placed under four general headings: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, cohesion and context. Under each heading, smaller-scaled categories are placed to give a range of data which may be examined in relation to the literary effect of the text.

A: Lexical categories

General

Nouns

Adjectives

Verbs

B: Grammatical categories

Sentence Types

Sentence Complexity

Clause Types

Clause Structure

Noun Phrases

Verb Phrases

Other Phrase Types

C: Figures of speech

Grammatical and Lexical Schemes

Phonological Schemes

D: Context and cohesion

This list is provided by Leech & Short which can be used as helpful means but it cannot be considered as complete model, for “these are attempts to give shape and system to a field of study in which much remains unclear, and hidden beneath the threshold of observation.” (Leech & Short, 2001: 33). Leech & Short further reveal that the study of the relation between linguistic form and literary function cannot be reduced to mechanical objectivity. In both the literary and

linguistic fields much rests on the intuition and personal judgment of the reader, for which a system, however good, is an aid rather than a substitute

## **II. About the Author**

Born on 7th May 1927 in Germany, educated in England, Jhabvala is one of the most prolific writers. Ruth Praver Jhabvala is German by birth, English by education and Indian by marriage. Her family immigrated to Britain in 1939 and attained British citizenship. After completing schooling at Hendon County School in London in 1945, Ruth Praver attended Queen Mary College, London, where she received first a B.A. degree and then an M.A. in English literature (1951). She married Cyrus Jhabvala in 1951. Her marriage to an Indian architect and her stay in India made her familiar with the life and manners of India. At the same time her birth and education in West gifted her with western sensibility which provides her with an uncommon insight into the typical traits of Indians, particularly the urban upper and middle classes as they keep undulating between tradition and modernity. She portrayed all aspects of the Indian society very minutely. Her vivid description of Indian society and human relationship makes her short stories very interesting and realistic. Because of her realistic approach she has often been said to be an outsider inside but the fact seems to be that she has only tried to portray the realistic image of Indian society. She deals with the themes of East-West encounter, impact of religion on people, love, sex and marriage, and hypocrisy of middle-class people. She touches all her themes realistically. She is widely regarded as a major creative writer of fiction about India. She observes the Indian people, Indian society, Indian family and the Indian spirituality. R.S. Singh states that she has portrayed an “ironic and satiric and yet sympathetic picture of India.”

Jhabvala has composed 12 novels, 8 short story collections and 23 screenplays. Her awards include the Booker Prize for *Heat and Dust* (1975), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1976), a Neil Gunn International Fellowship (1978) and a MacArthur Fellowship (1984).

## **III. Brief Account of the Story**

This story is a beautiful satirical representation of the life of an Indian poet. In the story the Protagonist suffers for identity crisis in his home land. The poet Dev Prakash was ignored while living in India but while living abroad he gets recognition. But when the poet was in England the feelings of patriotism and nostalgia forced him to return to India. But when he is back, he is

always feeling nostalgic about England, always misses the people, the food, the drink of England. Through the presentation of Indian parties Jhabvala gives a detailed mentality of Indians and compares to the parties of the west. In the West, parties are an occasion for intellectual and academic discussion. In India, for the children and most of the men party is the occasion for good food and enjoyment and for women it is an occasion selection of sarees, clothes, dresses and jewelry. Women of rich families have no understanding of intellectual matters always engrossed in wondering- "what to wear, where to go, what to do". These are the problems always faced by all the females of rich families. In the story some Indian female characters have power enough to interfere with the national awards. Aruna has access to minister and even to the Prime Minister. She can even compel Prime Minister to come to honor a poet.

#### **IV. Analysis**

For any story having a storyteller is a vital element: a narrative voice, real or implied, that presents the story to the reader. Narrative voice implies point of view, the method of narration that determines the position, or angle of vision, from which the story is told. The story "The Award" is written with the omniscient point of view.

#### ***Lexis***

In the text there are 491 words of which 269 words are unique and 195 words are non-repeated. The largest word is of fourteen letters. In the text three letter words are the most frequent i.e. 27.29%. 19.35% words contain four letters, 15.89% words contain two letters and the percentage of five letter words and of six letter words is 10.18 and 8.15 respectively. The average of letters per word is 4.23, average of syllables per word is 1.37 and the average of words per sentence is 21.16. In the most common repeated words „he“ is repeated 12 times which creates cumulative effect and „and“ is repeated 12 times indicates compound sentences. In word pairs „Dev Prakash“ is repeated 6 times and „young man“ is repeated 5 times. In other repeated words „had“ is repeated 10 times and „was“ is repeated 7 times which indicates the story is in past tense. Other most frequent words are: „the“ is repeated 17 times „and“ -12 times „he“ - 12 times „to“ - 11 times „his“ - 10 times „of“ - 10 times „in“ - 8 times „a“ - 8 times „was“ - 7 times „dev“ - 6 times „prakash“ - 6 times „young“ - 6 times „be“ - 6 times „him“ - 6 times „man“ - 6 times „with“ - 6 times „too“ 5 times „I“ - 5 times „at“ -5 times „you“ - 5 times etc.

If we divide the text in parts of speech, we get Nouns - 23.01%, Adjectives - 10.39%, Verbs - 13.44%, Adverbs - 6.52%, Prepositions - 11.20%, Pronouns - 9.16%, Auxiliary Verbs - 7.33%.

If we examine verbs, we find that most of the verbs are in the past forms. The helping verb „had“ has been repeated ten times, „was“ has been repeated ten times and the verb „said“ has been repeated six times. The text contains a large number of nouns 23.01% with verbs, adjectives, prepositions approximately in the same number because of the descriptions made by narrator with the progress of the plot. The simple use of vocabulary suggests Jhabvala’s style, especially in the context of her short story “The Award”, is restricted. She does not use abstract terms for the things to be described.

### ***Grammatical Categories***

The diction of this short story is quite simple but 92% sentences are either complex or compound. One notices a degree of complexity in syntax. In the text minimum sentence length is seven words. For example, „Dev Prakash leaned back against a bolster.“ The two longest sentences consist of 35 words i.e.

- a) Most things left her unmoved; she was a tall, slow, heavy woman with a stout, faintly - moustached face out of which her magnificent dark eyes looked with boredom and discontentment.
- b) ' Your dull , dull dinners , ' said Dev Prakash with a conspiratorial smile at the young man who , however , was looking down at the papers in his lap in swollen embarrassment . '

Average sentence is only 21.16 words long. The average sentence length is significantly long due to the fact that in the text omniscient narrator reveals the facts about the characters with their narration.

Most of the corpus by Jhabvala is written keeping in mind the detailed description of Indian culture to make story interesting for western readers. The major type of tense used in the text is simple past. The simple present tense has been used only in the conversation as direct narration. It has also been noticed that most of the sentences are in active voice. The predominance of the active voice in the main story indicates that the agent (story teller) is very important. Majority of

the sentences found in the text is complex and compound sentences. The overall complexity is apparent.

### *Figures of Speech*

Jhabvala writes her stories in satirical way with detailed description of Indian culture to make story interesting for western readers. The use of figure of speech is one of the most prolific elements of her writing style. Here are some findings:

He had an impressive literary-lion manner, which did not betray the sense of failure and neglect he was at present feeling. This sentence is a fine example of metaphor.

'My own works,' Dev Prakash repeated, his interest stirred. He passed a large, dimpled hand over his noble brow. This sentence is an example of the figure of speech transferred epithet as dimples have a place on the face not on the hand.

His passionate eyes gazed impressively into the distance as he quoted this answer: ' It is better than to live as a slave in one's own land. ' – „passionate eyes“ is an example of metonymy.

But he had always liked to refer to himself in such terms; it had been easier in London, of course, where the quaintly untidy rooms he had rented in Hampstead had not betrayed the handsome allowance that was sent to him every quarter from his share of the family business. – This sentence is a fine example of personification.

The young man straightened the papers on his knees and continued to put the questions with which he had come prepared. ' I would like to know your opinion of your poem " My Country is a Rose in my Heart " - This sentence is a beautiful word picture created with the help of metaphor.

He had had many friends in England. Plump and sensuous in the tight - fitting Indian clothes he wore, with his deep dark eyes in which one could read, if one wanted to, all the sufferings of the past, he was always a success with English women; and his patriotic sentiments, which he enunciated in a low, soft voice vibrating with feeling, woke a warm glow of indignation against

oppression in all the right - thinking advanced circles in which he moved. – This sentence contains excellent alliteration and word picture.

„An unhealing wound in the heart, ' said Dev Prakash. He shut his eyes and quoted with passion: The rose is weeping but not tears, ah my heart! not tears. Goody, Isabel had said; she was a handsome, no - nonsense woman with an Oxford degree who wrote sensitive novels about personal relationships. - In this quote „An unhealing wound in the heart“ is an example of metonymy and „The rose is weeping“ is an example of personification.

. ' Drop by drop my rose weeps out its blood, ' he said, and he still felt it. - This is also is an example of personification.

She was materialistic, even crude, too fond of food and clothes and the ostentation of money; yet, more than clever, sensitive Isabel, she had this well of feeling in her to respond to the profound and the poetic. In the sentence „well of feeling“ is an example of metaphor.

She cried in a radiant voice, “There you have the greatest of them all! shooting out her short forefinger at Dev Prakash. - In the sentence „a radiant voice“ is an example of metaphor.

Dev Prakash raised his hands from his knees and became eloquent: ' What need for me but the garden of the spirit in which to walk with my Beloved, "- In the sentence „the garden of the spirit“ is an example of metaphor.

There had been gayer parties in England, wittier people, better drink which was drunk with enjoyment; but never had he felt there this oneness, this love, this union of spirit.– Here is juxtaposition of Indian and Western parties.

She put down her glass and shed glad tears: ' What happiness, such happiness, ' she said, loving everyone. – In the sentence „glad tears“ is an example of transferred epithet.

Who repaid him by ignoring him, wasting him, passing him over? For twenty-five years he had been what he called in exile and even now that he had come home, he felt more exiled than ever. – The sentence is a fine example of parenthesis.

### *Rhetoric Question*

. 'What can I tell you about my own works? They are there, to be read or to be ignored, to be loved or to be scorned.'

She opened his wardrobe: 'What will you wear?'" She looked up and down the shelves and clicked her tongue „You never have anything nice.“

Dev Prakash said, ' how can you, an Indian, bear to live in exile from your country?

The young man had also got up. He said, ' How happy I am to be able to be the first to give you, my congratulations. "

“So, your triumph and my joy are nonsense?'" she playfully turned on him.

The young man said, ' How auspicious it is for me that I am here today. "

### *Phonological Schemes*

Yet he had come with such high hopes: the Tagore of today, that was what he had hoped they would call him.

Yet he had come with such high hopes: the Tagore of today, that was what he had hoped they would call him. – This sentence is full of alliteration with the repeated sound of h, t, w.

' Your dull, dull dinners, ' said Dev Prakash with a conspiratorial smile at the young man who,however, was looking down at the papers in his lap in swollen embarrassment.,,- This sentence is a fine example of alliteration with the repeated sound of d and „swollen embarrassment“ is a beautiful example of metaphor.



### *Context and Cohesion*

Through analysis it has been found that cohesive ties in the text are established mostly through reference and lexical cohesion and partly through conjunction, ellipsis and substitution. On the basis of analysis, it can be presumed that Jhabvala to maintain cohesion and coherence in this story has used different types of referential items in abundance. The author has used text references (words referring to surrounding text, like „he“, „she“ and „it“), situation references (words referring to the real world such as „I“ and „we“), personals like „I“, „you“, „he“, „she“, „it“, „we“ and „they“ along with their object forms like „me“ and „him“ etc. In addition, repeating the identical words, synonyms and hyponyms, there are other relationships also between words that can be used as cohesive devices. The words that collocate with other words in any way, also contribute to the texture of the story. Jhabvala has employed such words very effectively. Generally, in a fiction, the events described in one sentence often follow the events described in the previous sentence. Sometimes this connection is shown by conjunctive elements and sometimes readers have to mark out the connectivity. The author, in this short story, has employed both the techniques to make the style of the story more effective. The movement of discourse in the story is smooth because there is a great deal of anaphoric references and ellipses and the readers get involved.

### **V. Conclusion**

On the basis of above analysis, we may conclude that Jhabvala's writing style, as is revealed by an examination of the most prominent linguistic features in the text is by no means aphoristic like that of Frances Bacon; neither is it similar to that of Dickens's, which is universally recognized as being pompous, filled with sharp-edged irony, together with criticism so direct and forceful. This is due to the fact that this short story is written especially as detailed description of Indian culture and society. One can claim that her style is satirical but sensitive, delicate, poetic, seemingly impersonal yet emotional. Jhabvala has written her stories keeping in mind the detailed description of Indian culture to make story interesting for western readers. In the last it can be said that the analysis of the stylistic features of the text, in relation to the analysis of other literary corpus of Jhabvala, will certainly bring out some specific features of her writing style.

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**Appendix**

**Text Statistics**

Category	Count
Word Count:	491
Sentence Count:	25
Unique Word Count:	269
Non-repeated Word Count:	195
Character Count:	2189
Complex Word Count (3 or more syllables):	35
Syllable Count:	671
Lexical Density	53.36%

LENGTH	COUNT
1 letter words	14
2 letter words	78
3 letter words	134

Part of Speech	Percentage
Nouns	23.01%
Adjectives	10.39%
Verbs	13.44%
Adverbs	6.52%
Prepositions	11.20%
Pronouns	9.16%
Auxiliary Verbs	7.33%

4 letter words	95
5 letter words	50
6 letter words	40
7 letter words	47
8 letter words	17
9 letter words	6
10 letter words	2
11 letter words	3
12 letter words	2
13 letter words	1
14 letter words	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>491</b>