ISSN 0971- 605X

POINTS OF VIEW

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2 WINTER 1994

BHABANI BHATTACHARYA

SPECIAL NUMBER

Editor
K.K. Sharma

POINTS OF VIEW

EDITORIAL BOARD

Points of View is a biannual Journal devoted to scholarly and authoritative opinion on broad cultural issues focussing on the centrality of human concerns as evidenced in literature, art, cinema, etc. It provides a special forum for the perspectives on 'New Literatures in English', including translations. Also, it carries detailed and careful notes, and reviews of outstanding new books. The Summer issue is a general number concerned with various authors and subjects, while the Winter issue is a special number dealing with an individual writer or a specific theme.

Manuscripts are welcome. They should conform to the *MLA Style Sheet* in all matters of form. Unused or unsolicited manuscript can be returned if accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

Annual Subscription rates are

India	Individuals Rs. 80.00 (by M.O.)	Institutions Rs. 200.00 (Collection Charges for outstation cheques Rs. 20.00)
Overseas	Individuals £ 9.00, $ 14.00	Institutions £ 11.00, $ 19.00

(Additional Charge for supplying copies by airmail £ 3.00, $ 5.00)

All editorial and business correspondence should be addressed to

The Editor
Points of View
KH/127, New Kavi Nagar
Ghaziabad— 201 002 U.P., INDIA
Telephone : (0575) 718687

POINTS OF VIEW

Volume I, Number 2 Winter, 1994

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

CONTRIBUTORS

Rashmi Gaur teaches in the Department of Humanities, M.N.R. Engineering College, Allahabad.

G.L. Gautam teaches in the Department of English, L.R. Postgraduate College, Sahibabad, Meerut University.

Harish Raizada is Former Professor of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

J.P. Savita teaches in the Department of English, S.D. Postgraduate College, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut University.

Nathan M. Aston is Coordinator, Postgraduate Centre in English, Nowrosjee Wadia College, University of Poona, Pune.

J.P. Tripathi is Head, Department of English, Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur.

B.D. Sharma is Professor and Head, Department of English, Kumaon University, Nainital.

K.K. Sharma is Former Professor of English, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

Asha Viswas is Reader in the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Bhagwat S. Goyal is Principal at S.D. Postgraduate College, Ghaziabad.

A.K. Mishra teaches in the Department of English, D.C.S.K. Postgraduate College, Maunath Bhanjan, Mau.

S.M. Kansal Heads the Department of English, Sri K.K. Jain Postgraduate College, Khatauli, Meerut University.

O.P. Mathur is Former Professor and Head, Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Arun Kumar is Reader in the Department of English, Meerut University, Meerut.

S. **Viswanathan** is Professor of English at the University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

SO MANY HUNGERS!: AN ATTEMPT AT RESTRUCTURING OF SOCIETY AND HUMAN PERSONALITY

Rashmi Gaur

In his approach to life and literature, Bhabani Bhattacharya is a realist; and it is not merely a put on intellectual persona. He himself has defined his realism as genuine, being inherently different from the realism practised by those writers who were influenced by the theories of subconscious and unconscious mind, propounded by Freud, Darwin and others. He points out that "a great mass of writing, readable, technically superb, shows the deceptive face of the 'real' without the true spirit."[1] Bhattacharya interprets realism as the writer's concern with socio-historical reality within the definite cultural milieu of an age. Only through it the truth presented in a literary piece can be vitally universalized. A work of art must invariably "convey truth, the truth of emotion which is the ultimate realism."[2]

Bhattacharya advocates the purposiveness of art. 'Art for Art's Sake', for him, is an absurd meaningless cry of the romantics, who can only create a fantasy. Art must have a social purpose. He upholds that man is constantly influenced by the social forces. He cannot be indifferent to the value system prevalent and accepted in the society of which he is a part. This social purpose of all aesthetic creation must be inalienably linked with the artistic presentation of truth and reality in terms of life. To quote his own words: "The creative writer's final business is to reveal the truth. He reveals it, unlike the philosopher, in no cold statements of dogma but only in terms of life, rendered through the devices of dramatization. And how could the truth help being partisan ?"[3]

Bhattacharya also believes that for writing a novel with a definite social purpose, the writer must be aware of his environment, constantly understanding the behaviour of the people and interpreting it within the context of a value system which should be organically related with the patterns of the society that the author is trying to represent. The artistic descriptions of the novel must be based on the author's personal experiences. During an interview with Sudhakar Joshi, Bhattacharya said, "You see, Mr. Joshi, unless a writer has

keen observation and an eye for noting the details of general behaviour of folks, he cannot write a social novel. I have developed this habit and I have not missed a single opportunity of observing incidents, happenings, where I can gain something for my writer in me....''[4]

Bhattacharya's attempt to reproduce the truth in terms of the reality of life results in the simultaneous presence of two strains in his novels. We find primarily a commitment to social restructuring. In *So Many Hungers!*, for example, he is not satisfied with the descriptions of the famine alone; he wants to motivate further the people towards a recognition of the ills prevalent in the society, and a determination of their causes. This identification of causes should then lead to a conscious attempt at eradicating them on the part of the people. The underlying presence of this idealistic strain in his novels also suggests that the individual and the society are dialectically interrelated, and the artistic talent is nurtured by the cultural tastes of the people and the spiritual demands of the contemporary social life. It is this concern of the writer for the creative interpretation of truth which, according to Bhattacharya, leads him to a fearless treatment of ethical values, even if this fearless treatment is labelled as propaganda. However, Bhattacharya lays down the condition that the presentation of the ethical values should not interfere with the creativity of the artist. As a vehicle of truth, art vividly interprets life and should preach only unobtrusively. The balanced equilibrium between the artistic portrayal of life and the interpretation of ethical values must not be distorted under exterior compulsions.

Bhabani Bhattacharya also strongly feels that the writer should not hesitate in portraying any contemporary event. The nearness of the artist to these events or his participation in them imparts an authenticity to his experiences. Besides, the immediate milieu often compels him to represent the existing reality in an artistic fashion. Combined together, these two factors often result in a literary masterpiece and *So Many Hungers!* is an example of it. Bhattacharya was so profoundly moved by the Bengal famine of 1943 that he wrote this novel, piecing the story together from newspaper clippings. Yet the novel is not a journalistic reporting of a cruel moribund society. It definitely gives us the picture of the immediate, though it also transcends the immediate impressions of life and presents before us a larger picture of humanity, struggling to resort to its traditional value system. Bhabani Bhattacharya was a witness to the 1943 Bengal

famine. The gruesome manifestation of human suffering in its most acute form had captivated his mind so compellingly that he kept on dwelling upon the thematic motif of hunger again and again in his novels and stories. At the very outset, *So Many Hungers!* graphically deals with the Bengal famine of 1943 and can be treated as an authentic chronicle of the heart-rending starvation and human suffering of a particular era; but at the same time it is a sensitive commentary on the spiritual contusion which the people of this country sustained from the cruel and methodically planned policies of the foreign rulers. The outer poverty of life is poetically contrasted with the inner wealth of spiritual values, underlining the struggle which an imaginatively sensitive person undergoes when he is forced to compromise his traditional sense of humanity and notion of mutual help for retrieving a banana skin from a dilapidated dustbin on a shabby roadside. It is this poetically suggestive juxtaposition of the inner and outer worlds, a sympathetic awareness that there is so often no escape from an impasse, from the dead ends people find themselves in, which transforms this novel into a saga of man's determination to overcome the immediate surroundings, to fight against the contumelious imposition of circumstances against his will.

In *So Many Hungers!* Bhattacharya has beautifully woven motifs of different types of hungers into the thematic fabric in order to reassert a positive faith in the basic human values. Kajoli's family microscopically represents the people of rural Bengal who, unable to face their hunger, trudge wearily towards Calcutta, the city of dreams, only to see their poverty and misery to be mirrored hundredfold in the heartless contumely of the city-rich, to be subjected to new humiliations, to be lured systematically into evil. And from this point onwards *So Many Hungers*! retells the age-old allegorical story of a tussle between temptation and denial.

Hunger becomes a symbol, tentative and alluring, and yet decisively depicting man in the midst of things, man set upon by things, man confused and facing that inner real self whose existence perhaps he never felt sure of. In this novel, the motif of hunger becomes the central metaphor. It is used in varied circumstances and suggests various states of self-revelation and emotional maturity. The motif transcends the merely physical hunger and gains to almost a mystical significance, simultaneously enveloping several interpretations. Bhattacharya regards hunger, "external and internal, as the

fundamental reality of life.''[5]

So Many Hungers! begins with an almost methodical cataloguing of different types of hunger. Rahoul and his grandfather, popularly known as ''Devata'' among the villagers, represent a hunger for the universal and the cosmopolitan beyond the immediate squalor and humiliation of daily life. Rahoul constantly gropes within himself to identify the truth, which for him is manifested in the probability of a new type of world order which would ensure the happiness of the common man. His hunger is the cause of his ''wasteful unrest and unhappiness''.[5] He believes that the War can be won only if it remains closely related to values. When the man-made famine sweeps over his province, he unhesitatingly leaves aside his research and offers his mite to the suffering humanity.

Rahoul's quest for truth and knowledge is paralleled, at a higher level, by his grandfather's quest for ideally restructuring the society. He is in the seventieth year, and lives in a small village Baruni, away from the affluent comforts of his son and grandsons. He runs an evening school in the village to generate among villagers an understanding of human behaviour. He epitomizes the dignity, courage, grandeur and strength of the old sages. Therefore, his very presence imparts confidence to the village people, who await his word in their moments of crisis. Rahoul also derives strength and hope from him. He uses his hunger as a powerful weapon. He registers his protest against the all-pervasive starvation and coercive methods of the government by launching a hunger strike. It is his vision ''in jail-house in the garb of a convict, wielding his body's hunger like a sword, strong as ever, and true and deathless,''[6] which reinvigorates Kajoli and emboldens her to repudiate and finally negate the betel-woman's evil designs.

Rahoul's character is contrasted with that of his father Samarendra, who is a profiteer and has an insatiable desire for materialistic gains--money and titles. The novelist, to some extent, justifies his behaviour, by giving us a psychological background of his early life. He desires that his sons must have all the pleasures he had been denied in his early struggling years. Despite his sympathy with his son's ideals, his quest for money and titles does not cease. The same materialistic quest is portrayed in a gross manner in the character of Sir Abalabandhu, Senior Director of Cheap Rice, Ltd.

and the genius behind the huge hoarding of food grains. He is hungry after money, titles and sexual pleasure, and this hunger is explicitly reflected in his talks and actions.

At another level, *So Many Hungers!* is a documentation of a particular phase of Indian struggle for freedom. The hunger for freedom among the Indians is described with the help of Rahoul's characterization and it is interwoven with his discovery of the self. Rahoul's urge for self-fulfilment is depicted in a very suggestive manner. When the story begins, he is torn between two extremes--extremes of creation and annihilation--symbolized on the one hand by the birth of his daughter, and on the other by the outbreak of the War. War implies different things to different people and becomes a multilayered symbol of violent outrage and cruel plundering, encompassing a whole range of exploiters--people like Abalabandhu, the village traders and the predatory animals. Rahoul also realizes that without pain and suffering creation is impossible. Thus for materializing his larger goal of universal love, the immediate and the smaller loves (of family, research and career) have to be effaced out of his life. He is able to interpret his inner self in a more positive manner as he watches the gradual erosion of human values and dehumanization of man and is able to associate it with political causes. The death of a destitute woman at his doorsteps after a prolonged labour travail breaks down the final turnstile and enables him to cast aside his fear of loneliness and suffering: "somewhere on the long, winding path of the years he had shed his fear of suffering and loneliness, what happened to him as an individual did not matter. It only mattered what happened to his people... his mind was without hate, without anger, in a *nirvane* of passionlessness."[7]

If Rahoul's family represents, in quintessence, the political rejuvenation of the urban elite and their response to the Quit India Movement, Kajoli's family represents the predicament of simple village people--their rice has been seized and they have become totally dependent on the local supplier. The local suppliers, in league with the big speculators, hoard the food grain, and create an artificial scarcity. The British government stores the grain for the future requirements of its army, but remains totally callous to the plight of the common man. The boats of village people are also burnt. Kanu and his friend try to hide their boat in a hollow of overhanging shadow of bamboo and brushwood, but they are caught and the boat is

destroyed. Soon after it the villagers are arrested, but the life in Baruni soon resumes its daily routine. Kajoli and her younger brother Onu toil hard on their land. There is a lull in the atmosphere, a soothing rhythm of subdued yet vibrant urge for flourishing life, which shall soon be denied to them:

> Hot sunshine was falling on the fields, glinting on the sickles as they swished, and the tall standing paddy dropped, cut close to the earth, heaping, rice-heavy, at the reapers' feet. Kajoli could feel the rhythm. She knew the movements, like the beats of a tune....[8]

The panoramic view of life, presented in this passage, possesses the capacity of transforming even the normal happenings of the day into something evocatively mysterious by its suggestive rhythm. Externally peaceful nature is contrasted with the internal agitation of Kajoli; but it has a soothing effect on her. The concise expressiveness of this passage reminds us of many similar passages in Pearl S. Buck who describes the Chinese peasant life before the Revolution.

Life sparkles for Kajoli once more when she is married to Kishore and expects her child. But the shadow of approaching evil soon engulfs her. Kishore tells his mother-in-law that their stocks cannot last till the new crop, and therefore the *kisan* field-hands should not be fed. But the old mother replies with unflinching faith that "the rice is as much theirs as ours ... for it has grown from the pouring sweat of their chest."[9] This simple episode reiterates Bhattacharya's belief that the village folk possess a value system, more significant than that of the city people. The village people do not nurture any selfishness even amidst a crisis, and do not want to distinguish their own family members from other dependents.

Even in Onu, Kajoli's younger brother, we witness an unconscious attempt to suppress greed and selfishness. Like other village children, Onu also collects figs, herbs and wild roots. He can climb like a squirrel and therefore tries to save a few figs at the top of the tree for his own family. The rest of the boys attack him mercilessly. He fails to resist their scramble for figs and is pushed around madly. However, the moment of madness is over. A boy stays back and nurses him back to consciousness. This simple gesture brings out Onu's humane temperament. He who would not bring himself to give a small share of his booty to others shares his treasures with his new friend so that his younger sister could eat well. Although Onu is aware of the risk of falling down from the top of the tree, he has made up his mind to

collect the figs for his mother and sister and for the sister of his friend. He unhesitatingly accepts the responsibility of a mature adult, and herein lies his inner strength.

The inner strength of Onu's mother is revealed to us through various incidents. She is able to perceive the needs of others and sympathize with them despite her own hardships. When she sees a young fisherwoman burying her child alive in the sand, she is stunned and horrified. Forgetting the plight of her own children, she gives her Mangala, encouraging her with the prospective gay vision of the metropolitan life. The mother represents an inner strength, which does not fail her even in the moments of utmost deprivation. She unknowingly accepts the gifts from a woman who wants to lure Kajoli to a brothel. The moment the mother realises her true motive, she throws away all the things and turns the woman out of her home. She represents the compassion, hope and unselfish devotion for fellow beings and comes very close to the similar portraits of Pearl S. Buck and Gorky.

Kajoli also feels joyful life amidst the apparent waste and squalor when she suddenly realises that the child is stirring in her womb. Though the "*Kokil* inside her had died,"[10] she cannot remain aloof from the perennial flow of life evidenced in beautiful nature, pulsating with unbound sonorous pleasure: "Song-birds were twittering a hymn to the goddess of dawn, casting their joyous cry over the fields. Coo-oo! said one, sweet-said."[11] Kajoli is unable to face the pathetic death of a destitute woman below a jackfruit tree. She is horrified. Yet the revitalizing force of life is lurking within the pervasive futility of death-- the ripe jackfruit will sustain Kajoli's family for three days. T.S.Eliot once remarked about Baudelaire that he elevated and intensified his imagery based on the sordid, common life, to such a level of awareness as it represented something much more than itself. In the same manner, in this incidence the jackfruit symbolizes not only an immediate release from hunger, but also a greater continuity of life. Beyond the immediate and the superficial, the characters of Bhattacharya always have a vision of a better mode of living. Kajoli's family continues its journey towards the mirage of city lights. Their six days on the high road are "six dragging chains of agony"[12] on their feet. All their senses, except that of hunger, have been numbed. In her search for food, Kajoli wanders away from her ailing mother and becomes a helpless victim of a soldier's lust. But

even this prolonged misery does not completely negate either the possibility of a visionary perception, ingrained among the people, that a better life exists, or their determined desire to realize this hope. Onu has a vision of a dignified future life based on hard work and self-respect. The mother is also hopeful: "She and her son would surely find a roof for their heads... there would be food... Onu would go to school...."[13]

An unflinching faith in human virtues is witnessed most poignantly in the incident in which Bhattacharya depicts the tale of a young girl who, in her determination to help other famished people, bares herself before strangers under the cold harsh light of a street lamp, as they drop a silver coin in her bowl with a cruel look. Bhattacharya beautifully links the clinking sound of a silver coin falling into the bowl with the inaudible sound of the crumbling moral structure of the society, with the sneering gestures of a world which is totally insensitive to the burden of guilt it should logically bear. The sensitivity of the situation, the hesitant movements of the girl, and the compulsion of the situation are beautifully assimilated in the agonised rhythm of the scene. The tears and the distorted smile of the girl scream out her agonised frustration and helplessness in the face of the complexity of the poetic manner. This incident compels the reader to raise questions which so far had been complacently and conventionally dormant in his conscience. Even more compelling is the portrait of that old man who wants to surrender his ticket for free food for a more needy person unfed at a kitchen. This sacrifice by a semi-starved, bent and half-naked figure fills Rahoul with joy and wistful buoyancy and he interprets it as a symbol of the invaluable richness of life, "a signal of hope and deliverance for the hunger-stricken masses of Bengal."[14]

Bhattacharya has projected his optimistic vision of life not only through virtuous characters, but also through negative and indifferent characters. Samarendra Basu is an undignified profiteer, and yet he takes pride in the heroism of his son Kunal, and supports Rahoul's endeavours of setting up a free kitchen. Rahoul's wife Monju is also finally able to identify herself with a profounder cause, realizing the full worth of her husband's work and does not hesitate in helping a woman who is dying at her doorsteps. It is her realization of her husband's larger hunger for a happier life for the common man that enables her to bear her husband's arrest with fortitude. She is calm

and strong, determined to follow her husband's footsteps.

Rahoul fully apprehends the fierceness of the devastation effected by the foreign rule, and is able to understand the remote consequences of famine and contemporary struggle. This indicates a political reawakening of the society as well as a constructive affirmation of burgeoning life. Tagore's song sung by the prisoners also becomes representatively symbolic in this context:

> "The more their eyes redden with rage, the more our eyes open;
>
> The more they tighten the chains, the more the chains loosen!"[15]

The song shows the determination of the people to fight off their slavery and to attain a new dawn. Rahoul, alongwith others, realizes ultimately that liberty will not descend; people must raise themselves to liberty: "Freedom could not drop from the skies, nor be asked from lands beyond the seas; but there, in the vast swamp of suffering and struggle, would it break into bloom, growing out of the seeds of the spirit. It was the four-petalled lotus of the people."[16] And this recognition that he is organically and indivisibly linking his destiny with that of his people, who have decided finally to retrieve their independence, fills him with a "strong exultation"[17] and his face is kindled with a "strange intense look of conquest."[18]

Our final response to *So Many Hungers!* is rather strange. Our awareness of the continued presence of multilayered interpretations in it imparts us a compelling insight for revaluating our own desires, ambitions and secret hopes, within the context of a revised understanding of the social forces which are constantly at work. The novel also helps us in assimilating our individual value system in a profound manner. The motif of hunger in this novel gains an archetypal dimension. Taken together, the several interpretations of this motif categorically indicate towards affirmation of life, and the novel can rightly be said to be the "artistic embodiment of the novelist's affirmative vision of life."[19] The concluding mood of the novel conveys an almost jubilant reassertion of faith in the ultimate goodness and compassion of man amidst strife and his constant indefatigable strife towards high moral values.

In *So Many Hungers!* Bhattacharya suggestively probes into the problems of existence, suffering, evil, love, passion and greed. The apparently simple story of the novel evokes a sense of shame in us and

arouses our conscience. It also exorcises all our attempts at evasion, or justification of the immoral, the unscrupulous and the evil even today when every individual is protected by a carapace of an inherent duality of conscience. Bhattacharya stimulates thought, and enables us to see ourselves as we are in vices, virtues, values and transcience. He also encourages, through this novel, an inclination for restructuring human personality within the context of a cosmopolitan value-system; and herein lies the universal appeal of *So Many Hungers!*

REFERENCES

[1]"Literature and Social Reality," *The Aryan Path*, Vol.XXVI, No.9 (September, 1955), p.393.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 395.

[4]Sudhakar Joshi, "An Evening with Bhabani," *The Sunday Standard* (April 27,1969), p. VII.

[5]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers!* (Bombay:Jaico Publishing House, 1947), p. 176.

[6]Ibid., p. 205.

[7]Ibid., pp. 213-14.

[8]Ibid., p. 78.

[9]*So Many Hungers!*, p. 105.

[10]Ibid., p.145.

[11]Ibid., pp. 144-45.

[12]Ibid., p. 147.

[13]Ibid., p. 158.

[14]Ibid., p. 196.

[15]Ibid., pp.214-15.

[16]Ibid., p. 215.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]K.K.Sharma, *Bhabani Bhattacharya: His Vision and Themes* (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979), p.26.

SO MANY HUNGERS !: A SINGLE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF REALITY

G.L. Gautam

Bhabani Bhattacharya, like Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markandaya, holds that an artist should delineate contemporary reality rather than recreate the historical or legendary theme.[1] Furthermore, he forcefully argues that if the conditions of the present can arouse an artist's sensibility to the degree of impulsion verging on uneasiness to his awareness, they should necessarily be given an outlet through artistic creativity. In the similar vein he says that the artist should be a keen observer of truth in life's varied situations so that he may be able to deal with such situations in his works. These observations fall in with the progressive view of art, looking upon art and literature as a vehicle of changing the inhuman social order into the humanist one by arousing the reader's consciousness against the ills from which it suffers.

If we critically look at Bhattacharya's first novel *So Many Hungers*!--a work which won him wide acclaim at home and abroad--particularly in the perspective of his emphasis on the delineation of truth and reality in artistic creations, we notice that the novel represents the single-dimensional view of reality in Indian life in the early forties when the world passed through the turmoil during World War II. The harrowing famine that swallowed up millions of people in Bengal basically filled him with social indignation to expose how the hoarders, the profiteers, and the speculators planned a conspiracy that if they succeeded in causing food famine, they might make fat profits out of the human predicament and economic misery the poor would be subjected to under the desperation of hunger. The conditions turned out to be as they planned, and the rich rejoiced at their profit as demons do in drinking human blood even Though the poor perished like flies for want of food during the famine.

One year before the ravaging famine was caused by the criminal motive of the rich, Gandhiji had launched his historic Quit India Movement. Since the period with which the novel is concerned is indeed an eventful one in Indian political life as well as in world politics as World War II was on its height, Bhattacharya weaves the story of man made famine into the plot of Freedom Struggle. However,

in the preferential treatment of Gandhi's fundamental principles and the Rightist Congress ideology in the novel, with total exclusion of no less important forces of the Indian Left, showing as though the former represented the totality of Indian political life, Bhattacharya's obsession with Gandhian ideology is copiously manifest. That the forces of the Communist Movement in India were fighting for international Socialism during the War after the Communist Russia was attacked by Nazi Germany in 1941 is the patent fact of the contemporary reality.

In depicting the influence of Gandhi on his characters, Bhattacharya truly demonstrates how Gandhi's thoughts and actions cast ennobling influence on the people and inspired many to model their lives on his ideals. But it is debatable whether all the Gandhian people lived up to his ideals under the actual life conditions. Because however hard the people may strive towards an ideal, they do remain rooted in the actualities of life. In developing Gandhian characters he builds a halo around them and hence they look divorced from actual life. Since his treatment is not a dispassionate study of the people's actual motivations in society, they look individuals rather than types. The observation Georg Lukacs makes in a different context is true in the case of Bhattacharya, since he presents Gandhian characters as though they are worthy of adoration:

> ... the theory which proceeds from the anti-democratic hero cult and posits the lonely greatman as the focus of history, which sees the mass both as raw material in the hands of "great man" as blinding, raging, natural force etc.[2]

However, not many critics have shown in their analysis of Bhattacharya's works how in terms of the depiction of the socio-political reality they provide one-sided view of the objective world and do not present a multiplaned view of the whole reality. On the other hand, his contemporary Mulk Raj Anand renders a comprehensive view of how the opposite ideological forces, sometimes interacting and at the other counter-acting, created political awakening among the masses. Among the Indian English writers perhaps Anand is the only one to paint a multi-dimensional picture on the canvas of the novel, dipping his pen in the colour of varied cultural consciousness of his time. Bhattacharya's vision towards the objective world is pro-post-Independence Establishment. Moreover, the criticism of his works has been characterised by passive approach to literature, accepting him at his own valuation. Hence this paper

seeks to evaluate his first novel critically, focussing on how far Bhattacharya has rendered a true picture of contemporary reality.

So Many Hungers!, as pointed out at the beginning of this paper, has a complex plot woven from the so varied strands as national movement and the terrible famine that took the toll of the millions of lives in Bengal. Viewed thematically, the conception of producing the book in the consciousness of its creator had been caused by the pity he felt for the hunger-stricken humanity and his anger against the shameless rich who pounced upon the villages as the hungry wolves do on human flesh. Nevertheless, the writer in the first half of the book concentrates on the theme of the national movement which indicates Bhattacharya's sympathy with and commitment to the Gandhian ideology and the Rightist Congress culture.

The ideology of Gandhi, or the theme of national movement finds its best illustration in the characters of Devesh Basu and Rahoul Basu. Devesh Basu is a Gandhian and runs the village school at Baruni. His son, Samarendra Basu, is living in the city making fat profits in speculative business, though he is a lawyer by profession. Extremely calculating and scheming, he belongs to the vicious circle that causes the mass human tragedy in the story. A hoarder and profiteer as he is, the writer has drawn him realistically.

Rahoul, Samarendra Basu's son and Devesh Basu's grand son, is opposite pole from his father and is committed to preserve human values like his grand father and hence seeks his opinion on the ticklish problems he faces as an intellectual. He is a great intellectual, a D.Sc. of Cambridge and is on the teaching staff of a college. Viewed ideologically, he upholds the nationalist stand point during the turmoil of Quit India Movement. However, the analysis of his character in relation to the role of intellectuals, who, during the Quit India Movement, according to the distinguished historian R.C. Majumdar,[3] had no appreciation of Gandhi's orthodox methods of struggle, should have shown that he is not a representative character. Perhaps unaware of the contemporary political reality, K.R. Chandrashekhran believes: "Rahoul represents one class of freedom fighters-- the upper middle class intellectuals."[4] In the light of the observation of Majumdar, however, Rahoul should not be regarded as a typical character as intellectuals as a class had lost faith in Gandhi. A work of art, being peopled by individual principal characters, often lacks the force and vitality which a representative art creation possesses. The permanent

power of keeping the reader's intellectual faculty absorbed in the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot, Gorky, Prem Chand and Nagarjun lies in the fact that they created representative characters.

Rahoul Basu, who is the principal character, however, is true spokesman of how the nationalist forces, who on the one hand sympathise with Britain's resistance to, and fight against, the Fascism and aggression, and on the other, demand political independence to India. The nationalists' sympathy with Britain emanated from the fear that if England fell to German attack, her freedom loving people might be enslaved. However, the nationalists had half-hearted sympathy with Britain during the War because the British rulers were not willing to declare freedom to the Indians. Rahoul's reactions to the War situations reflect the dilemma faced by nationalist leadership :

> That was Rahoul's dilemma. That was he knew the dilemma of national movement. That was the dilemma of every thinking Indian.[5]

Rahoul once again voices the same predicament facing the national movement :

> That question had long harassed him. It had harassed all anti-fascist India and held back revolt. The war was one piece, indivisible, India could not let the battle of China be lost on the Ganges earth. But then freedom, too, was one piece and indivisible. Enslaved, enfeebled India would be tiresome drag on world freedom.[6]

Rahoul expresses clearly Nehru's point of view how during the early years of the War he was divided in his sympathies to help England in the War and to press for independence. Gandhi, however, adopted a firm and uncompromising posture as far as the question of Indian independence was concerned. Rahoul expresses Gandhi's stand:

> A free India will throw all her great resources into the great struggle.... Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with people's united-will and strength behind it....[7]

Though Rahoul is an individual nationalist, yet he is a human character, combining in himself both the strong and weak points. He is a staunch nationalist and is willing to make do or die struggle for the cause of Indian independence and he is finally arrested for nationalist activities. But the second side of his personality reveals his love of hedonistic pleasures like European dance, music and dress. "He was no ascetic. He loved the good things of life."[8]

Devesh Basu, the grand father of Rahoul, is modelled on Gandhi

as Moorthy is Gandhian in Kanthapura. By elevating the purely human character to the super human stature both writers not only show their adoration of Gandhi but build up a heroic cult around the former, thus divorcing them from real life. Also, they neglect the forces of society which operated dialectically. The peasantry in some parts of the country struggled along the line shown by Gandhi and in the other they carried on their fight in accordance with the revolutionary method of struggle. The dialectical principal, with the two opposite forces existing side by side, dominated the political life throughout the struggle for freedom. R.C. Majumdar unequivocally points out the fact. But Raja Rao and Bhattacharya choose to bypass the revolutionary fact of the Indian political consciousness. Their Gandhian characters are of godly stature. If viewed dispassionately, Gandhiji was no doubt a great man, but he was not a celestial being himself because he was egoist about his political philosophy being absolute truth. Also, he was intolerant to those who held opposite beliefs. However, the creative writers have clothed the Gandhian people in the garb of sacredness. As a Gandhian, Moorthy in *Kanthapura* is a paragon of nobility and idealness. His character has been idolised to the incredible extent as though Gandhi has handed him a magic band, turning all the ugliness about *Kanthapura* into a glitter of idealism.

Bhattacharya's Devesh Basu is called by the villagers of Baruni as Devata, a celestial being. Whether the Gandhian Congressi were really true to the principles Gandhi held dear to his heart is a debatable question. Yet Devata is true follower of Gandhi and the Congress. After Gandhi's arrest during the Quit India Movement he organises the national flag *pranam* ceremony and is suspected of sedition by the police. When the police come over to Devata to arrest him, the peasants of Baruni try to stop forcibly the police, but he commands them to be non-violent:

> Friends and Comrades, do not betray the flag. Do not betray yourself.There is violence in your thoughts, that is evil enough. Do not make it worse by violence in action.[9]

A Gandhian as he is, he believes in changing the heart of the enemy by offering passive resistance. Hence he exhorts them to remain passive and truthful in resisting the police:

> Ours is the harder task. If we use the weapons of our enemy, we play into their hands. The supreme test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless.[10]

Devata succeeds in laying ahimsa "spell on Baruni."[11] But the contemporary records speak of how the creed of non-violence was violated during the flare up of the Quit India Movement. The historical facts reveal the true face of the political realities that Gandhi's principle of non-violence could not be put into practice during the outbreak of 1942. Then the question arises : Why does Bhattacharya project Gandhian influence on the people of Baruni in the spirit of a goldy cult ? and why does he not interpret the reality in terms of actual facts?

That Bhattacharya has subjective obsession with Gandhian ideology is too obvious. By interpreting reality in relation to Gandhi's role during the Quit India Movement, Bhattacharya has followed the Congress version of history. The Congress version presented Gandhi uncritically so as to create in the consciousness of the common men awe and respect for the Congress which Gandhi led during the struggle for freedom. In fact, the novel would have been a work of multi-dimensional reality if the writer had dealt with, in detail, how the working classes were carrying out their fight in big cities in 1940. In the novel Kishore is representative of the workers. His role has been shown through the flashback technique by rendering a sketchy description of his role as a trade union leader.

However, Bhattacharya has truly depicted how the students and the peasants were seized by enthusiasm for organising nationalist activities and thereby courted imprisonment. The important point to be noted here is that the peasantry were stirred by the upheaval of 1942 only in the villages situated close by the towns or the cities. The interior or far off country side, where the bulk of rural populace live, still had to be politically awakened and struggled for bare survival as Hori does in Godan of Prem Chand. The writer brings home the fact in the example of Kajoli's father and brother who are put behind the bar for their nationalist activities during the outbreak of 1942. K.R. Chandrasekhran has committed a factual error by showing that they are in prison for their participation in Civil Disobedience Movement. He points out: "This family consists of a peasant, his wife, and three children, two boys named Kanu and Onu and a daughter, Kajoli, the heroine of the novel. The head of the family and the elder boy are in prison for their participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Devata feels that he is the head of the family and always refers to Kajoli's mother as his daughter and to Kajoli as his grand daughter"[12]

In the words of Prof. Chandrasekhran Kajoli's father and brother have ben shown arrested during the Civil Disobedience Movement. But the writer has shown they are arrested all along :

> The Red Turbans came early at dawn. A lorry load. They forced Devata out of his sleep, put hand cuffs round his wrist and searched the house all through, bundling up books and papers, slashing at the bed mattress with beyonets as though to find some hiding sedition. Then they came to Kajoli's home and took her father.[13]

REFERENCES

[1]Dr. Bhattacharya contends that an artist should depict contemporary reality in the writings: "It has been argued that the novelist should not draw his material from contemprary reality since he is too close to it to read its meaning and assess its inward nature. This is absurd. (Bhabani Bhattacharya, "Literature and Social Reality," *Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya*, ed. Ramesh Srivastava [Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1982], p. 5.)

[2]Georg Luckacs, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1962), p. 244.

[3]Dr. Majumdar opines on the role of intellectuals during the outbreak of 1942: "The intellectual or the higher middle class had not taken any very active part, evidently because they were gradually losing faith in the specific remedy offered by Gandhi." (R.C. Majumdar, "The Outbreak of 1942," The History and Culture of the Indian People: Struggle for Freedom [Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1969],p. 659.)

[4]K R. Chandrasekhran, *Bhabani Bhattacharya* (Delhi: Arnold Heinemann Publishers Private Limited, 1974), p. 90.

[5]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers!* (New Delhi: Orient Paper backs, 1978), p. 42.

[6]Ibid., p. 66.

[7]Ibid., p. 67.

[8]Ibid., p. 46.

[9]Ibid., p. 72.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 96.

[12]Chandrasekhran, *Bhabani Bhattacharya*, p. 13.

[13]Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers!*, p. 71.

SYMBOLISM IN BHABANI BHATTACHARYA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *MUSIC FOR MOHINI*

Harish Raizada

I

English and European literature since World War One has been a notable era of symbolism in literature. Many major writers of the period -- poets, novelists, and dramatists -- exploit symbols which are in part drawn from religious and esoteric traditions and in part developed by themselves. Some of the notable works of fiction of the age are symbolist throughout: in their settings, their characters, their actions, as well as in their diction. Instances of a persistently symbolic procedure occur in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is the most prominent of the contemporary Indian English novelists to make a consistent use of symbols in his novels to convey the intense reality of Indian life and present his own vision of a new and progressive social order in the country. Being deeply concerned about the responsibility of the author -- as "a man among men"[1] -- to his people, he makes his novels act as the instrument of serious social purpose. He assumes the role of the spokesman for the conscience of his age and crusades militantly against the social, economic, political and religious evils in the life around him. He is, however, not a mere iconoclast but an author with a positive and constructive message to convey and a vision of significant social change to achieve. His novels are therefore conceived as the vehicles to usher in a dynamic and resurgent Indian society.

As a writer Bhabani Bhattacharya is, however, not only concerned about his responsibility as a social reformer but also conscious of his responsibilities *qua* artist lest his novels should degenerate into denunciatory and didactic tracts. By the alchemic touch of his creative imagination he transforms the gross reality in his novels into artistic pictures. One of his devices to remove the banalty of realistic details in his rich use of symbolism and imagery is his treatment of the facts of life. Wallace Stevens points out: "Reality is a cliche from which we escape by metaphor."[2] It is metaphor which while working

like a germ of energy among the facts adds the yeast of imagination to the material dough. Bhabani Bhattacharya does not describe events or settings because they are interesting and picturesque, but because every detail treated fits into an imaginative pattern and has a symbolic significance. This is why even when the actual appears to predominate, one cannot fail to discern the strong and basically simple outline of a symbolic configuration beneath the realistic detail. By using this symbolic mode of perception of reality, he creates a new technique of "symbolic realism." The realistic details treated by him serve to suggest something about action and characters that transcends tangible detail and thus becomes symbolic or the visible sign of something invisible. This device not only accentuates the sharpness of his social satire but also saves it from turning polemical and trite. Still more the mode helps him to reveal his *weltanschauung* or world view and express hidden recesses and motives of the human heart, i.e. the mysterious nature of characters, which eludes apprehension by the human eye, and thus portray the real man and the whole man.

II

Bhabani Bhattacharya has woven the plots of all of his first five novels round the themes related to certain basic problems which clog the advancement of India and which need a proper tackling to put the country in the right direction on its way to progress. *So Many Hungers!* deals with the conflict faced by India between the Western materialistic values and her own spiritual values. In *Music for Mohini* the problem treated is that of India's choice between obscurantism and modernism as a way of life. *He Who Rides a Tiger* exposes the religious charlatanism which exploits the Indian masses because of their blind faith in superstitious religion. In *A Goddess Named Gold* the free India is warned against the monopolization of its economy by capitalists. *Shadow from Ladakh* raises the issue of the direction India has to follow between Gandhian village economy and modern technical progress and industrialism to compete with the developed countries of the world in the age of unimaginable scientific progress.

While presenting with the help of realistic events and characters a convincing picture of the Indian situation in the background of these problems, Bhabani Bhattacharya follows a symbolic pattern to highlight these issues and suggest a vision of life as a way out of them. He

introduces in his novels an innocent girl -- Kajoli, Mohini, Lekha, Meera and Sumita -- all unmarried except Mohini, as a heroine, symbolizing mother India. These heroines pass through the same experiences and face the same conflicts, tensions, allurements and traps as does India. Each heroine has her mentor or saviour -- Devata, Jayadev, Biten, the holy minstrel Atmaram,Bires -- who inspires her to make a proper choice for her happiness, which India also needs to follow for its over-all progress and prosperity. Characters and events thus acquire a symbolic significance in the structure of each novel. In his sixth novel, *A Dream in Hawaii,* Bhabani Bhattacharya shifts his focus from the problems of the country to those of individuals. He, however, still follows symbo device to convey his message effectively and naturally.

On the realistic level *So Many Hungers!* (1947) presents a very moving picture of the torment of body and spirit endured by the people of Bengal during the hideous famine years and the early stages of the Second World War. The simple and honest villagers of Baruni, nourished on the moral values taught to them by Devata, suffer traumatic agonies because of the tyranny of the imperialist alien rulers and the greed for wealth of the hoarders and blackmarketeers like Samarendra Bose and his capitalist friend Sir Abalabandhu of Calcutta. The author, however, transcends this temporal subject matter by symbolizing the conflict between the unscrupulous capitalists of Calcutta and honest villagers of Baruni as the conflict between materialistic values of the West and the spiritual values of India. Ultimately it is the spiritual values which emerge victorious in this struggle as is evident from Samarendra Bose's disillusionment of glamorous titles and material prosperity and Kajoli's momentous decision to carve out an honest living as a newspaper vendor instead of debasing her body. The contemptuous, smacking slap Kajoli deals at the plump cheek of the vulgar jackal woman is symbolic of her rebuff to the sordidness of life. As Kajoli represents India, the incident symbolizes India's rejection of the depraving Western materialism.

He Who Rides a Tiger (1954) exposes the evils of blind faith in religion and religious superstitions. The cunning priests play upon the ignorance of illiterate masses and exploit them in the name of religion. Biten shocks Kalo's age-old accepted faith when he remarks:

> "Food for the soul is produced and sold like food for the stomach, and though the ways of the two trades are different, you pay for both with hard cash. The temple is a market and the priest is a dealer. People are always ready to pay well for feeding inner man!"[3]

The rich men like Sir Abalabandhu and Motichand raise the temples, patronize the priests and encourage them to perpetuate the common men's faith in religion so that the ignorant masses may remain satisfied with their wretched lot under the fear of religion and God. The author ironically highlights religious charlatanism by transforming the destitute blacksmith Kalo as the Brahmin priest Mangal Adhikari. In his new disguise Kalo continues to dupe the people till his conscience revolts against his acts of depriving poor people of their hard-earned money. He also senses the threat posed by religion to deprive his daughter Lekha of her happiness of life and render her incapable of fulfilling her destiny as a woman. He therefore resolves to kill the tiger of lie if there is a danger in dismounting it. On the day of the *yagna* ceremony Kalo throws off his disguise and makes a clean breast of his fraud before the throng of worshippers. The *yagna* ceremony to install Lekha as the Mother of Sevenfold Bliss symbolizes the attempt of religious priests and capitalists to keep India -- symbolically represented by Lekha -- under the bondage of religion to check it from making progress and playing its role as the leading country of the world.

In *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), Bhabani Bhattacharya tries to awaken his countrymen to the need for economic freedom of masses to save independent India from being exploited by the greedy capitalists and profiteers for their own selfish ends. Atmaram, the holy minstrel who is venerated as sage and yogi by the villagers and whose mind is filled with the vision of glorious dawn, remarks with foresight: "Freedom is the beginning of the road where there was no road. But the new road swarms with robbers."[4]

The village Sonamitti, symbolic of earth which yields gold, has one of such robbers in the person of Seth Samsunderji, its cloth merchant and money-lender, whose greed for wealth knows no bounds. Villagers call him "Belly-that-ate-all," for the whole village is neck-deep in debt to him and tethered to his stiff rate of interest. His mind is always fertile with ingenious plans to add more and more to his coffers. When the holy sage Atmaram ties an amulet to his grand daughter Meera's arm and says to her: "Wearing it on your person you

will do an act of kindness. Real kindness. Then all copper on your body will turn gold....Gold with which to do good--,''[5] the greedy Seth visualizes the chances of earning gold through Meera! When one of Meera's friends, Lakshmi, exchanges her own gold ring with Meera's copper ring while she is asleep, there spreads a rumour in the village that she has alchemic power to turn base metals into gold. With his greed whetted by this discovery, the cloth-merchant enters into a business deal with Meera to share half of the gold produced by her. Meera is excited by the prospect of her getting enormous gold which she desires to use for the benefit of the poor villagers of Sonamitti "to wipe every tear from every eye.'' The Seth manoeuvres to create situations to make Meera perform her acts of real kindness. People are thrown out of their lands and made homesless, children are threatened to be dropped into wells so that Meera may have a chance of helping them out and displaying her kindness. As the miseries of people increase,Meera the beloved of the village, comes to be treated as its scourage, and the evil goddess of wealth, whose effigy they plan to burn. The holy minstrel Atmaram, however, returns to the village in time to dispel the misunderstanding about the amulet. He tells people:

> "Brothers, now that, we have freedom, we need acts of faith.... Then only will there be a transmutation. Friends,then only will our lives turn into gold. Without acts of faith, freedom is a dead pebble tied to the arm with a bit of string, fit only to be cast into the river.... The miracle will not drop upon us. It is we who have to create it with love and with sweat. Freedom is the means to that end.''[6]

Just as Meera with her amulet -- symbolic of "New India'' with its freedom-- becomes the scourage of the village Sonamitti when exploited by the self-seeking Seth Samsunderji, similarly New India with its political freedom may turn into a curse for its people if she is allowed to be monopolized by the unscrupulous capitalists for their selfish ends.

In *Shadow form Ladakh*, Bhabani Bhattacharya deals with the ideals on which India is to be nourished to become a powerful and fully developed country, by portraying the conflict between Gandhigram patterned by the Cambridge-educated economist Satyajit after Gandhiji's Sevagram and the Steeltown, named after the big factory installed by the America-educated Chief Engineer Bhaskar Roy to produce steel. This conflict between the ''village of service'' and the town of heavy machines and blast furnaces, symbolizes the opposing ideals of soul power versus armed power, asceticism

versus full-blooded satisfaction of life's urges, and village economy versus large-scale industrialism. The author tries to test the relative value of these conflicting ideologies in the background of the unprovoked Chinese aggression on India in 1962, suggested by the title "shadow form Ladakh."

According to Bhabani Bhattacharya India needs synthesis of both the ideologies for its regeneration. In reply to Satyajit's question, "what is to be in India today ?", his friend Bires, the persona of the author, remarks: "Both. This hour in India's national life has to be one of conscious amalgam."[7] There takes place a reconciliation between Satyajit and Bhaskar as both begin to realize the limitations of their own ideals and the need for benefiting from the experiences of the other. When Satyajit's Peace Mission to Ladakh fails, he begins to see the practical limits of the "soul-force" and idealism. Similarly Bhaskar begins to understand the importance of ethical values Satyajit stands for when he sees the evils of rivalry, jealousy, and callousness infecting the gains of industrialism. If Gandhigram has to realize the value of technical progress, Steeltown has to learn the value of love and cooperation. The synthesis of the two ways is symbolized by the marriage of Sumita with Bhaskar. Just as Sumita who is symbolic of India and who has been nourished on the ideals of her father Satyajit achieves her fulfilment by her union with Bhaskar, a practical man, believing in the human need for satisfaction of life's physical urges, similarly India needs the synthesis of moral values with technical progress for its advancement and development. The names of the characters in the novel symbolize the qualities they possess -- Satyajit signifying "the conqueror of truth," Bhaskar "the sun," Suruchi "the refined taste," Sumita "wisdom" and Rupa "charm of beauty."

In *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978), Bhabani Bhattacharya shows that the way to healthy human life lies neither in the sexual permissiveness of the American society nor in the asceticism which completely discards human passions as vicious. Swami Yogananda, who goes to Hawaii to bring about the change in the outlook of the sex-ridden and acquisitive people of America by preaching Vedantism to them, is ironically enough himself tormented internally by his intense desire for Devjani whom he has taught as a learned Professor of Philosophy before turning a Yogi. His dream of Devjani in Hawaii on the night Sylvia Koo, dressed as Devjani, slips herself into his bed to defile

him, brings on the surface his suppressed passion for Devjani and symbolizes man's natural desire for the satisfaction of life's primal urges. Swami Yoganada's experience in Hawaii proves beneficial not only to the people of Hawaii but also to the Swami himself. On the one hand it arouses the spiritual awakening among materialistic Americans, on the other it resolves the Swami's own psychic aberrations. Like Dimmesdale's confession of his sin in Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, Swami Yogananda's confession before Devjani of his passion for her and his experience with Sylvia Koo, exercises chastening influence on him. Swami Yogananda who returns to India after his brief stay in Hawaii is a transformed Swami whose soul is no more racked by doubts about his sanctified personae.

III

Music for Mohini deals with the theme of the social rejuvenation of India, particularly its villages which constitute the nine-tenths of the country. With freedom of India in sight, the author fears that the putrid Indian society caught in the deadly mire of obscurantism, superstitions, rituals, blind faith and obsolete customs, may fail to utilise political freedom for the real progress of the country till it undergoes a complete social and cultural transformation. Thinking of the degenerated Indian society, Jayadev, the hero of the novel, reflects:

> Society, rural society (and nine-tenths of India was rural) was sick with taboos and inhibitions of its own making: the inequities of caste and untouchability; the ritualism that passed for religion; the wide-flung cobweb of superstitious faith. It was all an outgrowth of centuries of decadence. The purity of ancient thought had been lost in misinterpretation until the dignity of man had become a mere plaything of visited interest.[8]

He feels "what was political liberty worth to the common man if it was not part of a renascence in social life ?"[9] If freedom is to be made effective, India must reorient her national life on a new social basis. Jayadev is determined to make his own contribution "to India's developing struggle for social freedom, the fountain of all freedoms."[10] The freedom he envisions must release a spiritual energy among the masses which would require every social value to be re-weighted. He considers the present moment in India's history to be the most suitable moment to end all slavery, not least of all the slavery of the spirit: "The proud nation that would soon step onto the world stage could not afford to be half-slave, half free."[11]

Jayadev, who is a writer of rare distinction and whose monumental work on the culture pattern of East and West through all the ages is to be completed in two or three years, has, however, his own personal view about the change in the social set up of his country. He considers it necessary to look back so that he may look forward: "Look to the roots of India in this fateful hour of flowering. Use the buried material of the past to write the new social charter."[12] He is opposed to imposing the Western ideology thoughtlessly to solve the social problems of India:

> While others borrowed a ready-made sword from Western ideology to cut the knots of the problem, Jayadev delved back into India's remote past for a solution.[13]

Being a scholar in the philosophies of East and West, he is drawn to the New Learning as much as to the old. His heart is therefore set on the synthesis of the two. Talking about Jayadev, his sister Rooplekha tells Mohini:

> "A strange mixture of the old and new is he, my brother. Self-divided, as it were, if you get me.... He would have harmony of cultures for India. He reads ancient thought in today's light. He seeks in ancient thought sanction for the West-influenced ideals of our time."[14]

Jayadev and his mother symbolize regenerated modernism and obscurantism respectively. His village Behula and its Big House to which he belongs are symbols of his degenerated country with their social putrefaction caused by the centuries of blind faith and iron traditions. Musing over the backward condition of India and the Big House, Jayadev wonders:

> What, he wonders, had happened to the ancient quest of the Hindus, the quest for *satyam, sivam, sundaram* -- Truth, Goodwill and Beauty ? The core, the spiritual content had been choked by centuries of evil overgrowth. Misguided faith burned like a great lamp of oil that gave little light but a great deal of smoke. It was this smoke which was pouring over India, this smoke which made the Big House stifling.[15]

The village of Behula is a typical backward village of India. Its people are superstitious and conservative. They have blind faith in obscurantist religious beliefs, horoscopes and irrational religious rites and ceremonies. The beautiful Sudha's great uncle ruins her life by breaking off her marriage with an eligible match because he reads in her horoscope that she is under the watch of Saturn's evil eye and unfit to wed at that time. Though she is very beautiful and has all the eight luck signs in her hand, she comes to be nicknamed as "Saturn's Eyesore" and is unable to marry. The Mother of the Big House gets

deeply concerned when her daughter-in-law Mohini fails to conceive even within two years of her marriage. She fears that according to her son Jayadev's horoscope he will not survive after his twenty-eight year unless he has a child. Believing Mohini to be sterile she takes her to the temple of the goddess of births and tries to make her cut the skin of her bosom and give to the goddess her blood in a lotus leaf bowl to lift the curse of sterility from her. When the Mother fails in her plan, she tries to send Mohini to her home town and meanly conspires with Sudha to marry her to Jayadev. The blind superstitious faith leads the proud lady of the Big House to debase herself by her attempted shameful tactics. Siva's pond near the temple of Siva in the village, commonly called crocodile pool, is not allowed to be cleaned up and used by villagers for bathing by the village priest who believes that there lives in it a crocodile, a devotee of Siva, who was a Brahmin in pre-birth. The hyacinth growing on the water of the pond spreads and lays its heavy bright green carpet over the whole pond. The mud banks of the pond crumble and the stagnant water from it seeps over to make a swamp for mosquitoes and harmful germs to breed on. The pond thus becomes a source of malaria and other diseases in the village. Even then no one dares to clean the pond lest he should annoy the devout one now disguised as an animal. The villagers, however, without feeling any qualms of conscience permit an old moneylender to marry a very young girl whose father is bribed by the wily sahukar. An indigenous Ayurvedic physician does not let his wife dying of pneumonia be treated by his doctor son. He prefers his own ineffective medicines to the English drugs even though the patient dies. The caste differences divide the people of the village and make them perpetuate hatred against untouchables. The social backwardness of the villagers coupled with their economic poverty makes their life still more miserable. When Mohini attracted by the rich crop in the fields of the villagers exclaims solemnly: "The golden earth of the Bengal... so they say-- and how true," Jayadev adds in his reflective mood: "The golden earth of Bengal... and the blue sky hung with vultures." Villagers are, however, so rigid about their blind faith in their old and obsolete customs that they defy all efforts at the social reforms. In its backwardness the village Behula is the microcosm of all the villages in India. What is true of it, is true of all other villages.

The Big house of Behula in which the city-bred Mohini is married symbolizes the village and the whole country in miniature in its social decay. It has some twenty rooms and a dozen servants and is still

"Lonely within."[17] Jayadev's genealogy extends to the last seventeen generations and like the family the Big House also has "the record of a thousand years."[18] Like India it too has withstood the ravages of time:

> It was essentially the history of the inward life. Thunderous invasions had shaken Bengal -- Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, British -- and even though the thousand echoes of struggle and change had washed on to this remote village, its ancient Aryan culture safe in the trust of stern-living Brahmins had remained basically unaffected. Unstained as ever were the old values of meditation, self-discipline,faith, charity, renunciation, truthfulness -- not as lip ideals but as essential aids to life, in an unshakable pattern of conduct.[19]

Everything in the Big House is old; nothing has changed in it for generations. The new bride Mohini's bedstead as her mother-in-law tells her "has known honey and bitter; birth, growth, married life, age, disease, death, festive gayness, tears. My son's grandmother brought this bedstead as part of her marriage portion. On this, her flower bed, her seven children were born. Here died my son's grandfather. Grandmother, too. This was my flower-bed and here I had my four children, the first-born son and the next girl who died as babes. This bed is now yours, daughter. When you lie in it, do not forget its history, its sanctity."[20]

Mohini finds the bed enormous, shoulder-high, its mattresses a cubic deep, brass rails on three sides and engravings all over, supported by elephantine legs adorned by mosquito poles thick as an arm."The bed could not have been repainted and polished this last half-hundred years. Like the Big House, it was absorbing time."[21] The room which Mohini shares with her husband has beauty and splendour: large and high -- ceilinged; the floor is mosaic, a pattern of great blossoming lotuses, some white, some blue, with green moons of leaves afloat in a clear sunbright pool somewhat muddled by time. The tall lime-coloured walls are smooth as satin, painted at intervals with murals, scenes from the Hindu epics. The enormous, faintly coloured ceiling is light blue with decorations in pale gold. Mohini finds it "a rich and lovely room, but you could not be intimate with it, for you felt strangely as though it did not belong to you. You belonged to the room."[22]

Mohini realizes that the Big House exists in association with the traditions of the family:

> This house lived always in the shadow of the family tree: nothing mattered so much as

> the family tree. The tall, gilt-framed portraits of ancestors that seemed to hang on every wall had a rich vivid life beyond canvas and point. An old, proud house of an old, proud family. A tradition within a tradition.[23]

The weird, old looks of the Big House make it oppressive to live in:

> The evenings unlit by a moon in the sky were oppressive, almost unbearable. The Big House was a pebble clutched in the iron black fist of night. Dim kerosene lamps, scratched the darkness tiredly. Dull bursts of cricket chirp, *jhinn!* with frog songs for variation, deepened the immense, listening silence. Then, the ancestors of the house brooding on the high walls slipped down and trod the long corridors back and forth, the *clop-clop* of their wooden sandals echoing from wing to wing.[24]

The stiffling atmosphere of the Big House can be lessened and the darkness inside it dispelled but any such attempt is intolerable to the presiding deity of the house, the mother of Jayadev. If the huge splendid chandeliers that hang in every room are lighted, the house will be less forbidding, less haunted by its benevolent masters of the past. But any such festive illuminations will annoy the mother and appear unusual to the villagers. Just as India finds it difficult to introduce any social reforms because of the stubbornness of its conservative priests and obscurantist social mentors, so does the Big House of Behula defy any change in its traditional set up because of the eccentricities of its iron-willed presiding deity, the Mother. Describing her mother, Rooplekha, the sister of Jayadev, tells Mohini:

> "My mother is the usual orthodox Hindu woman, only she is more intense than others, and all her faith is pinned to family tradition. No deviation for her, not one inch. Stern-willed, though tender at heart, she is a simple soul, with singleness of purpose, a one-eyed mind. She exists for the Big House; she wouldn't have it changed the least way. Even the age-grey walls are not to be lime-washed because Mother loves to see them absorb time."[25]

Mohini, the heroine of the novel, is symbolic of "the New India," of the newly emerged free India -- as the voice of her father reminds her when she prepares herself for the blood-giving ceremony. According to the author, she has "a symbolic inheritance. The Hindu maiden, born and bred in the ancient starlight of Vedic civilization, washed by the running stream of the centuries, sheathing her limbs and her thoughts in a conventional dress to suit the needs of each passing age, was innately unchanged: she had retained all her ancient hunger to offer worship."[27] Her husband Jayadev looks at her as the Vedic woman like Gargi and Maitreyi: "And his vision of the Vedic woman, drawn out of the mist of ancient ages, had a curious likeness to a living vision he had seen for fleeting seconds at his

ceremony of the Auspicious Glance.''[28] Mohini's marriage and the festivities accompanying the ceremony are symbolic of India gaining freedom and the festivities following in its wake. Her responsibility as the new mistress of the Big House of the village Behula is similar to that of independent India's wooing the villages which comprise the real country. How Mohini is able to generate life and light in the Big House, which is socially decaying and stubbornly bound by iron tradition, will show how far free India will be able to uplift and transform her villages socially.

The city-bred and village-wed enlightened girl Mohini has to play a significant role in changing the face of the backward Big House and the village of Behula. Her sister-in-law Rooplekha who unlike her is village-bred and city-wed emphasizes the role their situation demands them to play in the reconstruction of the New India:

> ''We who're so wed, serve some real purpose. It's as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect, culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with the new semi-Western outlook. The city absorbs a little of the 'barbaric' village, the village absorbs a little of the 'Westpolluted' city. Both change unaware. They are less angry with each other. This is more urgent today than ever before. Our new India must rest on this foundation.''[29]

Mohini finds the iron traditions and the stifling loneliness of the ancient desolate Big House very oppressive. She feels like a caged bird in it. Brought up in the free atmosphere of the city, she is forced by circumstances to be the mistress of the ancient House and trustee of an alien tradition.''The struggle to retouch her mental values, readjust her expectations, hurt fiercely.''[30] Though at times she feels conscious of rebel in her, yet she soon realizes that there is no way out for her. She reflects: ''As though I hate to give myself to the Big House. But I must. This life is my own free choice. There's no other way.''[31] To assert her individuality she sings and plays on *dilruba* to the annoyance of her stubborn mother-in-law. She even makes it her habit to climb on a jamrul tree in the garden and dig her neat white teeth into the painted fruit skin with a sort of love and rapture -- an act undreamt of by any lady of the Big House. She begins to collect small village children in the garden and teach them to assist her husband in his social work. But she soon realizes her mistake of outraging the dignity, authority and trust of the Big House as its mistress. She feels ''she had given herself to an ancient house and its age-old traditions, and she must subdue her temper and her turns of mood. She would not be beaten even when she felt bruised.''[32] She thus gives in more and

more to cast iron codes, to an old-world design for living:

> Yes, the young mistress of the Big House took deeper colour from her new life everyday. Slowly she fitted herself to rural design. Her sprightliness, her quick girlish laugh, she easily subdued. The mother was a ruthless teacher.[33]

Like the Mother, Mohini also begins to believe in the horoscopes of her husband and fears for his life. Her husband tries to extricate her from the superstitious belief and tells her emphatically: "We're fighting ignorance and superstition, aren't we. We're fighting the false clayfoot gods. They've had their day and now they must quit.... Or else the true gods will elude us.... I tell you, I'm not going to die soon, Mohini, and I don't need a child whose luck will save me -- what a fantastic idea! -- from the malice of the stars. Mother makes herself unhappy because of her crazy faith."[34] She even listens in her imagination her father's voice exhorting her not to yield to superstitions: "Have courage.... Do not bow down to such insult. You are the New India. The old orthodox ways have been our yoke, have enslaved us Let us be free," but her grandmother's words silence the brooding conflict of her mind: "How can we live without our past ? Time is our earth, the earth which feeds our roots. Faith will not be denied. Give yourself to the goddess with grace, if not with faith."[35] The result is that she agrees to go with the Mother to the temple of the Virgin Goddess of births and perform the blood-giving ceremony. For a time it appears that the free India instead of socially reforming the backward villages is herself falling a victim to their degenerated traditions. The ritual arranged by her mother-in-law to cure Mohini of her supposed sterility by offering blood from her heart in the lotus-leaf bowl of the Virgin Goddess is like draining newly won independence of the country of its life-blood. The timely arrival of Jayadev -- symbolic of modernism -- saves Mohini from her annihilation just as the impact of modernism can save the New India and its political freedom from being stultified by the degenerate orthodox society. Jayadev's admonition to his mother at this occasion is the author's warning to the stubborn mentors of the orthodox Indian society:

> "Values, Mother ? There are values beyond your grasp, since you'll always try to reach them with your grasp, since you'll always try to reach them with your reason, never with your feelings. Life has punished you.... Blind belief shapes your thinking; blind belief cannot make a sentiment."[36]

He reminds her mother:

> "We are not slaves of the stars.... There is no room in the Big House for crazy beliefs.

> The villages looks to us for ideals and a way of living. The pattern we set is not our private affair: it creates the strongest social sanction.''[37]

Thinking of the stubbornness of the orthodox people to defy the challenge of time, Jayadev reflects over the hard task that lies before the free India:

> Great and exciting days lay ahead. India, free to build up her destiny, was not yet truly free. She was like a prisoner held too long in a dark cell. Unchained and released suddenly, she was bewildered by the light. But the stupor would pass. India would renew herself, and her strength of the young -- not more, not less.
>
> Yes, Jayadev told himself, his son had no need of the Big House, of a House of the past, for he would have his own proud inheritance.[38]

Jayadev stands vindicated when a little later it is discovered that Mohini had already borne the child for three months before she was led to appease the Goddess. Her fertility is reflected in the progressive and productive measures taken by Jayadev and his friend Harindra for the social uplift of Behula. Harindra and his young followers of village Behula, so called ''ruffians,'' oppose the marriage of the old moneylender with a young girl; the Siva pond is cleaned up and the myth of devout crocodile exploded; the village physician realizes the ineffectiveness of his ayurvedic medicines in comparison with modern medicines; and Harindra, who thinks of marrying luckless Brahamin girl Sudha, tries to break up caste barriers. Impressed by the new changes in the village, the Mother realizes the value of modernization and is as pleased by them as by the expected birth of her grandchild. With the synthesis between the modern and the old, symbolized by the reconciliation between Jayadev and the Mother, the life for Mohini becomes sweet harmonious music throbbing with every pulsation of her innermost being, as it would be for new India with the regeneration of its social set up under the influence of modernization.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]See John Lucas, *The Melancholy Man* (London, 1970), p.202.

[2]Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous* (New York, 1957), p.179.

[3]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *He Who Rides a Tiger* (Bombay : Jaico publishing House, 1955), p.42.

[4]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *A Goddess Named Gold* (Delhi : Hind pocket Books, 1960), p.119.

[5]Ibid., p.85.

[6]Ibid., p.303.

[7]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (Delhi : Hind pocket Books, 1966), p.344.

[8]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Music for Mohini* (Delhi : Orient paperbacks, 1984), pp.67-8.

[9]Ibid., p.67.

[10]Ibid., p.124.

[11]Ibid., p.68.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., p.67.

[14]Ibid., p.94.

[15]Ibid., p.179.

[16]Ibid., p.77. In his novel, *A Goddess Named Gold*, Bhabani Bhattacharya describes how the villagers of Sonamitti, symbolic of earth which yields gold, are exploited by the 'vultures' like the avaricious village sahukar.

[17]Ibid., p.95.

[18]Ibid., p.101.

[19]Ibid., p.102.

[20]Ibid., p.100.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., p.108.

[24]Ibid., pp.132-33.

[25]Ibid., p.94.

[26]Ibid., p.166.

[27]Ibid., p.55.

[28]Ibid., p.71.

[29]Ibid., p.93-4.

[30]Ibid., p.108.

[31]Ibid., p.109.

[32]Ibid., p.132.

[33]Ibid., p.130.

[34]Ibid., p.165.

[35]Ibid., p.166.

[36]Ibid., p.180.

[37]Ibid., p.179.

[38]Ibid., p.181.

MUSIC FOR MOHINI: A NOTE

J.P. Savita

In Indian English fiction Bhabani Bhattacharya, like Mulk Raj Anand, is a socially conscious artist. The great Bengal famine of 1943 and something of the impact of World War II (*So Many Hungers*!), the Independence Movement and its eventual success (*A Goddess Named Gold*), the move of China across the vale of ladakh towards Bengal (*Shadow from ladakh*), social abuses in the name of the Hindu caste system (*He Who Rides a Tiger),* and the traumatic effects of Western values and technology on India's deeply rooted culture (*A Dream in Hawaii*) are issues that form the background of his novels and short stories, though the absence of any reflections on Hindu-Muslim tension and the cataclysmic events accompanying the partition is rather too curious and too conspicuous to explain.

Music for Mohini (published in 1952) stands hyphenated between Bhattacharya's two masterpieces, viz. *So Many Hungers*! and *He Who Rides a Tiger*, both as it were, seething with anger -- the former an indictment on a mammoth man-made tragedy, and the latter a scathing attack on the age-old Hindu Caste System. *Music for Mohini,* however, belongs to a different category. It is, as Dorothy Blair Shimer rightly observes, "undoubtedly Bhattacharya's most light- hearted novel."[1] Not that it is wholly issue -free. In fact, so many social and cultural themes have been named and suggested but only one-- the re-building of a new society for free India and a re-orientation of values through a blending of past and present -- has been effectively developed, and that too in a very low key. The only theme that is properly dealt with is the theme of a girl's mental growth and adjustment to her new role as wife. Cultural integration is, to quote K.R. Chandrasekharan, "only academically discussed and not fictionally rendered."[2] Unlike other novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya containing so much social and political drum - beating and orchestration, the music we hear in *Music for Mohini* is only the soft and subdued melody of the flute, or the *dilruba* which is the favourite instrument of the exceedingly charming and graceful heroine of this novel.

Viewed as a story, *Music for Mohini* portrays the intellectual and emotional development of the heroine Mohini from carefree and

sheltered girlhood to the position of a wife and the mistress of a prominent and influential house with great traditions. To the extent that it is concerned with the development of a mind, the novel is a study in psychology; but it is not a psychological novel in the sense in which say D.H. lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* or *Women in Love* are. Unlike them, *Music for Mohini* is singularly free from the involutions and complexities of a typically psychological novel.

When the story begins, Mohini is a motherless girl of seventeen, studying at school and growing up in her Calcutta home where she is patted by her father, a Professor with modern ideas and her grandmother referred to as Old Mother. The bridegroom suggested for Mohini (by a bangle-seller!) is a handsome, well- educated and affluent youngman in the late twenties, by name Jayadev. An odd mixture of old-world ideals (mark his abortive effort to teach Sanskrit to his young wife and turn her into a modern Maitreyi!) and Gandhian activism, he is the head of an aristocratic family in the village, Behula, called the Big House. The Calcutta-bred Mohini, a slip of a girl, is favourably impressed by a learned article written by Jayadev in the journal, *Maya,* and particularly by a photograph of the youngman that shows him to be extremely handsome. Jayadev's widowed mother, a staunch pillar of orthodoxy, gives her approval to the proposed match because all the eight signs of luck are present on Mohini's palm. Mohini's educated father (who sees no relevance of horoscopes in an age of microscopes) is unwilling, but in the end gives in to the wishes of his mother and his daughter, and the wedding is arranged even without Jayadev and Mohini seeing each other. Mohin later calls it her 'Swayambar.'

At Behula, thanks to the iron- cast traditions of the Big House (the room does not belong to you, you belong to the room) and a staunch, unflinching mother-in-law, a willing prisoner of old traditions, customs and superstitions (she has dedicated her right arm to Siva to ward off any evil to the heir of the Big House!), Mohini has literally to face a lot of music. She takes quite some time (about two years) in attuning herself to what the Big House and its inmates stand off -- after of course a lot of ding-dong wrangling and battling. At the end of the novel she has been married for two or three years and is returning to her parents, home for the first holiday, an expectant mother and a new mistress of the Big House of Behula.

What is it that makes *Music for Mohini* different from Bhabani's other novels? firstly, as has already been pointed out, it is (despite so many issues figuring and discussed academically) not issue-dominated. Unlike other novels, it is first and foremost a novel of character. Not that other novels have no character interest but the characters there, Kalo and others, are interesting because they move and act and think more or less consistently within the ideological light focused on them. It is not so with Mohini. At the heart of this novel is its extremely sensitive (as sensitive as the taut strings of a *dilruba*) and rather 'mercurial' heroine whose name figures in its title. It is also worth-noting that it is the only novel of Bhattacharya in which the *name* of the chief protagonist appears in its title.

Secondly, it is a feelingly written 'private' novel, private in the sense that it does contain a lot of the author and his wife's matrimonial experiences. Jayadev is Bhabani himself as David Copperfield is Dickens-- not an exact replica of its creator's life but certainly an artistic projection of much of his thoughts, feelings and traumas. It is (again like *David Copperfield*) what in language of psychoanalysis is called 'wish fulfilment.' We are told by Shimer[3] that though the novel was published as late as 1952, Bhabani Bhattacharya had started working on it in 1935, soon after his marriage with Shaila Mukerji-- 'the beautiful vivacious and outgoing young girl of seventeen that 'combined English sophistication and ancient Indian culture,' and her father, a prominent Bengali physician being ''a man with unusually liberal and modern outlook.'' While talking to Dorothy Blair Shimer in their Honolulu apartment in 1971, Bhattacharya affirmed:

> ''Mohini and her background were just like my wife's. It I hadn't gone to England I would have been somewhat like Jayadev. To a certain extent we were orthodox family like Jayadev's. Though we lived in the city, we were orthodox Hindoo Brahmins. However, while my mother, like Jayadev's mother, did not adjust her ideas, she did give complete freedom to others, and her love for her daughter-in-law was without any reservations.''[4]

And further:

> ''My wife, brought up in Westernized life ways, faced the compulsion of adjusting herself to very different psychological environments. And she did achieve the harmony needed-- enormous self-sacrifice was involved''[5]

Moreover, a close study of *Music for Mohini* can reveal that though outwardly 'quiet' and 'light-hearted,' it is symbolically the

richest and the least topical of Bhattacharya's novels. The symbolical undertones and overtones are much more pronounced here than elsewhere. Mohini is the eternal woman here; she is Everywoman. What is her destiny, her fulfilment? -- love, of course, "the light, the saviour of life."[6] Her exciting experience of sitting alone in a cinema house with a handsome youth (Somir) who temporarily takes her hand in his hand is, as it were, her initiation into the mystery of love. After her betrothal with Jayadev, whom she has not yet seen, she ruminates:

> "You pretty enough for him?" She asked of her image in the mirror. All at once she had a great desire to be lovely ... and it was as though her body longed to be a gift, fit for offering. It never occurred to her to wonder at this sudden overwhelming urge to give herself completely to a stranger. For the stranger was, as it were, more an idea than a person. A symbolic inheritance. The Hindu maiden born and bred up in the ancient starlight of Vedic civilization, washed by the running stream of the centuries, sheathing her limbs and her thoughts in a conventional dress to suit the needs of each passing age, was innately unchanged: she had retained all her ancient hunger to offer worship.[7]

In Anton Chekhov's very interesting story named 'Dushitchka' or the Darling, Olinka, the heroine, is the eternal woman who can not live without loving or at any rate without 'masculine friedship.' Mohini also means the darling. It will be too much to expect a Bengali girl of Mohini's background and upbringing to betray the ease with which Olinka entertains husband after husband but with Chekhov's heroine she does share the one instinct common to all women-- the innate desire to be loved and lose one's identity in love. Her marriage with Jayadev is an alliance of opposites. Yet there is no going back. He is her husband and for his sake she is ready to undergo any ordeal:

> But she had her husband. For his sake she would absorb new ways of thought and habit and cultivate new interests.[8]

Of course, Jayadev is an idealist and Mohini knows

> " 'How hard to be an idealist's wife! If only he were like other youngmen. No! How compare him with others! He was far above them all.'"[9]

She thinks that

> "She would much rather have the commonplace things of life, like other girls. She was not made to be an idealist. She could'nt bear the strain."

The very next moment she muses

> "She Could. She must. Her husband needed her help. How could she fail him? In the great task ahead she should play her part. She would be his true partner in feeling, in faith, and in dream."[10]

And she does it as subsequent events prove. That is why she is *Mohini*, the darling.

Near the end of the novel we find Mohini as an expectant mother. Motherhood is a woman's supreme fulfilment. Mohini is in bliss and one can well imagine what sweet music her life in Behula will be when she becomes the proud mother of the future heir of the Big House. She has already matured from a mere sophomore into the lady of the Big House and an ideal life partner of Jayadev. Now she is well-equipped to play her new role of a mother. The Great Maestro is going to play a totally new symphony upon this *dilruba*.

When Bhabani Bhattacharya submitted the manuscript of *Music for Mohini* to a publisher, the latter insisted that the title and the last page should he changed. The novelist refused to do so and withdrew the manuscript. The last page contains the famous passage:

> At home in Shibpur she would not be truly away. The Big House lived in her, a part of her inmost self. At last, there was no discord. Life was music-- a note of song for the Old Mother was in her, a note for Jayadev and his rebel gods, a note for the Big House and Behula village, torn and at cross-purposes for a while. Her life was music--the true quest for every woman, her deepest need.[11]

In fact, music is a literal part of the book used symbolically throughout the book. Mohini is synonymous with *dilruba*. *Dilruba* no doubt is a small stringed instrument, some what exotic but highly sensitive and capable of producing very sweet music as may also sound jarring if touched with untrained fingers. *Dilruba* (in Persian) also means a sweet heart, i.e. Mohini. Even as Mohini is an accomplished radio singer, *Dilruba* is her favourite musical instrument. She herself is like a *dilruba*. Music moves with her wherever she goes. Yet she protests, quite audibly, if some one tries to play a discordant note on her. In the opening chapter she is shown competing with her younger brother, Heeralal, in the childish game of collecting English proper names which sound funny to Indian ears-- Silverthrone, Longstreet, Rainbird, Slaughter, etc. But when Heeralal translates father's name as 'Butter Boy Chief', she protests: "Don't be disrespectful to father." She would not let her father be mocked at or spoken at lightly. That is not music.

Near the end of chapter 6, Mohini is about to depart from her father's home. Old Mother is disturbed with misgivings, "Who knows what music the gods have in store for Mohini?"[12] Mohini the *dilruba*

is despatched to a totally new environment of Behula and the Big House with its iron traditions. She is laid silent. The new owner, her husband, for all his idealism, is just a novice so far as the real music of life is concerned. On their first night his sermons on wifely duty and later his attempt to convert her into a modern Maitreyi are like trying to turn *dilruba* into a *vichitra veena Dilruba* protests. The novice realises his mistake and gradually learns to handle it as it should be handled. A trained hand can play a number of tunes on a *dilruba*, but not all. As it cannot and should not be used as temple music in accompaniment of cymbals, gongs and conchshells, Jayadev's mother objects to Mohini's singing of modern songs: '' 'These modern songs make no sense. You have such sweetness in your voice, why not use it for religious lines?' ''[13] Mohini is hurt as if the most sensitive chord in her being has been rudely jolted. Out of anger, Mohini smashes the instrument. A string has been snapped abruptly and callously. Near the end of the novel Jayadev gives Mohini a big surprise when he brings a new *Dilruba*. The symbolical significance of this episode is quite clear. It signifies the restoration of lost harmony. Through and through Mohini struggles ''to make harmony of the discordant elements in her own life'' and finally comes out successful, triumphant.

On a broader social scale, harmony must be established between the old and the new ways of life, between East and West. Mohini has to adjust to strange village customs much as Rooplekha (Jayadev's sister) had to enter the bewildering life of the city. When Mohini speaks against village - city inter-marriages, Rooplekha replies: ''we who're so wed, serve some real purpose. It's as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eartern view of life with new semi- Western outlook.''[14] This is more urgent to-day than ever before. Our new India must rest on this foundation: 'A bridge between two banks of a river'; 'connect culture with culture.' The synthesis thus effected is very akin to the one between Pt. Ravi Shankar's *sitar vadan* and Zuben Mehta's Phile harmonic orchestra.

All this, however, is ideological theorising. The real music is Mohini herself with which the whole look is resonant. All noise of national and social forces in which she is caught has not been able to wholly drown the enchanting music that she carries with her. She is music incarnate; she is *DILRUBA*.

REFERENCES

[1]Dorothy Blair Shimer, *Bhabani Bhattacharya* (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1975), p. 35.

[2]K.R. Chandrasekharan, *Bhabani Bhattacharya* (Delhi: Arnold Heinemann. 1974), p.56.

[3]Dorothy Shimer, p. 16.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Music for Mohini* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1952), p. 19.

[7]Ibid., pp. 54-5.

[8]Ibid., pp. 105-06.

[9]Ibid., pp. 128-29.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 188.

[12]Ibid., p. 56.

[13]Ibid., p. 32.

[14]Ibid., p. 93-4.

HE WHO RIDES A TIGER
A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Nathan M. Aston

He Who Rides a Tiger[1] is a novel with a hard-hitting social satire on the one hand, and a story of unfaltering love and compassion on the other. This novel is a twin of Bhattacharya's earlier novel, *So Many Hungers!* The theme of the Bengal famine of 1943 and the Quit India Movement of 1942 are present in both the novels. Though the theme is similar, yet in the use of stylistic devices it is unique and strikingly different from any other work of the writer. In this article we shall discuss certain stylistic tendencies noticed in this novel, basing our remarks on the rapport established by the novelist with his readers. Bhattacharya has represented characters speaking an Indian variety of English. Here we shall try to find out whether the novelist has succeeded in making his non-English characters speak English in an acceptable way and if his characters from different language communities have been able to carry the goods to the reader.

In what follows we shall take up different strategies of nativisation which occur in the novel, *He Who Rides a Tiger,* and would relate it to the author-reader relationship in the novel. Our discussion of nativisation in the novel in relation to style will be in relation to

1 Italicised words
2 Non-italicised words
3 Proverbs
4 Idioms
5 Syntax.

Let us look at the five words used by the novelist which in fact are devices in order to continue the conversation. They are : *han* (pp. 2, 24, 86, 163), *O-hey* (p.49), *halo* (pp.32, 39, 50), *bhago* (p. 178), and *Nah* (pp. 63, 67, 75, 163, 196, 197, 198). The very first italicised word in the novel leaves the reader a little disappointed since the reader fails to understand the meaning of that word. The word *han* appears on page 2 in a talk exchange between the old Brahmin and Kalo :

> ...Dark-minded folks of your caste have a fancy for Haba and Goba, Punti and Munni, *han*?

Since the word 'han' is in italics, a non-Indian reader knows that it is not an English word, but he doesn't give any clue regarding the meaning of the word. This *han* is equivalent to *don't they?* or *isn't it* in Indian English or *Am I right?* seeking confirmation from the addressee. The novelist again uses *han* with the same connotation on page 163.

The use of *han* appears in two other places in the statement form:

> *Han*! That was the way to get on the train, Kalo made a mental note. (p. 24)
>
> *Han*! that was the way to avenge himself. (p. 86)

What is interesting about these two examples is that both are presentations of Kalo's thoughts. In both the cases *han* is equivalent to *yes*. After seeing the destitute rush and jump to the footboard of the train, Kalo by saying *han* gives his approval to such an action. In another instance which appears on page 86 of the novel, Kalo gives his consent to what B-10 had told him. Kalo realised that he was no longer a scum and it was time for him to avenge himself.

The exclamation *O-hey*! is nothing but to draw the attention of the addressee. Since it is contextualised, the reader doesn't find it very difficult to understand the term due to the imperative that follows it:

> . . .'*O-hey!* Listen...what has come over you?' (p. 49)

The use of *chalo* in three places in the novel doesn't pose any problem to the reader as the novelist has contextualised it:

> A police constable prodded him in the ribs with a harsh, *chalo*! and the handcuffed man moved off in a daze.... (p. 32)
>
> A policeman's baton prodded him in the back, hard. '*Chalo*', ordered the policeman. (p.39)
>
> '*Chalo*! unless you itch for a slap or two....'(p. 50)

What is interesting to note here is that on all the three occasions the word *Chalo,* an imperative in form, is used by a police official and by no other character in the novel.

Let us take an example where the novelist gives the meaning of the italicised word soon after giving it in italics. This goes to show that Bhattacharya is a very cautious writer who realises his responsibility to his readers:

They yelled '*Bhago!* Fly!'... (p. 178)

The negative word *nah* is also italicised and contextualised to make the reader understand what it means:

'*Nah*!' (p.63)

'*Nah*...' in a sort of gasping agony. '*Nah*...' '*nah*....' (p. 67)

The author uses *Nah* in four other places(pp. 75, 163, 196, 198).

The novelist's artistic use of Indian exclamatory words and exclamations is to be noted from two different points of view. For one thing, it adds to the beauty of the dialogues in which it is used and makes them scintillating and lively. For another, they make the characters true to the soil to which they belong. All this is borne out by the use of some of the exclamations, typically religious, by Kalo as listed below:

'*Bhagwan*!' Kalo invoked the name in his immense relief, and he spoke about to his daughter, 'Yes, yes girl, there is hope for us yet.' (p.27)

'*Bhagwan*!' cried Kalo. (p. 38)

'*Bhagwan*!' Kalo cried again. (p. 380)

The exclamation *Bhagwan* uttered by Kalo in four places in the novel reveals the character of the protagonist. This expression shows Kalo's implicit faith in the divine power of God. In the first instance, the term *Bhagwan* is used to show Kalo's immense faith in God. The suggestion is that there is still hope for humanity. Here is the invocation to God as the protector. In the second utterance, *Bhagwan* suggests that Kalo could not believe that human beings could fall so low in ethical behaviour. Rajani the pimp practises the flesh trade and even married women could not escape his wiles. Kalo uttering the word *Bhagwan* a third time has the implication that the whole society had become morally depraved. The use of the word in the last example (cf.p. 38) depicts Kalo's anger and his determination to counteract this moral degradation. It must be noted here that Kalo himself works as an agent of Rajani and induces women to work in the brothel as he doesn't get any other employment. However, he gives up this job when his daughter is about to be molested.

There are only two instances in the novel where the novelist, in order to indicate the illiteracy of the speakers, changes the spelling of the English word. In the first instance it is the tobacco hawker who

speaks, and in the second case it is Kalo who staggers by the suggestion that Dr. Stevens is a honorary physician to the Governor:

> '*Sigrette*, betel, tobacco leaf!' (p. 28)

> 'The *Lat Sahib's* English doctor?' (p.140)

Here again the novelist is careful in contextualising the distorted words so as to make them clear to the reader. The device of distorting is patently false because an Indian writer writing in English *prima facie* accepts the unreality of the characters speaking in English since the characters would not do so in real life. Since it is understood that their speech is being recreated in another language, distorting the spelling of English words contributes nothing to the effect of verisimilitude. The only possible reason for this mis-spelling could be to indicate that these words have become part of the Indian language spoken by the characters.

The following are some of the originally Sanskrit words which are explained by the author in the novel. This is a common device of using a sprinkling of the other languages accompanied by the translation as in *viman* (p. 19), *sabdavedi* (p.19), *Brahmastra* (p.19), *Namo Shivaya* (p.78), *mantra* (p.90), *darshan* (p.220), *arati* (p. 203), *yagna* (p. 117), *gayatri* (p. 160). It must be mentioned here that when the author repeats the same word at a later stage in the novel, he does not explain the word every time (and he need not do so) but relies on the memory of the reader. However, at certain stages the context brings home the meaning of the word.

Now let us have a look at measuring units and also try to see if there is a well-established interpersonal relationship between the author and the reader. On page 2 of the novel there is an example of how the novelist tries to contextualise an Indian word in such a way that the reader understands the meaning of the word:

> Kalo had never knocked a single pice off his fees. (p. 2)

The context makes one thing very clear that pice refers to Indian currency. The earlier sentence which speaks about Kalo fleecing the customers and this sentence ending with *fees* makes it crystal clear that the word *pice* refers to nothing but the lowest denomination of Indian currency. Bhattacharya chooses to make English the basic language of his work and uses some Bengali expressions as exceptions against this background. The novelist italicises *pice* on pages 22, 49,

90 and 130 of the novel, but the context makes the meaning of the word clear.

On page 5 the novelist talks about Kalo's smithy which was the best for *ten kos* around. By giving the word *kos* in italics the novelist has conveyed to the reader that it is an Indian word. The word *kos* is again contextualised in the sense that the modifier *ten* makes it clear that it is a unit for measuring distance. But it is not at all clear what that unit is. Whether it is a mile or two miles. The reader fails to understand why the novelist uses an Indian word *kos* when just a page later he uses the word 'mile' and 'yard':

> The next morning he took her to the Convent School about half a mile away, on the Main Road, but he stopped fifty yards from the gates.(p.6)

There is no justification in using *kos* as it doesn't serve any purpose. He uses the words 'mile' and 'yards' on page 6. He could have used the Indian word 'gaj' instead of 'yard'. The question that disturbs the reader is, why the novelist hasn't used 'two miles' for *'kos'* when he has used 'mile' on the very next page. Other Indian words such as *seer* (p. 60, 86, 203) and *anna* (p. 76) used by Bhattacharya referring to measurement are contextualised. Thus we can see the novelist's concern for the readers. These expressions relating to measurement or counting reflect the attitude of the traditional rural people, who usually do not believe in precision and accuracy but in proximity. All this goes to show their generosity, lack of education, carelessness and an attitude of taking life at ease.

The word *devi* appears in two places in the novel:

> They will be given palmfuls of coconut sweets consecrated to the *devi*. (p. 4)

> ...was the essential quality of the *devi* and it troubled Lekha. (p. 220)

Though the meaning of *devi* is not given anywhere in the novel, it is clear from the context that *devi* means a deity:

> 'This is a time of festivity,' the woman cried in exasperation. 'The image of the ten-armed goddess has been set up in the landlord's house for all to see and worship....'(p. 4)

It is very clear that Bhattacharya has the Western audience in view while writing this novel. When he uses the word *devi* once again on page 220, he once again contextualises the word though it is not really necessary:

> To be a stone figure and listen, to be deaf to pleadings, to prayers of all kinds, was the essential quality of devi...(220)

Referring to Chandra Lekha the novelist says,

> ... she was still a Kamar's daughter. (p. 5)

Kamar is the name of a caste related to the profession of smithy and is lower in status. This is what the novelist has contextualised. He says,

> With her looks, pretty ways and even her name, she was still a *Kamar's* daughter. (p. 5)

Though he hasn't given the meaning of the word *Kamar,* the reader is able to guess its meaning. A little later on page 6 the use of *lo* is perhaps appropriate as it recalls to the reader's mind *lo and behold* to describe something surprising when he says,

> 'Lo! A *Kamar's* daughter comes to school!'

The word *kamar* appears in italics on pages 121 (three times) 152, 155, 190 (twice), 192, 239 and 244 of the novel.

On page 8 of the novel he has tried to tell us that Kamar is a smithman when he says:

> 'Smithman's daughter' (p.8)

But in the very next sentence he shifts to *Kamar.* Here the novelist is being inconsistent since in the very next piece of conversation, Lekha is referred to as smithgirl again. The question that faces a reader is why the novelist can't be consistent throughout. Strictly speaking, this inconsistency serves no purpose at all.

A very common way of saluting in most of the sections of the Indian society is to say *namaskar* or *pranam* by folding the palms together. Since Kalo is a Bengali-speaking character, the novelist takes care in making him say *pronam* and not *pranam*:

> '*Pronam,*' Kalo greeted the visitor, folding his palms together. (p.16)

Again on page 92 the responsibility of the novelist to the reader is evident, though the salutation need not have been contextualised once again and made self-explanatory:

> Motichand made his pronam with folded palms. (p.92)

The following are instances where words are given in italics accompanied by the meaning:

... the *pagla ghanta*, the 'crazy bell' (p. 33)

'That is our *sonar Bangla*, the golden land of Bengal....'(p. 44)

Her *puja*, her prayers. (p. 60)

Namo Shivaya! Namo Shivaya! (Hail, Shiva!) (p. 78)

This is the only instance where the meaning of the word/phrase is given in brackets.

There is only one instance in the novel where the Indian word as well as the meaning are in italics.

Jai Hind, *Victory* to *India*. (p. 175)

The following are some of the Bengali words which have been contextualised by the novelist:

Choorie (p. 17), *Ramayana* (p. 19), *gharry* (p. 45), *Maidan* (p. 49), *Puja* (pp. 60, 64, 91, 95, 126, 134, 202, 203, 217), *pujari* (pp. 80, 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 121, 122, 124, 132, 133, 136, 137, 159, 161, 203, 214, 215, 217, 233, 240), *bhai* (pp. 29, 169), *Kunda* (p. 121), *mala* (p. 131), *quaidi* (p.145), *misthri* (p. 156), *Gayatri* (p. 160), *jatra* (p. 188), *arati* (pp. 203, 218, 230), *jai* (p. 205), *Sandesh* (p. 213), *luchi* (p. 213), *yagna* (pp. 117, 226, 231), *satrangi* (p. 234), *tantra* (pp. 237, 239), *shaitan* (pp. 241, 242).

Apart from adopting the device of the literal translations of idioms, phrases and proverbs, Bhattacharya also resorts to the device of coining new compound words. The reader who ponders over these compounds soon realises that they do not have counterparts in Bengali. Most of these words seem to express the standards he deems desirable in human conduct and social relationship, though of course they may in a given context be used either of those who exemplify, or of those who fail to measure up to, the implied standards. The most striking feature of Bhattacharya's vocabulary in this group of terms points to the same general direction: criteria of worth by means of which these characters, and the types and tendencies they represent, may be assessed.

Bhattacharya uses expressions that are obviously not English, their deliberate quaintness being meant to suggest that they are

translated from Bengali. Words like *joy-moments* (p.72), *money people* (p. 76), *childing* (pp. 109, 200), *starveling* (p. 124) are neither English expression, nor Bengali. This is rather strange and inexplicable. But the point to be noted here is that Bhattacharya makes a daring attempt of using such words in the novel without giving any clue to the reader. A reader with fairly good command of the English language concludes that these are not acceptable words. The novelist is unable to justify the reason for coining such strange expressions when legitimate English words are available. He uses this device to differentiate the native expression from those of the English speaking characters. Such a conscious effort to introduce these changes makes the style artificial.

After having studied Indian/Bengali words given in italics, let us now turn to non-italicised words which are in fact not English expressions. We must make a somewhat detailed analysis of this area of vocabulary, with an attempt to enumerate the most important words in question and to define them according to the senses they bear for Bhattacharya. Though Bhattacharya tries to bridge the gap between the vernacular expressions and the English expressions, it is necessary to examine such expressions minutely in order to see what Bhattacharya does in order to be intelligible to his reader.

It is interesting to note that many of the expressions in the very first narrative passage in the novel make the reader guess that they are translations from the vernacular. The name 'Brave in battle' (p. 1), for example, can be a translation of *Ranbahadur* or *Ranveer* or *Jangbahadur.* Not being able to exactly find a one-to-one correspondence between the descriptive phrases and the corresponding Hindu names does not take away the irony of the description. The name is true to the quality, if the name and attributes match. This we can say about the colour of the skin of the protagonist, *Kalo, Black.* Here the novelist has taken every precaution to make a native speaker of English understand what Kalo means.

Exclamations like *Wah! Wah!* as given on page 2 tend to be unintelligible to a non-Indian reader of the novel. The sentence preceding *Wah! Wah!* in the following example makes matters more difficult because the expression is not English :

> '....You smile to yourself in a dim happy way as if you were eating cool watermelon. *Wah! Wah!*' (p. 2)

Now let us turn to the various terms of address used by the novelist with the local colour in its background. Address in fact refers to the rights and duties of the participants in an interaction and we shall concentrate here upon verbally realised addresses. There are some forms that are governed by specific social relationship and terms like *bhai* (pp. 29, 69), *dada* (p. 169) and *baba* (p. 244) have been used in the novel. The modes of address that reflect the social status of the interlocutors insist on unreciprocated differential terms of address such as *pujari* (pp. 80, 88, 90, 91, 94, 121, 124, 132, 194, 195, 196, 203, 214, 215, 240, 241).

The way in which characters are addressed by one another gives the reader a glimpse of finely-graduated scale of controlled behaviour, with friends and acquaintance placed according to the relative warmth or coolness of manner judged as appropriate to the relationship and with modifications in this placing made only after due consideration. Chandra Lekha makes it a point to address her father *Baba* throughout the novel. Though nowhere in the novel has the novelist made it clear that *Baba* means *father*, the context makes it very clear that the term of address *Baba* refers to her father. We have such examples on pages 4, 7, 17, 21, 34, 48, 57, 59, 61, 62, 75, 85, 106, 110, 151, 152, 172, 173, 183, 196, 202, 232. Chandra Lekha uses the vocative *Baba* to address her father. We have said earlier that the novelist does not gloss the word *Baba*, but the novelist does give the reader clues about the relation of *Baba* with Chandra Lekha. One can understand that an Indian word like 'Baba' finds a place in a talk exchange between Lekha and her father. What the reader fails to understand is why the novelist also refers to Chandra Lekha's father as Baba. He could have plainly said 'Chandra Lekha's father' but he doesn't do so.

Later on in the novel the novelist introduces *Ma*, the Indian word for *mother*, alongwith Baba. Again, it is the context that reveals that *Ma* should refer to mother as in the following example when Khoka tells Chandra Lekha that he doesn't have a father and that his mother has been taken away by the soldiers:

> 'What name have you, childling?'
> 'No name.'
> 'Your Ma, Baba? How do they call you? Ma, Baba?'
> 'No Baba,' he shook his head again.
> 'Ma?' (p. 200)

It is very common among Bengalis to use *Ma* for mother and *Baba* for

father as terms of address.

The following are illustrations of instances where the novelist uses an Indian word but immediately gives the meaning so as to make it intelligible to the reader. These words never appear in italics throughout the novel:

> ... he named her Chandra Lekha, the Moon-tinted One (p. 3)
>
> 'Durga! Durga!...' the great goddess of mercy.... (p. 22)
>
> Rupa, Beauty (p. 65)
>
> 'Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune....' (p. 179)

A Hindi word like 'chalo!' cannot be expected to be understood by a native speaker of English. In the following extract the novelist doesn't italicise the word, nor does he take the trouble of making the native speaker understand the word:

> Then came the familiar growl from behind his back, 'Chalo!' (p. 128)

Another example will illustrate the point made earlier that Bhattacharya at times does not discharge his responsibility towards his readers. How is a reader to understand what the novelist exactly means by 'brother anointing ceremony' as there is no equivalent in English?

> For months after, on the occasion of the Brother-anointing Ceremony, Biten went to his sister at Calcutta, less than two hundred miles away. (p. 168)

A non-Indian will wonder what the Brahminic thread is when he reads

> For Biten would wear the Brahminic thread, and made the difference. (p. 186)

We know that experimenting with diction and syntax can be a conscious process, but the author's natural mode of awareness is revealed by imagery. When Bhattacharya or, for that matter, any Indian novelist writing in English, places on record his real responses to life, he ends up by producing material full of Indian imagery. The novelist begins to find some connections in experiences, events and objects from real life in order to have Indian imagery in his writings. Bhattacharya's images are obtained from Bengali literature. We find that images and metaphors are his natural modes of expression and very little influence of English literature is discernible.

Let us see a few examples of imagery in *He Who Rides a Tiger*.

> You smile to yourself in a dim happy way as if you were eating cool water melon. (p. 2)
>
> His strength would give out like a lamp using up its oil. (p.27)
>
> He has fed well for a month and revived like a famished snake. (pp. 124-25)
>
> Be sensible and live like a *Rani*. (p. 197)

The imagery here happens to touch upon objects and experiences that are distinctly Indian, yet one must distinguish them from attempts at appearing exotic to the non-Indian reader. Bhattacharya is concerned not only with the word but also with the social and ethical assumptions behind it.

He translates Hindi words, phrases and sometimes even sentences and sequences of them into English. He has translated groups of Hindi and Bengali words and phrases into English generally on the analogical patterns of English morphology, e.g. money-people (p. 76), long-ago past (p. 86), Childing (p. 208), milk bath (p.117), boss folk (p. 158), earth-life (p. 18), girl-woman (p. 189), cook woman (p. 194), wish thought (p. 204), priest woman (p. 213).

In what follows we shall examine the employment of wise sayings or proverbs. But, then, as with his use of Indian language material or literal translations, it is restricted to dialogue, thus resulting in a juxtaposition of two clearly distinct styles whose overall effect is apt to impair the unity of the novel as a whole. It must be noted here that proverbs provide shorthand character sketches, quintessential statements of motifs and conflicts; they mediate between authorial comment and objective description and they serve as objective correlatives of crucial sensitive developments in action:

> End my earth-life before my husband's. (p. 189)
>
> Why, she is a wingless fairy.(219)
>
> She called him a crocodile in loincloth. (p. 228)

What is interesting from the reader-author relationship point of view is that these translations are clear. These translations are intelligible to the non-Indian reader and are added with the richness of associations for Indians. The question that arises is what purpose do these proverbs serve. They provide a glimpse of the wise sayings of the rural people preserved and transmitted in everyday conversation as also their attitude to life. Moreover, these translations also remind

the reader that the characters are firmly rooted in the Indian soil.

Bhattàcharya has translated many words and phrases from Bengali, his mother tongue, into English. It must be remarked here that these words are found in other Indian languages as well:

I don't want milk with skin in it. (p. 8)

The lowborn people won't bend but they will crack. (p. 16)

The cash he had given was burning her palm. (p. 18)

Why should the women continue to bear on their shoulders the rotting corpse of honour. (p. 39)

It is polluted even by your glance. (p. 39-40)

An ant grows wings and flies in the air. (p. 94)

And they discharged you, the boss folk. (p. 158)

Must I stick my nose into another man's cooking pot? (p. 180)

People have long tongues and long tongues will wag. (p. 180)

The sacred thread would be no harder for him to wear than a cap on his head. (p. 186)

The use, abuse or non-use of proverbs can itself differentiate characters. The abuse of proverbs by a character through distortion of meaning is an effective device to convey his flouting of traditional values.

In order to give the readers a flavour of native words, Bhattacharya uses Indian words, phrases or translations. He goes to the rescue of the non-Indian reader by giving English equivalents side by side. However, there are words like *kusa* (p. 58) where English equivalents might have been preferred. It must also be said here that the use of vernacular words adds to our confusion when they are not italicised in the text and are confused with English words. At the same time, he uses words like *Thoo! Thoo! Thoo!* (p. 198) which far from adding to the flavour of the novel leave the reader irritated and confused. The confusion is due to the absence of annotations of unitalicised words. As a result of this the reader fails to understand whether *Thoo! Thoo! Thoo!* (sound of spitting) is English or belongs to some other language.

In conclusion, it must be said that He *Who Rides a Tiger* is a work where we see the maturing of Indian English. The problem arises when one becomes suspicious about whether the book is meant for a

foreigner or a Westernised Indian, particularly when the novelist explains certain things in a way an Indian need not be told. Then why does he do so? Obviously because he has the foreign reader in mind. All said and done we must say that occasional use of Indian words in an English conversation is welcome in order to distinguish the native from the foreign conversation as they give the cultural background of the characters, the local colour, their economic background and their attitude towards life. Bhattacharya has been very cautious and discreet in using nativisation in *He Who Rides a Tiger.* Also, we see that his use of many an Indianism is deliberate and common in the dialogues of his characters. It makes his Indian readers feel more at home while reading his works and at the same time brings home to his foreign fans some linguistic novelty. He comes out as a great master of contextualisation and coins correct equivalents for Indian words. This adds to the authenticity of the narrative.

REFERENCES

[1]*He Who Rides a Tiger* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemam, 1977)

All the references to the novel given in parentheses are taken from this edition.

A GODDESS NAMED GOLD
A STUDY IN STRUCTURE AND TEXTURE

J.P. Tripathi

The structure of the novel, *A Goddess Named Gold,* is that of poetry, while its texture is that of prose. The form and meaning of it follow a symbolical direction. There is a fine synchronisation of light and shade, reason and imagination, mystery and materialism, idealism and realism, humour and pathos, satire and irony, raillery and adulation in the novel. Minstrelsy and democracy, love and hate, altruism and egoism, tyranny and kindness, heroism and villainy, victory and defeat are curiously mixed in it. The novel, like good poetry, appeals to imagination and emotion.

The dream of better future, free from poverty, disease and exploitation, surrounds the structure of the novel like a hazy mist which often conceals the reality. The very texture of the book is so planned that structurally it comes quite close to phantasy. It is the rural backdrop of superstition and spiritual belief, of rural women getting together and talking in the afternoons and nights, of soldiers as glittering beings, of minstrels having prophetic and magical powers, of jealousy and hatred, of rivalry and envy, of love and admiration, of villainy and hero-worship that provides the necessary atmosphere of folkmind and folklore. This is the requisite background against which the action of an epic takes place, and thus the novelist, by his clear art and artifice, makes the novel move in the direction of an epic.

However, the novel has another side, and that is dramatic, and in this also imagination and phantasy help as richly as reality and facts. The book achieves a rare unity of effect. The time span of the action is that of a few months. The centre of action is primarily the village, Sonamitti, with occasional movements of characters to nearby places. But more important than the unities of time and place is the unity of action. In fact, all the actions hinge round the amulet, the touchstone, which opens out the possibility of copper changing into gold, and thus giving room for the free play of phantasy.

There are basically two subterraneous directions in which the plot moves-- one is the story of the general uplift of the village and the golden future for all with the dawn of freedom, and the second is

the idea of the miracle being performed by the amulet when a genuine act of kindness is done. Numberless occasions are invented by the Seth for the impulsive kindness to flow from the bosom of the heroine Meera. All these occasions are fabricated by the novelist's imagination and it is artifice which is employed with a mechanical consistency to see the miracle work. The reader is pleased by the novelist's 'comical prodigality,' a term frequently used for Henry Fielding in relation to his novels, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones.* But later the reader gets disgusted with the mechanical invention of a new occasion for the working out of the impulsive kindness motive. The disgust produces a side effect of humour, satire and irony being mixed. However, the plot is too serious for the working of the comic vein alone. The stronger element is that of pathos, although nothing tragic happens. The real pathos emanate from the misery, suffering and exploitation of the people.

The novel dramatically presents the clash between these two streams of interest-- the general welfare of people and all men and women working for it, and the Seth's pursuit of personal ambition. In other words, the book dramatizes the conflict between the human welfare ideal and man's selfishness, between altruism and egoism. The above two motives run parallel to each other from the beginning to the end of the novel, and each strives for supremacy over the other. People's worries and aspirations, shocks and disillusionments alternate, and provide room for emotional tension which acquires a dramatic significance. The parallelism and crisscross of the motives of phantasy and realism, miracle and materialism acquire the form of technique and affect the texture of the book including fable, action, character, sentiment and diction. They also produce dramatically the comic and pathetic effect on the reader. And this gives a deeper symbolic and parabolic dimensions to the novel, supplementing the epical qualities and dramatic effects of it.

I

We begin our analysis with the examination of the fable, the Aristotelian word for plot, of the novel.The book begins with the binding of the amulet on Meera's arm by her minstrel grandpa, and thereafter presents, in detail, its impact on the thoughts, actions and words of the people in the village Sonamitti. The narrative ends with the amulet being thrown away into the river in the night. Early in the

novel the theme of a wife's loyalty to her husband finds a prominent place. "Her son's begetter hungry and wretched, a woman's life is not worth two cowdung pellets"[1] --such is the inner belief of Lakshmi, the Seth's wife; and yet for the sake of social welfare, she pits herself against her husband by giving saris to the village women who are in tatters. The altruistic theme is further supplemented by the recounting of the ladies' participation in the Quit India Movement and their imprisonment. The selfish, egotistical strain of the novel is juxtaposed to this by the depiction of the exploitation of the peasants at the hands of the Seth: "For the Seth was not only a cloth merchant; he loaned money. The village was neck-deep in debt to him and tethered to his stiff rate of interest."[2]

The materialistic motive of the Seth is supplemented by his discarding of humanistic feeling of sympathy: "He, a trader, with his duties and loyalties and time - honoured code of conduct, could not afford to be soft.... A tiger living on grass was poetic fancy!"[3] The Seth finds a moral support in history for his self-centredness and immoral acts during the Bengal famine: "He had learnt it by watching his betters during the rice famine in Bengal four years before. At that time three million men and women had to die so that there could be thirty new millionaires, and none condemned the profiteers."[4]

The materialistic and altruistic motives are again attached to the theme of elections. To the Seth, elections become another source of profiteering. If he is elected on the board as a member, he is bound to be entrusted with the charge of construction of the wooden bridges, and thus he can safely take ten percent commission from the contractor, "the shark of sharks."[5] The black market will double his profits on cloth, and all this money will go to the bowls of peasants as loan. On the other hand, about the election of the District Board, Meera thinks: "It was meant to provide the people with better amenities. Better roads where the ox-cart wheels would not sink into dust or mud. Wells for public use. A free dispensary based at Sonamitti serving the seven villages."[6] The tension arising from the clash between the selfish and idealistic motives about the elections, from the beginning to the end, sustains the thematic structure of the plot.

Money, which gives unlimited powers, is again connected with the selfish and selfless motives. Two traders in the village, the Halwai and the Seth, have the money power, and they adore it and put it to selfish use. Others in the village badly need money and are dependent

for it on the Seth. The Halwai has great faith in money power: "Money has heat!"[7] But Meera holds an opposite view. To her, gold is as good as clay as is suggested by the name of the village Sonamitti, and money is significant only in that it relieves the needs of people. Earning money is the Seth's life breath, an end in itself. But for Meera, it is a means of a new beginning: she has "to make Sonamitti a bright jewel."[8] Whereas the Seth wants money for himself, Meera wants it for others.

In any case, gold, the yellow metal, is capable of inspiring mystic devotion among people. It makes people great and respectable. Bhattacharya makes an ironical dig at the people's worship of gold like goddess: "Such madness about gold! A mystic value was set on the yellow metal, so that there could he a game for men to play. Whoever gained the metal, more and yet more, came up on top and all bowed to him with palms folded.... A man was best stated in terms of his gold. A race apart from humbler folk; superbeings; golden gods!"[9] It has a mystical, magical charm for the greedy and materialistic people, but Meera considers its utility only in respect of service to human beings and relieving their material hardships: "Gold in itself has no value. Gold is a strip of field released from bonds. Gold is a new straw thatch on the walls of a mud hut. It is the rag woman's escape from hunger and the old Father's wish for a pilgrimage to Holy Benares."[10]

The novelist presents an excellent blending and interdependence of idealism, realism and materialism. He tries to establish the Gandhian ideal of mass uplift: "To wipe every tear from every eye."[11] Meera's belief is that this is possible only through money, the gold which she is wanting to have: "The gold will be mine. I have to pass it on. This is what grandpa meant. This is why he gave me the amulet."[12] Thus Meera's idealism, inspired by Gandhism, is wedded to materialism, the gold goddess. But this materialism, wedded to humanism, meets a corrective in the moralising of Sohanlal : "Money poured on people, unearned money. It poured like rain! It would do no good in the long run."[13] One man's money distributed to other men will not serve the purpose. Every man must earn money for himself. Prosperity cannot come from charity but from devoted hard work.

The mass uplift motive, washing the tears of every eye, is the core of the thematic structure of the novel. The minstrel, Grandma and Meera are on one side, and the Seth on the other. Thus there is

crisscross of two streams of interest, and this causes sufficient tension. The motive is introduced in the beginning and reaches a finality in the end with the announcement by the minstrel that freedom is the real amulet which will bring peace and prosperity to all. Thus the fable in the novel has a sound texture of human aspirations and dreams finding a fulfilment at least theoretically for the plot, if not in the actual life of men and women.

A very important thread in the texture of the novel is that of freedom and feminine awakening. Most of the persons, who joined the Quit India Movement in Sonamitti and were sent to jail, were women. So freedom and feminine awakening are interrelated. However, freedom is treated both as a dream and a realistic event opening out opportunities for all. In the novel the theme of freedom is closely knit with Gandhism -- i.e. the sacredness of means, complete faith in goodness and non-violence, and victory through goodness. The minstrel, through his words and deeds, stands for all this. That is why, he emphatically remarks : "You cannot right one wrong with another. You cannot fight malice with malice."[14] He further adds : "Let the Seth have his way. Let him deny the women and in his heart he will suffer. The victory will be yours."[15] The freedom theme is accompanied by the description of the minstrel as a dream man, as the superman of the freedom movement. In fact, many such supermen, embodying the ideals of self-sacrifice and public service, were created by the freedom movement, and they were held in high esteem. In this novel, Bhattacharya has artistically interwoven the two legendary traditions of struggle for freedom and minstrelsy in Meera's Grandpapa, making him the hero of both the traditions:

> He belonged not to her, not to grandma but to all the people; or else he would not be a travelling minstrel. The Grandpapa was lost in the song-making. Looking at him with worship in her eyes, she could almost see the flame held aloft in his hand, the flame handed to him from other song-makers, who reached far back... to a dim past when words had to be passed from mouth to mouth, memory to memory.[16]

This meeting of the two legendary traditions in a real man of flesh and blood connects the thematic structure with folklore and folkmind, and gives the novel an epic depth.

Freedom is a dream so long as it is not attained; as an unattained ideal it is dreamy and magnetically attractive. But when it is translated into reality, it becomes a thing difficult to handle: "And as he spoke, the sad thought came upon him that freedom's new battle would be

more difficult in a way than the battle that had been won.''[17] The realistic view of freedom is that people must work very hard and honestly to reconstruct the nation. True, freedom ''cannot be given. It is to be built by our own hands.''[18] Also, freedom means new opportunities for relieving the distresses of the people.

A Goddess Named Gold is a brilliant exposition of the miracle theme which centres upon the amulet. The Seth reduced the miraculous amulet to an object of trade. The miracle of amulet is supplemented by another miracle-- i.e. of a talking goat: ''A village elder had purchased the goat for its meat on the occasion of a marriage feast. When about to be slaughtered, the goat had spoken in a human voice: 'Friend, spare my life' ''[19] Such miracles are commonly believed by the folkmind and are part of folklore, and hence they contribute to the epic effect of the novel. By the time we reach the middle of the plot, some doubting voices are heard against the touchstones, and gradually the voices of dissent are more audible and strong: ''We hunger for the miracle, whatever else may follow, good or bad.''[20] The greatest voice of dissent is that of the old man leaving the village: ''Homeless wretches, we still have our honour.''[21] Soon the miracle becomes associated with tyranny and exploitation and brings tears to, instead of washing tears from, the people's eyes. Meera realises this: ''It is my fate to wear the *taveez* for one purpose. To be scorned, to the despised; to be the scourge of Sonamitti.''[22] Meera tries to explain her pious intentions in wearing the amulet, but people's contempt continues. Lakshmi, returning from her father's, finds everybody bitten by the snake of miracle. It is only at the close of the novel that the miracle is explained away as freedom and its endless possibilities -- that is the continuation, and not the close of the miracle, and this gives an epic dimension to the novel.

Apparently, the novel deals with themes of different types-- social, economic, religious and humanistic. The economic hardships of people, their exploitation by money-lenders, the peasants' dependence on loans, poor roads and transportation, and poor medical facilities describe the economic condition of the villages realistically. The social integration of the villagers of all classes and castes, the fellowship of women, the struggle for public uplift and freedom, the rule of the elders in the village, and the awakening of the masses form the social fibre of the thematic pattern. People's belief in the gods and goddesses, offering of *puja* and flowers, giving help to or feeding the

Brahmins, offering of *puja* for every fulfilment of wish and the higher yogic and meditation possibilities of transcending the body form the religious side of the novel. Description of sorrows and poverty, helpless women, widows, orphaned children, hope and frustration, and dreams of prosperity form the humanistic facet of the theme. Visions of prosperity for all, dreams of a better life, faith in miracle, superstitious belief in witches and *Bhhotni* and belief in *taveez*-- all add to the folklore aspect of the theme.

The emotional structure of the novel is finely tinged by emotions emerging from real human conditions and by those emanating from artificial and phantastic situations. Love relations of different married couple in the village including those of Lakshmi and the Seth, Grandma and the Minstrel, Masterji and his wife, those of the other members of the cowhouse five, Meera and Sohan Lal form the staple of the emotional structure. Bond of love between Meera and Grandma, Meera and the Minstrel, Meera and the ladies of the cowhouse five group, Meera and the villagers, love among the freedom fighters and among the villagers further contribute to the emotional structure of the novel. This is the stream of genuine human emotions running through the fable of the novel. But a parallel stream of emotions is generated by the phantasy of the amulet which is tied to Meera's arm. This generates universal curiosity, expectation, despair regarding non-occurrence of the miracle, adulation of the villagers for Meera, disenchantment of the villagers and their hatred for Meera and regarding her as another tyrant -- these emotions, artificial in nature and origin, supplement the above stream of genuine emotions and impart the novel an epical tone

II

The action in the novel, following the Aristotelian line of criticism, is serious, significant and of a certain magnitude. It is serious because it describes the participation of the peasants and their women in the Quit India Movement, and then in the elections prior to the declaration of freedom. The action covers the range of the farmer's activities in the fields and in the village, the Seth's running to and fro for the enhancement of his business and profits, the ladies' gathering to discuss matters of village welfare, the elders' deliberations on village problems-- all these form the texture of the action which is serious. The actions of the Seth pertaining to the working of the miracle, the creation of artificial opportunities for the

manifestation of Meera's genuine impulse of kindness of heart, her tying of copper coins to most parts of the body and the process of their touching her body, the feigned act of the drowning of Buddhu, the Seth's distribution of sweets for the act of kindness, the notice for the old father's eviction so that Meera's kindness may bring about the action of the miracle, the Seth's all activities to make the amulet work are silly acts, which have origin in the element of phantasy, and which impart the dramatic (comic) strain to the novel. The novel is not charged with the nuances of thoughts, feelings and phantasies only, but is also loaded with the solid cargo of human activity like that of the novels of Anand and Narayan.

III

Idealism and realism also shape the art of character - painting in the novel. The character of the minstrel, the Grandpa of Meera, is a mixture of idealism, legend, myth and realism. He is connected with the noble tradition of minstrels who roam from place to place and entertain people by their songs. His character is a blend of sainthood and common manhood. Besides being a harbinger of spirituality and a new age of freedom and prosperity, he is an individual, a grand father, a husband, and a beloved companion of the villagers. The idealistic tradition of the emancipation of people, miracle, magic and the grasp of the realistic solution of life's problems meet in him. The novelist's faculty of phantasy, imagination and logic give shape to his character.

Meera, the heroine of the novel, is next in importance so far as the altruistic motive is concerned because she has no egotism. Welfare of the people and removal of their miseries are the motivating forces of her character. But credulity is her feminine weakness although it has a solid base in her deep respect for her minstrel Grandpa who is supposed to be the incarnation of Atmaram and a beloved disciple of a yogi living in the Himalayas. She is also a but of laughter in the exaggeration of her faith in the miracle. Burning of her effigy symbolises the necessity of burning her credulity and superstition. She is a serious as well as a comic character.

The Seth is an embodiment of egotistical qualities. He has the ambition to accumulate wealth by hook or by crook like all hoarders and black marketeers. However, the novelist makes him a but of laughter by exaggerating his phantastic desire of minting money from

the miracle, i.e. the magical power of the amulet. Like Meera, he is credulous by nature. His yielding to the procession and Lakshmi and parting with the hoarded saris, although under duress, confirms the presence of some humanity in him. He becomes a convincing human being by virtue of his love for his wife and child. He is a comic character, a caricature, inspite of all his monstrosities. He is a low type of self-centred, greedy fellow.

IV

K.R.S. Iyengar very rightly notes "a cathartic quality,"[23] characterising this novel as against the entertaining element in other novels. The emphasis on the life-view emanating from the action is further supplemented by the following remark of Iyengar: "*A Goddess Named Gold* entertains as a story, but it also disturbs us with its undertones of warning and prophecy."[24] The rich fabric of the thought content (sentiment) of the novel has been brought out earlier in the discussion of the theme of the novel in the opening part of this article. The ideal of a homeless minstrel working for human weal and uplift, the possibility of re-birth for yogic perfection, the thought of soul transcending body, belief in miracle and the power of the spirit to transform matter, the possibility of plenty for all, the idea of pleasing gods and goddesses by worship-- all are sublime thoughts and impart the novel depth and width which is akin to that of an epic. Grandma discusses the philosophy behind idols: "It is the power... the power to move us into a feeling. We make a *devi* with clay, stone, wood and the image gives us a feeling and so it becomes more than its material, it becomes a goddess."[25] The Guru's training the disciple into spiritual perfection is expressed as follows: "The old peasant's training had to start over again. He had to reach the state of bliss when you leave your earth-body for a time as you in the lotus posture...."[26] The minstrel's work as a spiritual guide of the masses and the concept of freedom as an amulet that can bring bliss to India are thoughts profound enough to make a novel eternally appealing.

V

Although phantasy and fact, idealism and realism are mixed in the thematic structure, Bhattacharya's prose is marked by clarity and precision. Sentences are short and staccato, and there are no fancy flights or rhetorical rhapsodies as one would come across in Anita Desai, for instance. As realism is the characteristic quality of his

writing, descriptions are brief and accurate. His prose gives instanee of purity of line and simplicity of language leading to vigour and energy. He mostly avoids stream-of-consciousness flights into the psychic recesses of the soul. The materialistic and rational character of the Seth is represented by the abbreviation of stream-of-consciousness thinking into a racy, tense flow of ideas such as this : "A fierce cry tore at his throat. Be careful, Nago's mother, stupid easy-going woman. Do not let our son lose his patrimony. Beware, Bulaki Rao, brother of a bug. When I am dead I will haunt you and sit on your chest while you sleep. I will drive you crazy."[27] Images are frequently used to give expression to ideas. However, the artistic mastery of Bhattacharya is demonstrated by making the plot, action, theme and even characterisation hinge round one image-- the image of the amulet with the touchstone in it. Obviously, the novel is an allegory with deeper meaning.

VI

The novel has a commendable artistic unity and a deep poetic tone. The powerful magnetism of the 'Goddess' named 'Gold' is all-pervasive: the peasant folk, the Seth and Meera are all under its sway. But gold turns out to be a fake goddess. The attempt of hostile people to burn Meera's effigy is in itself symbolic. Meera, possessed by gold and its magnetism, is not her true self. Her false self must be burnt out; the very notion to help people by 'unearned' money is immoral. The real meaning of the parable of the touchstone is that freedom opens out opportunities to people to transform their lot through love, faith and hardwork.

In short, the excellence of the book lies in the fact that the pathetic and the comic, the serious and the ridiculous are artistically blended together. The misery, hardships, diseases, and the belief in superstitions and the supernatural arouse a feeling of pity and sympathy for the people. The attempt to ameliorate their plight by gold achieved through miracle is ridiculous and arouses a sense of disgust. Satire, irony, sarcasm and a sense of genuine laughter are the literary devices to cure the people of their illusions and fairy tale world of superstitions. Tying up of all the copper coins on Meera's person and her movement with a protruding belly and the irritation of Grandma (for a moment fearing that she has gone with a child before marriage) are all farcical and humorous. The scene of the marriage between the two egregious fools, the drunk and the prostitute, with

the pack of drunkards trying to cheat the deceitful Seth, are highly comic and are scenes fit for a theatre rather than a novel. Feeding the children of the village with *jilebi* for inspiring a genuine impulse of kindness in Meera and allowing Sohan Lal to descend in the well to save the boy while Buddhu eats *jilebi* in the latrine are silly, farcical acts. The effort to burn the effigy of Meera also has a humorous undertone. The ladies' procession, their threat to strip themselves are both intensely pathetic and comic. In a word, the blending of idealism and realism, miracle and materialism, phantasy and fact, serious and comic, irony and satire, pathos and bathos, heroism and villainy, poetry and drama adds a special artistic charm to the novel. The texture of prose acquires the tone of epic poetry in this novel.

REFERENCES

[1]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *A Goddess Named Gold* (Delhi: Orient Paperback, 1960), p. 6

[2]Ibid., p. 9.

[3]Ibid., p. 31.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 35.

[6]Ibid., p. 37.

[7]Ibid., p. 52.

[8]Ibid., p. 194.

[9]Ibid., p. 153.

[10]Ibid., p. 175.

[11]Ibid., p. 176.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 62.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., p. 64.

[17]Ibid., p. 123.

[18]Ibid., p. 124.

[19]Ibid., p. 159.

[20]Ibid., p. 207.

[21]Ibid., p. 214.

[22]Ibid., p. 225.

[23]K.R.S. Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (Delhi : Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 419.

[24]Ibid., p. 420.

[25]*A Goddess Named Gold*, p. 47.

[26]Ibid., p. 95.

[27]Ibid., p. 81.

THE GANDHIAN RESISTANCE IN THE CRUCIBLE IN *SHADOW FROM LADAKH*

B. D. Sharma

A study of Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* brings to light also the novelist's views about Mahatma Gandhi's technique of passive resistance. One comes to know of these views of the novelist when one takes into consideration Satyajit Sen's reactions to two aggressions, namely, China's aggression on India and Bhashkar Roy's attempt to annex the land of Gandhigram and their outcomes. In either of these cases Satyajit Sen tries to resist the aggressor in the Ghandhian way of inflicting pain on oneself rather than on the adversary and thereby making an attempt to change the adversary's heart. That Satyajit tries to make the Chinese vacate the Indian territory with the Gandhian technique of taking out a peaceful demonstration is evident from his resolution: "He would take a Peace Mission, *Shanti Sena*, to the Himalayan snowlines, travelling first by railroad and bus to Kashmir's capital city, then marching afoot. Across Ladakh to the disputed territory close to Aksai-Chin. The Shanti Sena would be armed with the lost slogan of brotherhood between two nations"[1] and by his attempt to vindicate his stand when he tells the Minister Without Portfolio: " 'We have to touch the spirit of Chinese people so that we may be brothers again' " (*SL*, p. 194). Likewise, when he tells the members of the village Council: " '... let us follow the line of individual resistance. The line laid down by Gandhi in the days when Japanese soldiers were pounding into the Assam Valley' " (*SL*, p. 353), he is trying to persuade his friends to use the Gandhian technique of trying to touch the spirit of his adversary, who is trying to capture the land of Gandhigram. If we examine closely in which case the technique succeeds and how far, we shall be in a position to make definite assertions about what Bhabani Bhattacharya believes Gandhism to be and how effective an instrument of fighting he finds it to be.

The question as to how an aggression can be resisted has been taken up by thinkers like Jesus Christ, Thoreau, Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. Meeting force with force to throw the aggressor out of one's territory is a common practice in the world, but the thinkers named above have suggested alternative value-based ways with the result that they have drawn attention of a

large number of thinkers. Jesus Christ's suggestion to the victim to offer the other cheek has evoked ridicule or astonishment rather than following. In India we have the four classical paths of persuasion, purchase, punishment, and diplomacy.[2] Jesus Christ's suggesstion reappeared in a slightly modified form in Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" when he observed:

> If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of Government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth,- certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.[3]

Thoreau's way is a middle path as it can be placed somewhere between the path of no resistance and that of armed resistance. It involves one's violating an unjust law and undergoing punishment for that. Gandhi used this form of passive resistance in Indians' fight for the freedom of their country from the British rule and even called his movement of 1921 'Civil Disobedience Movement.' How effectively it can be used by the victims of injustice, oppression and aggression has been discussed and debated upon considerably both in India and abroad. Martin Luther King's fight for the blacks' rights was by and large Gandhian.

Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to be suggesting in *Shadow from Ladakh* that the Gandhian technique of passive resistance can give the desired result only when one's adversary has at least softness, if not warmth, for one and that it is likely to fail when the adversary has no sympathy for one. This assertion is being made on the ground that even though Satyajit Sen resolves to encounter both the aggressions in the Gandhian way [see *Supra*], he transforms his resolution into action only in case of Bhashkar Roy's aggression and not in case of the Chinese aggression. One can easily perceive a decrease in Satyajit's keenness to launch his scheme of a peace-march. When Satyajit tries to bring it home to pressman that "[v]iolence had always hurt its perpetrator as much as its victim--that was a fact of history. In the final reckoning moral resistance alone could be creative" (*SL*, p. 213) he is simple echoing Mahatma Gandhi's views and so he seems to be following Gandhi without any reservations. Though Satyajit knows that Mao is a war-monger like Jenghiz Khan, as he has read Mao's words: " 'The whole world can be remodelled

only with the gun. War can be abolished only through war. To get rid of the gun, we must first grasp it in our hands' '' (*SL* p. 78) he is sad to find that the Chinese have ''annexed sixteen thousand square miles of territory that had been an integral part of India'' (*SL*, p.79), and he is shocked to realize that it was much more than a border problem for India: ''It was India's China problem--for all time'' (*SL*, p.79); yet he has full faith in the Gandhian form of passive resistance until he meets people in Delhi as when he reaches Delhi he hopes the Chinese women to sympathise with him as is evidenced by his telling Bireswar: '' 'The men may still hanker for the glory of Asian leadership. Not the women. The women of China will be the country's salvation' '' (*SL*, pp.191-92). But when he is in Delhi, he gets more information about the Chinese from Bireswar, the Minister Without Portfolio and the pressman. For instance, the questions pressmen put to him, namely ''Was there room in the present world for such idealism as the peace march embodied ? Would the Chinese understand any language other than that of strength?'' (*SL*, p. 213) draw his attention to the fact that the Chinese have little sympathy for the Indians. Bireswar tells him: '' 'The Women of China are drunk with emancipation' '' (*SL*, p. 192) And the Minister Without Portfolio tells him: '' 'China today is as self-centered, as chauvinistic, as Britain used to be in the hey-day of its colonial expansionism' '' (*SL*, p.195). It is in view of such pieces of information that he changes his mind and summons ''unlimited'' volunteers to peace march (*SL*, p. 214) dropping his original plan of a peace march consisting of only '' 'four men and one woman' '' (*SL*, p. 105). When he is waiting for ''unlimited volunteers'' (*SL*, p. 213), he seems to be trying to find excuses for not taking the peace march, as even Suruchi and Sumita feel that the peace march is being delayed for no satisfactory reason, as their feelings recorded in the following words indicate:

> Was the peace march assigned to another page? No, not a word anywhere. Was it too early yet to expect reactions ? A fateful decision took time to mature. Supreme sacrifice was involved, nothing less. May be the papers a few days hence would convey all there was to know.
>
> The days went by, and there was no word. The call could well have been a myth. (*SL*, p. 223)

Otherwise he should have given at least the minimum member of willing volunteers, as ''unlimited'' can be the upper limit rather than the lower one. The fact of the matter is that he has in his mind the views of his friends like the following one of the Minister Without

Portfolio: " 'Satyajit, your march would be plain suicide. The Chinese would not understand what it was all about. You can't even blame them for that' " (*SL*, p.196). Obviously he has not remained keen to take out the peace march because at least unconsciously, if not consciously, he seems to have realized that the proposed peace march is not likely to give the desired results because in their hearts the Chinese have no softness for him. If he had been keen to march to Ladakh, he could have announced his programme and led his followers to the front without caring for their number, as Gandhi never waited for crowds to come to follow him.

It is also significant that Satyajit's declaration to take out a peace march to Ladakh is taken cognizance of by only the Minister Without Portfolio rather than by the Prime Minister. And even the Minister Without Portfolio has no hope of the success of Satyaji's Mission as is evident from his reaction recorded in the following extract:

> Satyajit pondered for a time before he spoke.
>
> "It's not easy for me to lose faith in the Long March. Somewhere in Chinese consciousness the Long March must linger still, even if it has died in the hearts of the rulers in Peking."
>
> The Minister smiled, faintly, and the lines of fatigue in his face grew deeper. (*SL*, p. 195)

The Minister's faint smile conveys the fact that he regards Satyajit's perception as incorrect and believes him to have little knowledge of the facts of life. And this Minister is a person who must have been at least sympathetic towards Gandhism, as the narrator reports: "The Minister Without Portfolio had been close to Gandhi, as close as Nehru himself. Satyajit had recollections of him in Sevagram" (*SL*, p. 193). If even such a man has no faith in the peace march there must be something wrong with the whole idea of it. Nay, the Minister is in full sympathy with Bhashkar's view that it is industrialization alone that can solve India's problems as Bhashkar says: " 'Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defense--a compulsion of our current history''' (*SL*, p. 27) and Bhashkar has come to India because he was called from America by the Government of India through a Minister as is evident from the following report:

"What's to be done? "

"Rapid industrialization," the Minister said.

"Why don't we get on with it ?"

"You think it's as easy as all that ?"

"Easy ?" Sharply. "Why does it have to be easy ?"

Their glances met, and each searched the other's mind for a point of contact. The visitor's face became happy. He looked down reflectively into his glass and took several sips before he spoke again.

"Come to India," he said. "We need men like you." (*SL*, p. 32-3).

And this Minister was none else than the Minister Without Portfolio as is evident from the following report: "The Minister Without Portfolio was a man of reason. Bhashkar recalled their meeting in Washington 'India needs men like you,' he had said" (*SL*, p. 186) though in the pre-Independence days he was, as has been pointed out earlier, as close to Gandhi as Nehru (*SL*, p. 193).

All this unequivocally indicates that according to Bhabani Bhattacharya many of the persons who had been close to Gandhi had ceased to be Gandhians and had become the votaries of industrialization. It is Bireswar who admits the fact in frank terms: " 'A handful of years after freedom was won, we've released ourselves from the architect of that freedom by giving him a shrine on the bank of the Jamuna river' " (*SL*, p. 215).

One can say that the Chinese resolution to vacate the captured Indian territory and to go back to the McMahon Line was an outcome of the rising of the feeling of humanity in their hearts. But the novelist clearly indicates that the real cause behind the Chinese unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal to the McMahon Line was not that hearts of the Chinese had changed but that they had their own problems and that there were international pressures. The suggestion lies embodied in the interpretations given by persons in the lobby of the Parliament House, although Satyajit is of the view that it is a case of the assertion of humanity in the Chinese hearts as Satyajit thinks: "His faith was vindicated. Chinese humanity had asserted itself--even before the forces of nonviolence had been marshaled" (*SL*, p. 338); he finds people in the lobby of the Parliament House saying that the Chinese knew that in winter snow would block their lines of supply and reinforcement (*SL*, p. 339), that the Soviet Union "had put strong

pressure on the Chinese'' (*SL*, p. 339) and that the Chinese had been informed of the American Seventh Fleet's readiness ''to strike'' (*SL*, p. 339).

So far as Satyjit's Gandhian fight of passive resistance to save Gandhigram from the avaricious clutches of the Chief Engineer of Steeltown is concerned, it is a different story: Satyajit's fast unto death makes the Secretariat of Delhi '' 'all agog' '' (*SL*, p. 357) and not only the workers but also the Chief Engineer of the Steeltown come marching to Satyajit's house shouting '' 'Victory, victory to Satyajit' '' (*SL*, p. 372). The fact can lead one to say that this is a victory of the Gandhian resistance. One can also infer that it is the fast that changes Bhashkar's heart. This is the success of Satyajit no doubt, but the success has come to him partly by his Gandhian resistance and partly on account of some other factors. So far as the Government of India is concerned, the only man disturbed in Delhi by Satyajit's fast is Bireswar, who is Satyajit's friend. It is natural for him to be disturbed by Satyajit's fast as he loves Satyajit. But the only outcome of the Secretariat's being ''all agog'' is that the government offers an alternative ''site for a new Gandhigram" (*SL*, p. 357) without putting any hurdle before Bhashkar. It is noticeable that the offer has nothing new or attractive about it as Bhashkar had decided to accord Gandhigram this compensation the moment he had thought of Lohapur's expansion: ''What was Gandhigram but an idea ? The idea could be transplanted to some other soil. The men of the village would get full compensation. Each peasant of Gandhigram could buy elsewhere twice the measure of land he now had under plow. Each mud house could be exchanged for a brick house'' (*SL*, p. 38). Nay, even Bireswar tries to persuade Satyajit that the country needs Bhashkar: '' 'You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhashkar' '' (*SL*, p. 358). In other words, if Bireswar had not been a Member of Parliament, Satyajit's fast unto death would have gone unnoticed. The extent to which it is successful is decided by the softness that is there in Bhashkar's heart for Satyajit. If Satyajit had been a stranger to Bhashkar, it is doubtful if the latter would have been moved by the former's fast.

Admittedly, Bhashkar too has little nobility in him and he is too bad to even become an idealist as like the Devil he tries to make Rupa entice Satyajit and to draw him into the pit of lechery when he says to her: '' 'Satyajit is the very soul of Gandhigram. *He* is Gandhigram.

Without his guidance the structure of ideas he's been building will topple like a thing of sand.... If only Satyajit could be destroyed--....I am thinking of the inner man. The man of crystal purity. The man who abhors vice. Vice in his own reckoning, of course. Let him fall from his moral height, and he will declare himself unworthly of leadership'•'' (*SL*, p. 133). The man who has such designs on the morality of a virtuous man must be extraordinarily vicious even though Mrs. Sarojini Mehra describes him as '' 'a saint' '' (*SL*, p. 36). A Valmiki can change from a robber into a poet as his vice is based on ignorance, but Bhashkar is a different kind of man: he has in his heart a malignity which has a far-ranging motive behind it. There is little possibility of his heart's changing in the positive direction. But inspite of that he lets Satyajit's passive resistance succeed against him because he has a weakness: he is in love with Satyajit's daughter. It is this love that makes him soft towards Satyajit and his Gandhigram.

One who studies Bhashkar's thoughts and feelings on the occasion can easily find that the change in his thoughts is brought about by his love for Sumita. Here is the passage in which the narrator reports what Bhashkar is thinking at the moment:

> Bhashkar stared into the night. There lay the village that had forced upon him a revision of his mental attitudes. Satyajit had had his share. And Suruchi. But more than either -- Sumita. She went away, but the power that she was remained.
>
> He recalled his first impression of Sumita. He had not liked her. The coarse white garb, the eyes too big and calm. She was far from his idea of an attractive woman. And later, when he had known her at close range, he had felt repelled by his glimpse of the father image.
>
> Strange, then, that she became a fixation in his mind. He could not have believed that such a thing might happen. It happened against his conscious will. (*SL*, p. 371)

Here Bhashkar has unequivocally acknowledged that it is Sumita more than Suruchi or Satyajit or the village that has ''forced upon him a revision of his mental attitudes,'' that Sumita has become ''a power'' for him and that she has become ''a fixation in his mind.'' Obviously it is his softness for Sumita that makes him forsake his plan to capture Gandhigram. One becomes curious to know whether Bhashkar would have revised his mental attitudes if Satyajit had not been the father of Sumita. Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to be giving a negative answer.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (London: W.H. Allen, 1967),p. 64. All the subsequent quotations from this novel (*SL* for short) refer to this edition.

[2]The Sanskrit words employed to describe them are *sama, dama, danda* and *bheda.*

[3]Henry David Thoreau, "On Civil Disobedience," *A Nineteenth Century American Reader,* ed. M. Thomas Inge (Washington: United States Information Agency, 1989), p. 236.

SHADOW FROM LADAKH: THE IDEAL OF INTEGRATION AND SYNTHESIS

K.K. Sharma

A profound scholar of Indian history as he is, Bhabani Bhattacharya has concentrated upon the great Indian tradition of integration of diverse and conflicting elements, viewpoints and cultures. His creative work artistically embodies in miniature the essential Indian ideal of unity in diversity resulting from the compromise between the various aspects of life. In the earlier novels, the theme of synthesis is dealt with indirectly and secondarily. But in his masterpiece entitled *Shadow from Ladakh*, it is conspicuous and dominant from the beginning to the end of the narrative. The novel throughout is an attempt to bring about the integration of Steel civilization and the Gandhian asceticism and Tagorean aestheticism, the old and the new values, village and city, India and China, etc. In short, the novelist is primarily concerned with what he describes as Tagore's lifelong quest: "Integration--that was the poet's lifelong quest: integration of the simple and the sophisticated; the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West."[1]

The novel deals in detail with conflict and compromise between two distinct modes of life represented by Steeltown and Gandhigram--the first stands for the modern Western industrial civilization, while the second represents the old Eastern values of life. Early in the novel, we read that Steeltown, which has come into being as a result of Chinese aggression, begins to spread so fast as to threaten the existence of Gandhigram centring around Satyajit, Sumita and others. Naturally, the people of Gandhigram decide to fight against Bhashkar, the central figure of Steeltown which is also called Lohapur. Satyajit and Sumita treat the situation as emergent and do not think it proper to leave Gandhigram even for two or three days. Gandhigram follows the ideal of selfless service and self-help and thus is also called Sevagram which primarily aims at teaching people through action alone. When men from Lohapur begin to probe Gandhigram and measure parts of it with a long metal tape, the inhabitants of the village are greatly upset, seeing that the town people will never be able to comprehend the values and ideals for which Gandhigram stands:

> . . . Engineers from the steel mill, Sumita knew. Men with no understanding. Men with

> no idea what Gandhigram meant. Four square miles of farmland that could be acquired by a cash payment--that was what they thought... They would at last find things that would not resolve into money value!
>
> There were other values Gandhigram stood for--Lohapur would have to realize that. The apparently insignificant village was building up a model for the whole of India. The new community of people was creating a social order in which all were truly equal. All land belonging to the cooperative. Food from the fields distributed according to needs. Other needs met by small industries based locally; economic self-sufficiency was the set aim....[2]

After a short period, the two, Satyajit and Bhashkar Roy--the souls of Gandhigram and Lohapur respectively--meet each other and express their different viewpoints. Bhashkar, a young man dressed in the Western way,emphasizes the importance of steel for India by asserting that it means economic progress, machine tools, and is therefore the only means to fight poverty and hunger and defend the country's freedom. He believes in ''change, not tradition. Not the heritage of pholosophic insanity, but the dynamism of technological progress even with all its inevitable chaos.''[3] Also, he detests the social frontiers and takes every chance to cross them. On the other hand, Satyajit, a social philosopher, wants to go forward from the point where Gandhi left off and is opposed to the Western way of life. But the America-trained engineer believes in the Indianization of American techniques. He thinks that the Gandhigram type of life should be ended, and that it should be merged into the pattern of Lohapur. The village craftsmen will find it easy to adopt new techniques, and the tillers of the soil will easily become unskilled millhands. He wishes to achieve the integration of East and West, the old and the modern. Modern materialism ought to enter India so that she might receive its full benefit and ''life be easier, freer, happier''[4]

Bhashkar Roy feels that Gandhigram, ''burdened with the ideas of a neo-saint, did not know what it missed. There would have to be new windows through which it could look upon the pageantry of life.''[5] It is built upon the wall of Satyajit's ideas and this is to be demolished and replaced by the institute of millhands, a centre of social communion. Bhashkar does not desire to eliminate the village but to introduce into it the amenities which form an integral part of a modern city's life. The people of Gandhigram will compare the two forms of life and will surely draw the conclusion in favour of Steeltown type of life. Thus it will be possible '' 'to capture the spirit of Gadhigram, not merely the acres of earth.' ''[6] In order to materialize

his plan, Bhashkar starts building a house in the meadow near Gandhigram's dooryard. This house is to belong both to the village and to Steeltown, and so "it would be their meeting ground."[7] The healthy attitude of adjustment on the part of Bhashkar Roy astonishes and confounds Satyajit and others, for they have always expected a headlong clash between Gandhigram and Steeltown, and the use of force and aggression against them. However, the existence of the Meadow House disturbs them, for they believe that it will ultimately destroy Gandhigram which "was a citadel of the spiritual values the world badly needed: values crucial to the destiny of man."[8] Bhashkar knows what Gandhigram actually is, and wants that it must be annexed because its whole outlook is contrary to his own and a fight against it is essential for the proper growth of India.

Throughout the novel, Bhabani Bhattacharya concentrates upon the problem of bridging the different cultures so as to bring about their integration. The novelist reproduces Gandhiji's and Krishnamurti's ideas about the free mixing of cultures. It is stressed that all cultures should flow freely without any restrictions. As a matter of fact, there should be a healthy synthesis of these. That is why Gandhi asserts that Indians should not merely feed on the ancient culture of their land; they should enrich their old traditions with the experience of the new times. But the foreign elements in their turn should be conditioned by the spirit of the soil. He draws the conclusion: " 'One dominant culture absorbing the rest--that cannot make for harmony; that will be an artificiality and forced unity. That we do not want.' "[9] Since Satyajit is saturated with these ideas, he thinks that there is no permanent gulf between the ways of life represented by Steeltown and Gandhigram; the two can adjust with, and be complementary and supplementary to, each other. Thus he remarks: "Steeltown belongs to the present. Gandhigram to the future. Steeltown must do its work. But when that work is done, when the material benefits of production have been fully attained, Steeltown, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek new moorings. Then it will be Gandhigram's turn to come forward."[10]

Suruchi, the wife of Satyajit, is the first person to comprehend that neither the Gandhigram type of life nor the Steeltown mode of living deserves to be accepted or rejected in its entirety. Owing to her intimacy with, and correct understanding of, her husband, she knows that he does not completely discard Steeltown and its materialism

because he is aware of its significance. But she is unhappy to see that Bhashkar is not able to realise the importance of Gandhigram and its spiritual values for the fuller growth of human life. Naturally, she wants the integration of the two different ways of life and wishes that Bhashkar should realise the significance of Gandhigram: "He could not see values that lay beyond--values that Steeltown would do well to possess. The great city with its giant machines had something vital to gain from the small center of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self-abnegation. Or else the rot of corruption would prevail. Materialism, the gospel of unlimited accumulation, could never be self-sufficient."[11]

Being of mature wisdom, experienced, well-read and remarkably objective, Satyajit believes in a harmonious blending of the old and the new. When he happens to meet Dalai Lama, he expresses his conviction that there should be a slow, true and lasting adjustment between the old and the new leading to a healthy and happy mode of life, since " 'A relic of the old world cannot live within the shell of the new; under the hard pressures, it's bound to be crushed into pulp.' "[12] Like her parents, Sumita, too, does not frown at machines and the new civilization. Bhashkar is amazed to notice that though she regards machines as enemy to higher life, she is greatly fascinated by electricity and machines that have created the new civilization, the new century.

Preoccupied with the theme of synthesis, the novelist shows how the clash between Gandhigram and Steeltown, embodying two contrary thoughts and modes of life, disappears gradually bringing about a true adjustment between them. All this is the result of the understanding and sympathy that grows between Bhashkar Roy and Satyajit. Bireswar calls them phenomena and regards them as essential to each other in spite of their clear-cut differences. He explains his views to Satyajit thus:

> "You and he, facing each other like night and day".... "Night and day in the hour before the sun rises and in the hour of sunset. The eternal clash--light against darkness and darkness against light. Could we have one and not the other? Could we sleep if it is only light? Or waken if darkness is without end? You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhashkar."
>
> .... "There's Bhashkar deep within you, Satyajit! And there's you somewhere in Bhashkar, of that also I am sure."[13]

Towards the close of the narrative, the crisis caused by the assault

of Steeltown on the Gandhian village is resolved. The workers of Steeltown go to Gandhigram and proclaim that they have no quarrel with the spinning-wheel and that they are brothers of the men of Gandhigram. Quite a large number of millhands, both men and women, go to Satyajit's house to get the latest news about his health, and speak in friendly tones to the vllagefolk who surround them. The villagers cordially welcome the visitors and take them to the fields, small workshops, schools and the mud dwellings. As Bhattacharya writes:

> There could be no easier intermingling.... When the visitors had crossed the threshold of the homes, all barriers between city and village were gone. The slogan of brotherhood, enriched with emotional content, became real.... The divisions were gone. Gandhigram was a frieze carved on one slab of rock. And it was rock that lived! And would make itself deathless through death![14]

Bhashkar Roy is also in the crowd. He makes a brilliant, sincere and eloquent speech asking the people of Steeltown to live in harmony and friendliness with the vllagefolk even after the passion of the moment is spent. He urges his men: "You will have to be those people, always. Try to see what they stand for. Give them a chance to understand what we are striving to attain."[15] Both the city people and the vllagefolk yell in one voice: "Victory, victory to the C E!" and "Victory, victory to Satyajit!" Then the villagers pay a visit to Steeltown and the people of the city and the village mix freely with one another. All raise the clamorous cry repeatedly: "Victory, victory to Satyajit!... Victory, victory to the C E!"[16]

The synthesis of East and West, of materialist and spiritual values, is also achieved through the marriage of Bhashkar Roy and Sumita who embody two contrary ways of life. Bhashkar is educated in the West. He has travelled widely in Europe and seen cabarets and night-clubs. He understands only the body and mind, and not the soul and high morals. Before meeting Sumita, "His body had never thrived on asceticism."[17] Naturally he sometimes feels restless and finds it difficult to work seriously and continuously. At such moments, he would ask himself if he is a machine, a thing of steel. And the answer is: " 'Perhaps I am a kind of steel that can think. A computer. But I can't feel. That's it.' "[18] Apparently, he has a typically Westernized outlook on life. On the other hand, Sumita is typically Indian in her views. She respects asceticism and spiritual values. She belongs to the India of the epic age. A true follower of her father, she is an out-and -out Gandhian. When she happens to come in contact

with Bhashkar, the two opposites irresistibly attract each other. All are surprised to see them coming nearer to each other. When she is invited and pressed to attend a function of Lohapur club, people are struck by her Gandhi-like simplicity and observe: " 'All our guests will have nothing else to talk about in the days to come. The contrast that is Sumita--Satyajit's daughter. She wears the white garb of a widow.' "[19] Even when Bhashkar and Sumita draw near to each other, and love springs between them, people believe that they will never marry, since a wide, almost unbridgeable, gulf exists between their ways of life. An experienced and shrewd woman like Mrs. Mehra thinks: "The girl from Gandhigram had made a strong impact on the C E of Steeltown. But they lived worlds apart. She belonged to a hermitage, and to imagine her as the C E's wife was fantastic!"[20] But when the two begin to mix freely and frequently and the love between them becomes glaringly obvious, Mrs. Mehra revises her judgment. Nevertheless, she feels that the marriage between the two would necessitate a good deal of adjustment and orientation: "The point was that Sumita would need a measure of orientation. It would be no easy passage from Gandhigram to Steeltown!"[21] However, people are of the view that she will be a nice, suitable wife for the Chief Engineer, as she has a thinking mind; she will not be a decorative piece of Lohapur club, but will truly be her husband's intellectual companion. In the end, there is perfect understanding between them, for Bhashkar fully agrees with her assertion: " 'Feed your spirit while you feed your body, or else the spirit will not survive. You can't do this one by one,' "[22] Their marriage is, in fact, the integration of body, mind and soul, of Western materialism and Indian spiritualism.

The reason why Bhashkar Roy and Sumita can come so close to each other in such a short time is that though the young engineer has lived in America for some years, he is essentially Indian. His Westernization is superficial, while his Indianization is genuine. Rupa, a modernized, half-American young woman, rightly says to him: " 'The truth is that America as a whole has meant nothing to you. You brought back the industrial know-how. Not the know-how of life! This is the case with every Indian. He goes West and becomes a new person. He returns home and at once he is a complete Indian.' "[23] Besides, Sumita, like all the people of Gandhigram, is not made to detest anybody. In spite of all the differences, the does not dislike Bhashkar even for a moment. She says to the Steeltown people: " 'Men of Gandhigram are incapable of hate. Hate is the vice of city

people.' ''[24] Thus there is no hindrance in their way of liking and loving each other.

In this novel, Bhattacharya spotlights the synthesis of asceticism and aestheticism. In more ways than one, he points to an integration of Gandhian asceticism and Tagorean aestheticism. Satyajit is an amalgam of the two. He is a true Gandhian believing in, and practicing, simplicity of life, social service, village uplift, non-violence, truthfulness, fast as a means of penance and spiritual strength, rejection of materialism, *Brahmacharya,* etc. He devotes himself to the task of creating a model village with the hope that ''it would be a replica of Sevagram, the 'village of service' that the Father of the Nation had founded.''[25] Naturally he names it Gandhigram. By his words and actions, he preaches to the people the Gandhian ideal of basic compulsions-- simple living, voluntary poverty, self-help and celibacy, use of moral force as a weapon to combat evil and an infinite capacity to bear suffering and death rather than retaliate. If on the one hand Satyajit is a true Gandhian, on the other he has the essential Tagore in him. When he returns to India after getting higher education at Cambridge and winning laurels there, he comes under the influence of Tagore and becomes a teacher at Santiniketan, the country home of the poet where he has founded his university. The poet has impressed on him the belief that there are other values no less vital than Gandhian ideals, that want of happiness rather than want of riches is man's greater concern, that happiness is creative and has a source of riches within itself, and that it is fullness of life which makes man happy, not fullness of possessions.[26] Satyajit hopes that Santiniketan will give him fullness of life.

The marriage between Satyajit and Suruchi is significant in that it symbolises the union between asceticism and aestheticism. Satyajit, despite the powerful influence of Tagore on him, is a Gandhian through and through. On the other hand, Suruchi, though devoted to her husband and to the vow of *brahmacharya* under his impact, is an incarnation of the aestheticism of Tagore. No wonder when he comes in contact with her as a teacher at Santiniketan, he feels that the fullness of life of which the poet has spoken has ''taken shape before his eyes, sari-draped on a reed mat.''[27] Suruchi is such an embodiment of the fullness of life as Satyajit's early married life is a perfect union of asceticism and aestheticism. However, after some years, the ascetic in him becomes dominant and subdues considerably the other side of

life in him and her. Both of them vow to practise *brahmacharya* before they have fully satisfied their emotional and physical urges. This divorce of the two equally vital facets of life is unnatural and unwholesome. Hence an integration of the two in the later part of the narrative. Even at the time of the rejection of aestheticism by Satyajit, the novelist shows the defeat of his asceticism at the hands of aestheticism, resulting in a healthy and happy synthesis of the two. Let us illustrate it. Satyajit and Suruchi are dedicated to *brahmacharya*. But one day when the meal is over, she feels his hand clasping her upper arm followed by a quick sharp squeeze. Though once upon a time this was a very familiar and oft-repeated thing, yet now she takes time to understand it because such a thing has not happened for quite a long time and is now nearly forgotten. When she understands the situation correctly, she feels immensely excited and blood rushes to her face. He too is excited but soon he controls himself and walks away. However, the matter does not end here, and the two cannot avoid the natural physical meeting leading to a thrilling sexual act:

> Suruchi sat with her head bowed, her breath quick. The sheath of virginity she had been made to wear over the long years would not slip off at a mere gesture.
>
> But an hour later, close on midnight, she pushed open the study door. The room was in darkness. "Ruchi!" the surprised, humble, grateful voice came from the direction of the bed.
>
> "A moment," she said, and as in the times long gone she turned round the door and closed the wooden bolt.[28]

Shadow from Ladakh presents an interesting adjustment of two entirely contrasting old classmates, Bires and Satyajit. An antithesis of ascetic Satyajit, Bires is given to gaiety of life, to the philosophy of 'Eat, drink and be merry.' When he comes to know through Satyajit that Sumita has given up the garb of austerity, he is exceedingly happy and looks forward to seeing her beauty in a blue sari. He is the masculine counterpart of Suruchi and therefore always loves and worships her in his heart. Strictly opposed to 'Satyajitism,' he makes a correct prophecy about Sumita in her presence: " 'One day you will be rescued by something more elemental than Satyajitism. You may fight it, but at last you'll give way.' "[29] He is deeply in love with life. That is why when he marks a change in Sumita, a change from ascetic austerity to love for life, he tells Satyajit that she is like her mother at the age of twenty, and that he should completely surrender himself to her and should not force upon her a heavy guiding hand. But

notwithstanding their different attitudes and ideas, the two understand each other very well and are great friends, deeply concerned about each other. For instance, Satyajit's fast unto death immensely disturbs Bires, and he does his utmost to persuade him to give it up. His anxiety, compassion and understanding move his friend who, throwing his arm around his shoulder, says: " 'Now that you have made use of every tool you have, Bires, let your heart be at ease. Must you grieve so much on any account? Must you torture yourself, struggling to break my will, knowing it's hopeless?' "[30]

Written under the impact of Chinese aggression on India, *Shadow from Ladakh* is deeply concerned about harmonious relationship between India and China. Satyajit, the central figure in the novel, wants that the clash between the two countries should end and that there should be harmonious relations between the two as there were in the good old days. He tells Suruchi that there existed warmth of feeling between them in the past and that was the reason why Tagore was so much interested in China: " 'Anxious to revive the old cultural link, he (Tagore) visited China forty years ago, at a time when the world had nothing but scorn for that country. He even set up in his university a Chair of Chinese Culture. A library of a hundred thousand Chinese volumes. A visiting professor from Canton.' "[31] Bhattacharya is of the view that Indians and Chinese can and should live peacefully. Thus the Chinese girl Erh-ku Roy comes closer to the Indians even when there is an armed clash between the two nations on their borders for territorial gains. She has perfect understanding with, and great attachment for, Satyajit, Suruchi and Bhashkar. She loves and follows Mao and Gandhi simultaneously. She always keeps with her the photograph of Mao and the spinning-wheel of Gandhi. The Chinese children's departure from India brings out the writer's concept of brotherhood of the Chinese and the Indians, breaking down all the barriers between them:

> Bhashkar drew her up. Erh--ku's arms went around him and her sobbing became unrestrained. Bhashkar felt his eyes smart, and to conceal his feelings he broke into activity, swinging down to the porch, half-dragging the child. "Hurry, all of you; or else the train will be gone."
>
> Ah To, before he stepped into the waiting cab, turned warmly to Bhashkar, and the barriers between them ceased to count as his hands drew together in an Indian salute.
>
> Among the children's baggage, he knew, was Erh-ku's precious possession--the spinning-wheel.[32]

In short, the novelist's great concern in this book is harmony between India and China, and he is quite successful in exploring it.

To conclude, Bhattacharya's concept of compromise and integration finds a convincing expression in this novel. Through Mrs. Mehra, he asserts that adjustment is essential for, and inevitable in, life: "Life is all compromise. One yields a bit here and gets it back elsewhere."[33] But synthesis, in Bhattacharya's opinion, means the acquiescence of life in its totality, and not the denial of it in any form or the suppression of identity. His idea of synthesis is clearly embodied in his observations on the adjustment between Gandhigram and Steeltown:

> There was one way left for Gandhigram. It must make readjustments. That would mean acceptance of life in its totality. But not the Steeltown way; that also was denial of life deep under the surface. Let licence be chastened by restraint. Let restraint find its right level by a leavening of freedom. Let there be a meeting ground of the two extremes; let each shed some of its content and yet remain true to itself.[34]

REFERENCES

[1]*Shadow from Ladakh* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1966), p. 215.

[2]Ibid., p. 28.

[3]Ibid., p. 155.

[4]Ibid., p. 60.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 61.

[7]Ibid., p. 86.

[8]Ibid., p. 177.

[9]Ibid., p. 156.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 273.

[12]Ibid., p. 295.

[13]Ibid., p. 344.

[14]Ibid., p. 352.

[15]Ibid., p. 356.

[16]Ibid., p. 358.

[17]Ibid., p. 122.

[18]Ibid., p. 124.

[19]Ibid., p. 151.

[20]Ibid., p. 195.

[21]Ibid., p. 197.

[22]Ibid., p. 200.

[23]Ibid., p. 317.

[24]Ibid., p. 162.

[25]Ibid., p. 14.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 15.

[28]Ibid., p. 184.

[29]Ibid., p. 232.

[30]Ibid., p. 346.

[31]Ibid., p. 55.

[32]Ibid., p. 350.

[33]Ibid., p. 115.

[34]Ibid., p. 274.

STRUCTURE OF DESIRE IN BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S SHORT STORIES

Asha Viswas

....From the earliest times, man has examined himself earnestly in seach of explanations for his feelings, experiences and behaviour. He has looked for answers in superstition, religion, philosophy and... psychology. Because the question, "What am I?" is so important to man's curiosity and sense of security that almost any answer seems better than none....[1]

Bhabani Bhattacharya of *Steel Hawk and Other Stories* is not the social realist of his novels. The stories have no moralizing mask and no ameliorative formulas. But this is not to suggest that the stories evolve in a void. His purpose in these stories may be described as 'Maieutic'-- a bringing forth, like a midwife, of the latent memories, thoughts, wishes, fears and dreams of the uncharted terrain in consciousness. Although each story can be read in relation to a specific event, yet the event itself brings to surface some hidden drive, emotion or hunger.

The first two stories, "Glory at Twilight" and "Public Figure," show the human consequences of imperialism in post-colonial societies. Without condemning it, the writer depicts a society given over to materialism. In such a society man knows the ground rules-- he should use opportunism and subterfuge to ensure his survival. Satyajit of "Glory at Twilight" and P.F. of "Public Figure" are amoral rather than immoral products of the post-colonial society. It is only when his self-made world topples does Satyajit ruminate over his first "Stepping Stone-- the forgerer." It is "too late now to seek" this forgerer and to "give him a chance to live." But as a bank clerk he has nothing but contempt for the forgerer. Each wrong step promotes his status. From a bank clerk to an accountant and then the Managing Director-- he has "tried to overreach himself." All this glory comes to an end with the collapse of his bank. He loses all his assets-- his house, two cars and the equities. From this point to the end of the story, Satyajit's actions can be interpreted as a study in "ego - involvement." Floyd L. Ruch, in his book *Psychology and Life*, writes:

Some types of frustrations... constitute real threats to our fundamental needs. Losing one's job, for instance, can be a source of genuine apprehension. The prospect of unemployment not only means reduced financial ability to satisfy one's biological needs, but also may involve feelings of insecurity, lowered self-esteem and loss of

> social approval. Any frustration embodying a threat to the individual's self concept is said to be ego-involving.[2]

Withdrawal from a frustrating situation is a defensive reaction. Basically a fear reaction, it may be an actual flight. Satyajit runs, not to his wife who has given birth to their first-born baby, but to his native village Shantipur. The letter from his village neighbour uncle Srinath to attend the marriage of his daughter is just an excuse-- "He had great need to fly from himself... a temporary relief from the wrenching within." When Satyajit was prosperous he enjoyed giving money to Uncle Srinath because it satisfied his ego. As a young boy, he was considered "one of the common herd" without any brilliance. It was this hunger for recognition which needed satisfaction. While the villagers longed for his money, he needed their "wide eyed wonder and eager homage." It was plain give and take. The reception given to him at the station once again swells Satyajit's deflated ego. He knows that he is an imposter now, not his former prosperous self, yet the overwhelming reception by the villagers once again awakens his hunger to taste each moment of this glory:

> Let him be happy for the day even with a false echo, let him be wrapped awhile in the lingering twilight splendour of departed glory. Tomorrow he would be in the full fury of a stream, tugged under water, fighting for life. Today he would have his last breath of peace, freedom, content.[3]

Satyajit's hunger for recognition is fulfilled, but at a very high price. He has to pawn his village house and pond as security for rupees two thousand and one needed by Srinath for his daughter's marriage. The protagonist is enmeshed pathetically in the web of his own male ego.

The second story, "Public Figure," once again presents a post-colonial male protagonist, a rich business man hungry for name and fame. To satisfy this hunger, he gets associated with a number of societies professing public welfare. He lives in a society where people are known by their offices. For instance, the Deputy Commissioner Ram Lal Sharma is known as D.C. Sharma. As Honorary Secretary of a welfare fund P.F. decides to promote his name using every subterfuge. A grand function is organized by him to be presided over by a V.I.P. The highlight of this function, he decides, would be the donation of gold ornaments by his third daughter Nolini. In order to get full coverage of the function in the newspapers, he invites the local correspondent to have tea at his residence, a subtle way of bribing a shrewd man like Muthuswami. His scheme gets a big

jolt when his wife and daughter flatly refuse to oblige him. It is only when he gives the temptation of "New pieces" "of the latest design" that the daughter agrees, and P.F. gets what he had been waiting for -- the supreme moment of his life. The V.I.P. is garlanded by his fourth daughter, the opening song is sung by his fifth daughter, he himself gets half hour for introductory remarks and another half an hour for the concluding remarks, and finally his third daughter Nolini donates some pieces of her jewellery. Time seems to stop still for P.F.--"Pride visible on his broad face, pendulous lips parted in a self-satisfied smile." But suddenly there is a second jolt for him. The V.I.P. sees another ruby necklace in Nolini's neck and asks her to donate that too. The ironically humorous scene is described thus:

> Nolini was clutching at the necklace with both her hands. But the fat fingers of the V.I.P. had risen to the nape of her neck, fidgeting with the clasp. In a moment Nolini would jerk herself away from the threatening hands and she might even speak a sharp word, and then all would be lost....(p.31)

P.F. is at the brink of disaster, but his agile brain once again whispers the same *mantra* in her ear -- "latest design." His missed heart beat regains its rhythm when his daughter understands the sign and donates the necklace too. Thus momentary recognition is gained, though at a high price. The end of the story is slightly ironic. P.F. does not get enough space in the newspaper. But he is conscious of his money power-- "There were ways and ways" to chastise a "rat like Muthuswami."

The third story, "My Brave Great Uncle," once again focuses on the male psyche. The old man of the story, nearly seventy, with a "wrinkled face and a toothless smile," impresses the villagers with his supernatural yarns and thus becomes a legend amongst the people of his small village. He claims that the flesh-creeping tales are not just the products of his fertile imagination, but "the stuff of his true experience." Thus he has succeeded in creating an image of a very brave man who can command ghosts and goblins:

> I happened to witness a furious fight between two goblins. They twisted each other's limbs, tried to gouge each other's eyes. I thrust my face out and yelled: "Stop it!" They paused, caught sight of me. Cowering, they melted away in a moment. (p.42)

In fact, the old man is afraid of ghosts. He can not sleep alone and constantly needs light during the nights to ward off his fear. The facade of fearlessness is a cover for his fear. His yarns fulfil his hunger for recognition and satisfy his sense of self-respect. The mask

comes off pathetically when the villagers insist that he should spend the night in the dead priest's room. As per the Hindu custom, the dead body has to be kept under vigil at night and there could not be a better choice than great uncle famous for "familiarly with spooks, goblins, gnomes." After one hour he rushes into the house:

> His eyes big with stark terror... he had lost his voice. His eye balls bulged in the deep sockets... his face twitched and tears were streaming down his sunken cheeks. (p.44)

Even when he is exposed, he wants to keep the mask saying that he can not clap his hands to ward off the ghosts as one of his hands is placed on the bier all the time. The narrator explains it in the following words:

> Sick with his morbid fear, he had been living in the protective shell of his brave yarns, himself the dramatized hero ! He clapped his hands out of a wish - thought : his fear intense, the way he fought fear was no less intense. (p.45)

Thus another ego is deflated, trapped in his ill-woven lies.

Another story that attempts to understand male psyche is "Pictures in the Fire." The protagonist of this story is not an Indian. Perhaps, by presenting a "Stranger from across the seas" the writer wants to stress that racial differences are of no importance. Basic human nature everywhere is the same. Infact, racial similarities are more revealing than the differences in elucidating the principles that govern man's behaviour. The story is a graphic example of the male ego. Henry Brown, a creative writer, sends his first story to a magazine in the name of his wife Josephine Brown. His reason for hiding his own name is analysed thus:

> Call it a secret shrinking-- that was it, for there could well be a rejection. Returned but addressed to his wife, it wouldn't be so very bad. Wouldn't it? Could his wife's name on the return envelope really be his shield against hurt ? So he might have hoped....(p.61)

The brittle male ego, apprehensive of rejection, seeks protection behind his wife's name. His story is accepted. The wife pleads against it and implores him to use his own name, but he continues to write in her name. He is happy because he feels he has created her, "created her as surely as any character in his stories." It is only when she becomes famous as a creative writer and even starts enjoying this new image of hers as a separate famous identity that he begins to feel angry with her. The vulnerable ego of man can never tolerate the fame of his wife. Man has always regarded woman as his possession like his

cigarette box. When a woman asserts her own individuality, it shocks his ego. Unable to bear her fame, Henry blames the whole female race-- "only a woman could misappropriate. So coldly, without shame." He feels a great need of fame for himself. What a contrast between male and female psyche ! While a woman feels happy to be the wife of a famous man, man's ego is shattered when he feels he is a mere appendage to his famous wife. His attempt to get fame results in futility when his story is rejected, while the next story in Josephine's name is accepted. The shattered male ego finds release by joining World War II as a soldier. The War gives him a "flight from harsh, heavy realities."

Freud always imposed male paradigms on female psyche which showed his failure to understand women. Hence his question, "Was will das Weib?" (what does woman want?) Bhattacharya, too, penetrates the so-called dark regions of the female mind. In a way, the stories present a contrast of male and female psyche. The eternal woman with her all encompassing hunger for motherhood emerges from the pages of "The Faltering Pendulum." The writer has not given any name to the woman of this story. True, poverty is amorphous crowd. She is an old widow without any children or any relation-- "Not once had her womb-flower borne fruit in all the years when she had a husband." In her sterile ambience, she still believes in the myth of fertility. Her actions show the effects of repression:

> We all are sometimes influenced by thoughts, memories or wishes which have been repressed but which nonetheless remain active at an unconscious level. These are likely to spill out in disguised forms of behaviour that we can not explain or control. We are conscious neither of the fact that certain thoughts and impulses have been repressed nor that they are finding indirect expression in some of our actions.[4]

The three ripe pumpkin seeds and a month old goat youngling that she buys after selling rags are an expression of her repressed desire for motherhood. Fondling the goat fulfils her hunger to clasp a child to her breast. It fills the emptiness within. The pumpkin seeds have a greater significance. Her drive for procreation seeks an outlet when those three seeds sprout:

> She hoped that the vines... would listen to the flow of her talk, and even if they could not, answer with baa and maa, they would surely make response by the wag of a tendril, the swing of a leaf. She was strangely close to the life of the vines, that lone despised woman of a remote Bengal village. For her they had a being. She could feel the rhythm of their growth and the movement of sap from rootlets deep in earth to the thrusting profusion of wide fresh - skinned leaves. (p.109)

Phrases like "rhythm of their growth," "movement of sap... deep in earth" and "Thrusting profusion" are closely associated with the experiences of a mother who feels the foetal movements in her womb. Drives seek outlets and repressed thoughts leak through repression barriers. This barren woman's interest in the vines is a case of transferred goal :

> The individual may resort to indirect means of obtaining gratification, choosing an alternate goal towards which to direct his energies. Although indirect goals never provide exactly the same satisfaction as original goals, they provide an outlet for the expression of frustrated desires and often afford real satisfactions of their own. Such indirect expression of a need... allows the person to bear his frustrations.[5]

Since her own barren condition is beyond her control, she tries to enter the being of the vines seeking some fulfilment. With a great thrill she watches and waits for the full cycle-- "Seeds - flowers - fruits - seeds." When the blooms die without producing fruit, it appears to her that her own sterile being has affected them. Her surrogate fruitfulness is blasted. When the goat starts nibbling the vine, her anger, resulting from her frustration, is directed against it, and "gritting her gappy teeth in resistless fury" she throttles her pet. Her anger, too, is a transferred anger. In fact, she is angry with her own sterile fate. The goat comes between her expected goal, hence destroyed. The killing of the goat symbolizes the ritual sacrifice. The goat has been sacrificed and the curse of barrenness is lifted. The two small pumpkins that were hidden behind the leaves are visible now after thick patches of leaves have been cleared up by the goat. The rag woman's dream is fulfilled. Tension is relieved and stasis is achieved:

> In that instant the woman was transformed.... Even in her deep anguish the rag woman's tear face beamed. The goat was dead.... But the pumpkin vines had sprung to fruitful life, after their long barren dead - aliveness. A balance was achieved. (p.112)

In "Mere Monkeys" Bhabani Bhattacharya echoes Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris. "When Desmond Morris writes of man as the naked Ape... we make his charges the stuff of cocktail conversation, smiling bitterly and dolefully, as if to say, " 'how true!' "[6] As far as the basic instincts of hunger, fear, anger and sexual desire are concerned, there is no difference between a monkey and a man. A female as a mother is a higher form of life inhabiting a dimension which is too mysterious for comprehension. Species make no difference. All female species are alike when there is a threat to their motherhood. The female monkey, perched on the tamarind tree with her week old baby clasped to her bosom, is a

picture of pride and contentment. Her "wild amber eyes" are soft and "if the pinched orb of a monkey face could smile, this one smiled." The other monkeys, invited by her fond cries of motherhood, come and fondle the baby by turns, taking care not to hurt it. The huge outsider, "an overgrown male of the species," represents naked lust and aggression, consuming love and harmony. As a typical representative of male species, the monkey is innately and instinctively aggressive. It shows the restlessness of male species always in need of change, excitement and challenge, ready to strike out whatever comes in its way. The way this outsider snatches the baby monkey and drops it to the ground expresses brutal agression with a will to dominate. There is a touch of anthropomorphism about the group mourners:

> There was something curiously familiar about the scene, I thought. Like the professional mourners who in this part of India rend the air with their ritual of full throated wailing when someone is dead, the monkeys raised shrill voices and swayed their haunches and beat their breasts.(pp.71-2)

It is difficult not to attribute human feelings to the female monkey when she takes revenge in a mysteriously subtle way. Though she herself is killed in the attempt, she has destroyed the agressor, the killer of her baby.

"A Moment of Eternity" depicts a lower middle class Indian woman married to a clerk who has lost his job. The husband's worry to provide for his wife and two children haunts him day and night and results in tuberculosis. It is her enormous love for her husband which fills her with tremendous anguish-- "Oh, I could die a hundred deaths so he could be happy for a day" (p.77). For this woman, her husband is her whole world. She hardly cares for the children during his illness. While in "The Faltering Pendulum" the word "deadwood" is used by the rag-woman for her barren womb, in this story the wife feels like a "dead wood" watching her husband slowly moving towards eternal oblivion:

> I was numb inside, I was a thing of wood, I was a tree standing rootless. Hour on hour, day on day, I grew more and more into dead wood. A neighbour woman fed the children, I had no mind nor time for them, all my moments were for my husband, each moment attuned to his struggle and pain... I was battling with the power of my spirit and I could not be defeated, not unless I was lost, destroyed. (p.80)

A liberated modern Indian woman may dismiss the story as an exaggerated clap trap, yet the truth is that for a Hindu woman, there

is no separate existence, away from her husband. She belongs to her husband "through all the cycles of her earth life." Savitri has permeated her consciousness. When she says "In you we three live. In your dying we three die. Savitri will not be denied," (p.82) the economic dependence is not the sole factor. When her world crumbles on her, she longs to be punished by the court for the killing of her two daughters; but when that too is denied, there is nothing left but a prayer for madness to "defeat memory."

The "*Acrobats*" presents overpowering love between two males-- a father and his son. In the absence of a mother, the son lives in close companionship of his father. The father too "had drawn very close to the growing child with a warmth of heart so intense that it was hard to bear." When the boy feels his father's attraction for a maid-servant coming between him and his father, he is unable to understand it, yet he instinctively resents this outsider because it represents a threat to his love. When the father does not care for his verbal resentment, he wants to runaway from this miserable situation, but "unbreakable bonds" of his love for his father hold him helpless. Finally, he decides to express his anger against this new intruder in a masochistic way. He deliberately loses his balance on the pole and falls on the stone pavement. When he regains consciousness, he explains his reasons. A new awareness dawns on them:

> Their eyes met. With a deep, searching glance, Father, for the first time, caught some of the pain, the protest, the ravaged feelings, the core of his son's inward storm. (p.99)

Their love for each other wins and the intruder woman is discarded.

"She, Born of Light" too compares and contrasts the male and female drives. Dhruba the artist, who makes a picture of Suta, is more interested in giving a new realism to art by bringing it closer to life. He is very well aware that Suta loves him, but "he was denying himself life while he created it in his picture." Even when she agrees to denude herself so that he can give realism to his art, it is the artist in him that prevails. Behind this artistic urge is the drive for recognition, all else is secondary. For Suta, "a simple girl with commonplace needs, near twenty and ripening into womanhood," the very act of taking off of her clothes means complete surrender to the artist she loves. All immersed in his art, when he ignores the woman in her, she breaks. Even when she leaves him saying, "we shall never meet again," he does not follow her because now he has been able to paint the trapped soul of a woman. So far his creation has only "the

reality of flesh and bone and the warmth of life.'' The artist in him is satisfied: recognition is ensured, his physical desires can wait. For Suta, love is supermost. She fulfils her desire at the doors of Nakul, the down-to-earth peasant.

Thus in all these nine stories Bhabani Bhattacharya has tried to show hidden human desires. The other six stories -- ''Lattu Ram's Adventure,'' ''Names are not labels,'' ''Just Coincidence,'' ''The Quack,'' ''Pilgrims in Uniform'' and ''The Steel Hawk''-- are not centred on any of the basic drives of human psyche. Hence they are not discussed in this article.

REFERENCES

[1]Floyd L. Runch, *Psychology and Life* (U.S.A.: Scott, Foresman Company, 1958), p.5.

[2]Ibid., p.173.

[3]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Steel Hawk and Other Stories* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books Private Ltd., 1968). All the quotations from the stories are taken from this edition only.

[4]Floyd L. Ruch, *Psychology and Life*, p. 177.

[5]Ibid., p. 181.

[6]Ashley Montagu, *Man and Aggression* (London: Oxford Uni.Press, 1973), p. 21.

THE METAPHYSICS OF ABSENCE AND THE SEDUCTIONS OF PHALLOGOCENTRIC DISCOURSE : A (MIS) READING OF BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S *A DREAM IN HAWAII*

Bhagwat S. Goyal

The Western philosophical tradition, according to Jacques Derrida, is characterised by what he calls the metaphysics of presence and a logocentric universe. But if there is a metaphysics of presence, there is also a metaphysics of absence inscribed within it. Most of the literary readings, and misreadings, have been based on the assumption that every literary text has, inscribed within it, a definite meaning. Meaning, however, is not something that is inherently fixed or present in a text. Several texts that apparently seem to be innocuous, transparent and traditionally sacrosanct can be read as subversive and potentially radical. There may be several totally divergent and contradictory readings of a text, depending on the approach or method one adopts. Some readings may be so startling and innovative that they become both trend setters and shatterers of the conventions of meaning.

Bhabani Bhattacharya'a *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978)[1] is a novel that is particularly amenable to a variety of readings and misreadings. The opening pages of the novel are a deconstructionist's delight. The very first line - "How old are you today? Eighty? ...Ninety?... Hundred?" (p.1) -refers not only to the relativity of time as a defining feature of the years a person is supposed to carry at physical level, but an inherent ambiguity in the very concept of time, specially in relation to reality. This is further reinforced a few lines later when the persona of Swami Yogananda, responding to his thought waves, muses: "You have to be just as old as others make you. Filled with antiquity, the decades equating age with wisdom." (p.1) Thus one's age is determined not in terms of the earth's rotations round the sun, but in terms of impressions gathered by others who wish to impose their own concept of age. In this scheme, age is a function and factor of wisdom: the wiser a person, the older he is. If one is filled with the antiquity of wisdom, one has to be at least a hundred years old. Yogananda's physical age may be no more than forty or so: but he must be a hundred in the eyes of others. The age of a swami should remain a matter of conjecture, since appearances are deceptive. And

deception is what a person encounters when he looks in a mirror: "Your face is an enameled illusion. Your mirror image. Outrageous with youth as it encounters you, a mere myth, mere make-believe." (p.1) The mirror is an illusion, though it mirrors a physical reality. The image that is found in a mirror is just the magical creation of enamel: it does not exist, since one cannot touch or grasp it. Thus the image in a mirror is illusory, though it is a reflection of truth as it is physically and materially experienced. The image is both there and not there: the illusion is a reflection of reality but in itself it remains unreal. Yogananda's face is youthful and the mirror reflects that youth truthfully; but the reality of youth is reduced to a mere "myth", a "mere make-believe," since the myths of India's ancient wisdom make it obligatory for a person to be a hundred years old if he has to look a repository of wisdom. The logocentric concepts stand reversed : myths turn into reality, while reality becomes a myth ; truth becomes illusion while illusion achieves the status of truth. Youth and old age become indistinguishable, as their fusion into a single being becomes a source of con-fusion.

Yogananda tosses the question of his age to his 'im-age' in the long bedroom mirror. The "figures of the years would have been playful rhetoric save for the depth of their passion." (p.1) Thus the question "tossed" by Yogananda is not just "playful rhetoric," but acquires status of a philosophical query. The word "tossed" has not only the suggestion of a game but also the idea of a "toss", the throwing up of a coin to decide the winner. The toss is held between two rivals : here the rivals are Yogananda's actual age as marked by his face and its mirror image on the one hand, and Yogananda's mythical age as imagined or made up by his followers. The toss appears to have been won by the latter, since "You have to be just as old as others make you," "So it has to be a hundred!" (p.1) It has been an "ascetical stride toward his hundredth birthday," (p.1) obviously belied by the black sheen of his thick shoulder length hair.

The Swami also resorts to the metaphysics of absence as a means to arrive at his hundredth birth anniversary. He adds absent years to his present ones to achieve the age of proper swamihood. The years of his life that still lie shrouded in the dark womb of future are somehow reclaimed by the Swami to add to the stature of his swamihood. At a metaphorical level the question of time itself dissolves into nothingness: "He was ageless anyway. He had no race, no country, no

Kith and kin, no roots in his past beyond the beginning of his Yogihood" (p.1). Now, if a Swami is "ageless anyway", why does he need to celebrate his hundredth birthday, which pins down his age, even if it be an illusory one? The irony is that the Swami is intent on clipping away the years of his age before he acquired Yogihood, while at the same time he basks in the light of years that are still hidden in the darkness. A swami is expected to snap all his social ties, because he has to be "reborn full-grown." But even a swami is not exempt from mundane necessities like wearing "a name as a label." Now we know that labels are also used as tags to indicate the price of a commodity, and for a country like America, even Yoga and Swamihood have the status of commodities. When Stella Gregson encounters Swami Yogananda for the fist time in his Rishikesh Ashram, she finds the name 'Yogananda' easy to pronounce, because "Yoga has become an American word." This cultural appropriation of an Indian spiritual discipline foreshadows Yogananda's experience in Hawaii, where a Yogic World Centre to he named 'Yogananda' is planned with all the finesse of a business venture. Stella's wish-fantasy that like her, her fellow Americans needed Swami Yogananda, grows into firm conviction. So Stella decides to 'present' Swami Yogananda to America. This act of 'presentation' itself - with its connotations of a present or a gift and presence signifying an aura or the force of personality-carries with it a desire for spiritual self-upliftment as well as the illusory belief that the whole society needs what an individual needs, irrespective of circumstances and socio-historical configurations.

The novelist appears to be highly fascinated by the nature of time, specially its correspondence with the nature of dream. Time and dream seem to be made of the same substance: human consciousness. The novel celebrates the supremacy of consciousness as an essential element in the livability and meaningfulness of life. Swami Yogananda has hardly been in Hawaii for a fortnight in terms of clock time, but "...those last few days in Rishikesh under the shadow of the Himalayan cliff seemed ages ago." In terms of consciousness, Yogananda has taken a huge cross-continental leap, but mechanical clocks have not moved faster. Time, in terms of its physicality, remains a matter of fixed movement, while in terms of its duration in consciousness it becomes a spirit of flowing freedom determining itself in consonance with its own experienced dynamism.

The dream that is born in Hawaii remains a dream, partly because within that dream is inscribed a nightmare, eloquently suggested by a line from a poem composed by Walt Gregson, a character in the novel: ''A dead rat stinking under the nylon rug,'' which he uses for discussion in a seminar on the topic, ''Images of New Lifeways in American Novels'' in his literature class. The dream relates to the building of a World Yoga Centre in Hawaii, to be named simply 'Yogananda' meaning the joys of yoga. Swami Yogananda, a former professor of philosophy at Varanasi, evokes dedicated admiration from a section of intelligent Americans and is invited to Hawaii where he becomes an instant 'hit' with the American youth. But he earns the wrath, envy and displeasure of those Americans who believe that a super technological society like that of America does not need swamis like Yogananda who had better endeavour to put things right in their own society rather than attempt to subvert the American value system. A dialectical tug-of-war between preservation and subversion, between phallocentrism and psychocentrism, between dream and nightmare and between technologism and Vedantism constantly works its way into the very soul of the novel which animates its body with a fresh narrative vigour.

The complex structure of thought and emotion that rages like a calm storm in the breast of Swami Yogananda is effectively suggested when the Swami abruptly turns from the reflective mirror indicating the flux and fluidity of time, and slides open the transparent glass door to step out from the prison of his galloping self. He leans over a solid, opaque 'brass rail' to gaze at the Pacific ocean touched with dawn. The solid safety of the brass rail enables him to view the watery danger with equanimity from the height of the nineteenth floor. The erotic imagery that dominates the phallocentric universe of the novel comes alive when the novelist writes: ''A scattering of surfers were already at work astride the languorous waves, but the sands of Waikiki Beach were yet to be ornate with sun-thirsting limbs.'' (p.2)

Actually phallocentric and logocentric discourses are so closely interwoven in the novel's structured corporeality and spirituality that the metaphysical dialectic of flesh and spirit, presence and absence and dream and reality becomes a metaphorical guide to the novel's meaning. While phallocentric impulses constantly challenge and question the metaphysical assumptions of a trans-sexual spiritual discipline like Yoga, the logocentric concepts like truth, purity and

reality are rendered as mere labels unable to face the fierce onslaught of the very logic from which they are supposed to derive their power and legitimacy.

Swami Yogananda has not only confounded the logic of time by claiming to be hundred while retaining his youth, he also endeavours to negate the logocentric configurations of the metaphysics of presence, the audibility of sound and the omnipotence of word. Though a cataract of sound flows through his tongue, he is a spokesman of silence: "Handclap is good for politicians, for public figures. They need it. I don't. All I ask of you is this : listen to what I have to say in silence. Then rise and leave in silence." (p. 7) Is sound, then, only the prerogative of the Swami, while his listeners are doomed to the dictates of silence? The duty of the audience seems to be only to listen, while that of the Swami is to speak. The audience is expected to be a mere votary of silence, a feminine recipient of the seminal energy of the phalloyogic guru. The same thing happens in Honolulu when Yogananda goes on speaking "almost without pause for two hours, the words pouring like water in a sunlit cataract. Silence continued in the hall even when his voice had come to a final stop." (p.8) The thunderous applause that follows is rudely and abruptly cut short by Yogananda : "I am not a professional speaker. I am not even a professor. I don't need your applause. Please leave in silence. " (p.8) That leaves the audience stunned. But Professor Dodwell intervenes to say that "The volume of handclapping is the measure of a speaker's success or failure." (p. 8.) Yogananda obviously achieves success in terms of the American norms, but he doesn't wish to follow them. That foreshadows the future disenchantment of Yogananda with the proposed Yoga centre when it seeks to hire the services of an exorcist among others to cater to the inherent need of the Americans for sensation and craze for the occult.

Yogananda has in Stella a keen disciple who wishes to receive from him as much enlightenment as she can. Thinking of the Swami's life-long quest, she says: "The Swami's relentless quest was directed to the core of reality behind the appearances which were maya, the stuff of illusion. What if he could commune with Neil Weinburger's *She*, hid under the rich tones of abundant flesh? The body's contortions- they could well be a symbolic expression of something deep within." (pp.8-9) She further recalls Yogananda's words about the relationship between religion and art as based on the same quest

for reality: "Religion and art have the same intent: To go beneath the surface forms; to seek, to find the basic truths and ignite them." (p 9.) Stella, however, had remained unimpressed because she felt that truth was a mere word that had been made senile through overuse. Yet she worries enough to get a deerskin airfreighted from Bombay for the Swami to enable him to meditate and give discourses. She, however, doesn't question why the skin of an innocent animal is necessary for a swami who ought to have reverence for all forms of life. Maybe the Swami uses the deerskin to feel its luxurious warmth and silken touch so that he can experience the sensual warmth of the ideas that he wishes to commune with. The Swami's mission is "to project dhyana for its basic value : a way to reach the depths of tranquillity, the inner silence" (p.10) But does the way to inner silence lie through violence to the deer?

Yogananda owes his metamorphosis from a philosophy lecturer to a Swami to Devjani, a beautiful girl who serves as a catalytic agent in his struggle for a new identity. Devjani remains an enigmatically erotic presence in Yogananda's life: a presence that constantly haunts and disturbs him. Even after having reached the tranquil shores of Swamihood, Yogananda remembers his moments of infatuation for Devjani :"The instructor has an unseemly impulse: To undo the braided hair and let the dishevelled mass cascade over her bosom! Just to see what she looks like in such wild abandon, the neatness gone. An odd wish for a man trying to explain Vedantic monism!" (p.13) The Swami even refuses to give diksha to Devjani as a shield to protect himself: "He cannot bear to see Devjani in the yellow garb. Unadorned, even the red orb of vermillion on her forehead gone. He has no strength to endure her salutation, her hand touching the guru's bare feet. In her gestures of reverence Swami Yogananda will be destroyed!" (pp.14-15) This is plain and rank hypocrisy. The Swami is afraid to face the force of his own dormant sexuality: he knows that Devjani flows like an erotic stream in the alleyways of his innermost being. He cannot endure to see Devjani in the garb of an ascetic because she remains for him an attractive source of his life force. Devjani is like a spiritual glamour doll for him whom he both needs and fears. Even after his old being is destroyed and "he is truly reborn as Yoganand" (p.15), he remains ambivalent towards Devjani: "..once in a while he recalls with sorrow his impulsive change of mind, which he cannot explain to himself. Could it be that repressed within him there was a desire to hurt? Hurt one who helped him to be

Yogananda?'' (p.16) The novelist has given almost a clear hint that Yogananda suffers from a psycho-sexual fixation as far as his relationship with Devjani is concerned. Perhaps he can never forgive the charming girl for pushing him into the deep waters of Swamihood. Throughout his life, Devjani remains a part of his human identity-whether as an eager student of his philosophy class or as a magnetic presence in the dynamic core of his swamihood. The place that Devjani occupies in Yogananda's life comes up in a deep focus when Walt Gregson tries the Menaka-trick to seduce this modern Vishwamitra. Just as in the Indian myth the divine damsel Menaka was sent to disturb the meditating Vishwamitra, Sylvia Koo, who is ''sheer animality'' in her aggressive sensuality, is sent by Greg to destroy the Swamihood of Yogananda. Walt plans his move with a clever calculation: ''Only a sari-draped Sylvia, hair braided Indian fashion could perhaps end in Yogananda the repressions of his deprived youth. Granted that he must have withstood many Devjanis in the years of his magnetic asceticism and his public visibility. But the need had to be somewhere in him, surely ? It could be set ablaze with an effective spark, such as Sylvia Koo.... Couldn't it?'' (p. 223)

Walt tells Sylvia: ''Let him simply touch you with a sex thought in his head, and he will be defiled, he'll be a fallen man. That's their set code of conduct. A Hindu Yogi's asceticism is as fragile as bone china. Just keep that in mind, Syl'' (p.223) Bhattacharya describes Sylvia's attempted seduction of Yogananda as follows:

> ''Swami Yogananda half awoke with the feeling that the fantasy was about to happen again. So soon, barely four months gone? The familiar softness and warmth enveloping his mouth, making all of him tingle. Eyes closed, he let his arms rise towards the dream woman. He touched the folds of a garb,and his fingers pushing through a thick mass of hair closed upon a braid. He held the braid clutched in his fist.''
>
> That braid!
>
> All at once his heart was beating like a drum. His hand trembled as it pressed. And as the real and the illusory coalesced, the startled whisper broke from his lips, 'Devjani!'
>
> A brief silence! and then the shattering impact of a voice he did not know. 'Honey!' He was at once wide awake. In the violence of his shock he pushed the head away from his chest.'' (pp. 224-25)

The description leaves no doubt in our mind that Yogananda has been fantasising about Devjani and is not averse to her sensuous touch. His fetish-like attraction for her braid speaks volumes for his desire for Devjani which he keeps buried in the vaults of his

consciousness. But Sylvia Koo is not one to accept her defeat so easily. Provoking him with her explosive body language, she lets her breasts spill out and says: "Look honey. These tits - same as Devjani's. Try them. Compare." (p, 226). As the Swami realizes the meaning of all this, he asks her to go, goes to the bathroom and closes the door behind him. As the jilted Sylvia leaves, she doesn't forget to give him a dressing down in her own crude language : "Hey there! Think of your Devjani in bed as you play with the hanging thing you have. Enjoy yourself" (p.226)

The novelist, however, appears to defend Yogananda when he writes: "The obvious truth was that Yogananda was thinking of Devjani in his need of inner strength.' (p.226) But the questions remain : Does a man fulfil the call of inner strength by responding to the warmth of a kiss and touching fondly the silken tresses of a woman? Does a Swami lack 'inner strength' which he seeks in a woman? Could there be a Swami who is totally immune to the thoughts of sex? Why should Swamihood remain wrapped in an aura of fake saintliness? Is sex taboo for a Swami? Why should sex be regarded as something that is opposed to spirituality?

Yogananda's own reaction to the Sylvia episode is quite revealing:

> "To have touched Devjani, his disciple, possessively-Yogananda returned to the crux of the happening. He relived the happening, torturing himself. It was the last word in shame. The shame had to be burned off with the hardest atonement. What could that be? The ultimate in penance?
>
> A confession to Devjani-no penance could be more cruel than that. Through her eyes as they grew stricken with pain, he would see an impostor disintegrate.
>
> He must first of all know himself. He must know just what had taken place within him in the years past. The fantasy in sleep- he had been seeing in it only a physical event, only nature's stern compulsion. Did it have a deeper meaning than was apparent?" (p.231)

After having decided his course of action, he calls Devjani and tells her : "You have to know the truth. Swami Yogananda has ceased to exist. This man you see is Neeloy Mukherjee. The yellow garb he still has to wear must be discarded." (p.232) While lost in contemplation earlier, "the cruel truth had burst upon him in a flash of illumination: the deeper meaning of his recurrent fantasy. With the sudden realization that *frequently in his sleep he had made love to none other than Devjani,* he had felt stupefied. (emphasis added). (p.233) Relating to Devjani what had happened that night, he says :

''Half awake, I saw you in that stranger. I fantasied you, and... He stopped, at a loss for words. ''Then further: ''At *Sadhana*, where I was so far away from your presence, you were in my dreams at night year after year. The truth is that I never got away from Neeloy.'' (p.234) As Yogananda bids good bye to the Hawaiian dream of the *Yogananda*, Devjani's heart flutters wildly with the vision of Neeloy coming to life again. It appears that both Neeloy's dreams of remaining Yogananda and the Hawaiian dream of the World Yogic Centre to be named *Yogananda* are doomed to failure. The last line of the novel tellingly says: ''The glimmer of the JAL aircraft faded into the night'' (p.245) The glimmer of hope that had sustained the movment for the building of *Yogananda* fades into the dark night of frustration and defeat. Simultaneously, the glimmer of 'firefly' that had been designed to become a 'star' fades into the night of failure of design. The ultimate irony of the novel is that while everybody seems to need Yogananda or what he stands for, he himself needs Neeloy, whom he doesn't find it possible to overcome or destroy. In the resurrection of Neeloy lies the annihilation of Yogananda.

The phallocentric universe of the novel is also peopled by characters like Jennifer, Walt Gregson and Vincent Swift. Swami Yogananda has to observe sexual abstinence as a matter of ritual, but he cannot deny the force of sex. Jennifer, a society girl, is keen to know more about Swami Yogananda when she allows Stella to use her house for a discourse by the Swami. She had once been to India and had a sexual encounter with a boy in New Delhi. In her consciousness, the gigolo and the Swami seem to merge somehow in a strange fantasy: ''Driving away from Waikiki, she found herself thinking again of Swami Yogananda and that New Delhi boy in the same breath! As apart from each other as noon from midnight,they met somewhere in the depths of her awareness!'' (p.43) This seemingly incredible thought, after all, is not so strange as it might appear. It might reflect Jennifer's realisation that just as the New Delhi boy didn't demand anything of her but only gave her some sense of release, Swami Yogananda didn't demand or take anything from anyone but only gave them some kind of spiritual peace. Moreover, qualitatively speaking, the New Delhi boy's phallic gift might not be very different from the Swami's spirituality, a sublimated version of the same phallic energy. Swami's own spirituality is not very far from his sexuality, as we find out at the beginning of chapter Four of the novel: ''Swami Yogananda's 'hundredth' birthday started with an

inauspicious prelude in the early hours of the morning. As he lay asleep, he was in the act of making love. That act possessed him'' (p.44) Rationalising it, he thinks: ''His submerged mind could not be controlled, nature's compulsions could not be denied.'' (Ibid.) If it is so, why the pretension of being a celebate and hankering after an unattainable purity? Sexual sublimation may be channelised either through the devotion to cultural creativity or through the practice of spiritual meditation and asceticism. But so long as the spirit is caged in flesh, the call of flesh cannot be totally ignored. Realising that ''Deliverance was never the reward of an escapist'', Yogananda goes to the waikiki beach to have an uninhibited vision around him. He sights a young woman in scanty apparel, ''her breasts exposed in their lush loveliness.'' (p.48). ''Swami Yogananda gazed, enchanted. For the first time in his life he saw a woman in the full beauty of bareness.... The shock of pleasure that went through him was partly surprise.'' (Ibid.)

When Walt Gregson asks the Swami, ''How does a yogi like you arrange your sex life, Swamiji?'', Yogananda is at first bewildered, then saddened. Greg considers abstinence as abnormal and says: ''In our permissive society abstinence has no validity whatever. (p.59) The Swami says: ''All this so-called permissiveness. Sex as cheap as the mass-produced drinks. Why so much deviation then?'' Elaborating further he says: ''Depravity. Sex crimes, unspeakably brutal. Child abuse. Incest... Permissiveness, so called- it's self-defeating. There comes a time when the surfeit of conventional sex ceases to attract. Then there has to be other means of feeding the fires which you call the substance of life..''(p.60) Yogananda cleverly shifts focus from the sexual needs of a Yogi to the surfeit of sex and sexual crimes in the American society. Walt does protest that ''All that has nothing much to do with sexuality,'' but is interrupted as Vincent Swift moves in. Vincent's presence brings in an explanation of Yogananda's absent years which make up his hundred years. Vincent swiftly suggests that 100 years is the distance that separates Swami Vivekananda's first mystical experience, his initiation into the mystery of a mantra, from Yogananda's similar initiation. It means that Swift establishes a sort of Vivekananda-Yogananda mystical continuum which makes Yogananda not just an individual but the inheritor of a spiritual tradition, and his age not that of a person but of a continued mystical experience. Thus Swift transforms Walt's exploration of the mystique of sex into the mystique of spirituality.

The mystique of supersex has certainly gripped America as Devjani discovers when two American students, Naomi and Al, wax eloquent about *Kamasutra* and ask her: "Hindus are supersexed like all other Asians, aren't they? *Kamasutra* must be worth a lot to them." (p.80) Devjani remembers the day she had discovered her mother's infidelity and extra-marital sexual proclivities and had decided to break with Rajib, the son of her mother's lover. As she turns away from the thoughts of sex she discovers that deep within her is a hunger for the spiritual life. Her desire to turn Neeloy into a Swami is a reflection of her own need to transform sexual into spiritual power.

Yogananda's ascent to Swamihood is paved with all kinds of thorns. In Hawaii he discovers a woman, Frieda, who seeks from the Swami "Heaven's Ambrosia". As his eyes "revolted yet fascinated were fastened on enveloping thatch of pubic hair" (P.112), he asks her: "What's this heaven's ambrosia you speak of?" She tells him about the guru who came to LA. When she went to his hotel he took her to his room. First, he showed her how to sit lotus-posture. Then he gave her a strong drink. He had spotted her in the lecture hall, he said, and he knew instantly by his inner sight that she was ready for the ambrosia. So he pulled her to bed. When Yogananda denounces him as an impostor, a phony guru, Frieda says protestingly: "A phony may know one simple truth: spirituality cannot come to a body which is needful. Fantastic, that a phony may have a word of sheer poetry for a plain and simple fuck!" (p.113)

Vincent Swift, who has grandiose designs for a World Yoga Centre, which he wants to run as a business venture, is also trapped in the ambience of a phallocentric universe. A widower, he frequents X-rated porno films in Hotel Street where the scenes of oral sex make him seek release in masturbation. In Walt's class, Mildred says: "The so-called sexist revolution based on a superholy ideology!.... Our sexual liberation does not give us the freedom to be free." (p.132)

The phallocentric universe of the novel extends itself in various forms to provide props to the people suffering from inner void. The American syndrome that finds itself drawn to the occult is explained thus: "The superfluity of gadgets is a kind of drunkenness, an escape from reality. When this fails, there is anxiety. That anxiety finds expression in a lapse into the occult." (p.212) Further: "A cultural paradox is working in America today: the stainless steel society glistening with technology and scientific rationality suddenly reverts

to the occult.'' (p.213) Walt realizes that the defeat of Yogananda through Sylvia is indeed a defeat of himself. Simultaneously forgotten words flash up in his mind: ''You squeeze out all the juice from life as though it were a bunch of grapes, and what's left in your hand is some skin, some seed, fit only to be tossed away.'' (p.227) The excess of gadgets and the excess of sex are both responses to the sickness of American society. Both define the parameters of the phallocentric universe.

The Swami's voyage to America turns out finally to be not so much a discovery of America as Yogananda's own self-discovery that the Neeloy within him is as invincible as Devjani, who constitutes an inseparable part of his twin identities as a professor and a yogi. Yogananda remains an intensely human figure in his realisation that sex and spirituality are two sides of the same coin, in spite of the fact that all sorts of perversions are committed in their name. Both phallocentric and logocentric concerns are blended in the novel to provide a footing for phallogocentric discourse. But one has to be wary of the seductive aura in which this discourse is shrouded. Absence and silence occupy a more important place in the novel to challenge the logocentric certainties. The narrative logic of the novel thus is surcharged with a rigorously subversive potential. What is designed to be perceived as an East-West encounter ultimately turns out to be a face-off between the contradictory inscriptions of logocentric discourse.

REFERENCES

[1]All references to the novel given in parentheses are taken from the edition published by The Macmillan Co., Delhi, 1978.

THE GANDHIAN OVERTONE IN THE NOVELS OF BHABANI BHATTACHARYA

A.K. Mishra

Gandhiji has rightly been regarded as the modern Christ. He is acclaimed by his devotees and admirers as the greatest Indian after the Buddha. His British and South African opponents, even in his early career, described him as "the most extraordinary person" and his staunchest adversary General Smuts (Head of the Union of South Africa) has written that he had "the highest respect"[1] for Gandhi. Perhaps the greatest figure in human history after Jesus Christ, Gandhi embodied the noble attributes of a prophet of mankind. Romain Rolland has rightly called him 'the Saint Paul of our times.'[2]

Gandhian principles and his struggle for freedom caught the imagination of the entire nation and also inspired a number of Indian English novelists. Bhabani Bhattacharya is mainly concerned with the social character and significance of art and literature. He asserts:

> "I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society's point of view. Art is not necessarily for art's sake. Purposeless art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me a sound judgement,"[3]

It would not be inappropriate here to refer to Gandhiji's opinion regarding art and literature in this respect. Gandhiji was not in sympathy with the view that art or literature was absolutely autonomous, but was far more inclined to make it a handmaid to life. Influenced by this point of view, Bhattacharya is convinced that no creative artist can ever be detached from the contemporary atmosphere. It is, thus, natural for an artist to mirror the social political and economic problems of his times.

Bhattacharya's first novel, *So Many Hungers!*, was born out of the agonised torment of body and spirit, endured by Bengal during the years of hideous famine and the early stages of the Second World War. The unfortunate predicament is portrayed through two families: one of Samarendra Basu, an affluent barrister and businessman of Calcutta, and the other of a peasant of Baruni whose soul is given to song and wandering. The two families are linked by their contact with the saintly figure of an aged nationalist leader, Devesh Basu (father of Samarendra Basu), whom the villagers of Baruni worship.

Devesh is Devata for the villagers of Baruni, with his tall, straight saintly figure. A true Gandhian, he has been deep in the Civil Disobedience Movement and has courted imprisonment several times. Devata is proud of the villagers and loves them deeply. He says:

> I am proud of my people. They are not bright... and knowing and civilized... like you city brands, but they are... good people. Centuries of brute hardship and strain have not destroyed their faith in human values.[4]

Samarendra Basu, quite opposite in nature to his saintly father, is interested in pleasing the British rulers and earning glamorous titles from them. During the War, he hoards a lot of rice and sells it later on at a very high price. He is also proud of his son Rahoul, and wants him to be on the highest post of technical advisor in New Delhi so that he may use his scientific knowledge to invent a highly destructive weapon.

However, Rahoul, with his D.Sc. degree in Astrophysics from the Cambridge University, is much more influenced by his grandfather, and is drawn towards Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement. While pretending to research on the Death-Ray, he works secretly for the Quit India Movement. He grows with the progression of the novel in his sensitivity and nobility, absorbs violent shocks, bears the agony of conflicting loyalties, but yields only to his inner call.

A promising Professor of Astrophysics, researching in the Cosmic Ray, Rahoul could have easily led a life of ease and comfort. But he feels that "the voice of India echoes in his blood throb." A highly sentimental and sensitive boy, he grows from a calm scientist into an irrespressible patriot. The growing horrors of the global war, the mounting cruelties of the alien government and the multiplying sufferings of the rural folk throw him into the vortex of the national movement for independence. He declares:

> The soul of a race, the soul of a man, does not grow in terms of time- space. Once in a while through the catalysis of experience, it grows far more in moments than in years.[5]

This is true as much of his as of his country. The undying impact of Gandhiji, Nehru, Devata, and the large-scale misery of the starving millions of his countrymen compels him to dedicate his life to social service. Thus he presents a foil to his father.

A truly Gandhian character in precept and practice, Devesh Basu

stands for love, truth and non-violence. He has dedicated his life to village reconstruction. With his exemplary life of love and service, he shapes the lives of Rahoul, Kajoli and other people of the entire village. His love for all is so all-embracing that he refuses to hate even the people of England. He says to Rahoul: "Why should you fight the people of England? They are good people. The people are good everywhere. Our fight is with the rulers of England, who hold us in subjection for their narrow interests."[6]

Clouds of war envelop the whole world. Scarcity of food and famine stare the people of Bengal in the face. The life of town as well as of village deviates from its traditional grooves. Even the moral life in Bengal is completely disrupted. During the Quit India Movement Devata, the friend, philosopher and guide of the villagemen, is arrested alongwith other Congress leaders. The fishing boats of the villagers are seized by the government for the use of the military personnel. The agents of the imperialist government and greedy hoarders compel the peasants to sell their grains.Consequently, the villagers begin to die of hunger. Destitutes leave their villages and march towards big cities in search of food. Kajoli, the mendicant's daughter, alongwith her mother and little brother, Onu, also joins this endless cavalcade of the starving masses. On the way, they come across tired and famished skeletons groaning in pain. Jackals crouch and eat their bodies, and vultures circle over the dead bodies and make a prey of human flesh. With great difficulties and hardships, they, at last, reach Calcutta.

Kajoli and her mother vainly try to search Rahoul. Hopelessly, they join other destitutes crowded on the roads and pavements. Unable to fight against hunger any longer, Kajoli at last thinks of earning money by selling "the last thing she owned--herself." But suddenly, she hears the newspaper vendors shouting about Devata's fast unto death in the prison house and his message to the people to be strong and true in the face of miseries : " 'Friends and comrades, do not betray flag. Do not betray yourself. The supreme test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless. Bande Mataram' ".[7] Samarendra Basu receives the news that his youngest son, Capt. Kunal, was missing and Rahoul was arrested. Simultaneously, the radio announces that Samarendra Basu has been awarded the title of the 'Companion of the Indian Empire', the empire that claimed both of his sons. The broken- hearted Samarendra drops down lifeless.

Bhabani Bhattacharya does not bring in Gandhiji in person anywhere in the novel, but his presence is felt everywhere, particularly in the person of Devata. With a vision of a New India, Bhabani Bhattacharya is mainly concerned with the future of his country. His interest lies in India's social, political, economic and religious regeneration. Like E.M. Forster and Henry James, he does not concentrate on the refinement of the individual consciousness. His main emphasis remains on social reform. The dominant motif of his novels, therefore, is to usher in a new social order based on justice, equality, cooperation and the judicious synthesis of the old and the new.

Bhattacharya's later masterpiece, *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966), presents a sort of confrontation between Gandhism and industrialism in the background of the Chinese invasion. Gandhism is represented by the simple rural community of Gandhigram, established by the veteran Gandhian, Satyajit Sen, while industrialism is represented by a young engineer, Bhashkar who is incharge of Steeltown, which in the process of its growth threatens to swallow up Gandhigram:

> The Challenge is not just between Gandhigram and Steeltown. It is between two contrary thoughts, two contrary ways of life, the spinning wheel set against the steel mill.[8]

The confrontation takes on a political colouring owing to Chinese invasion. The exigencies of war production make the Steeltown engineers anxious to take over the adjoining Gandhigram. Satyajit Sen, however, is convinced that there can be no justification of it. Bhashkar, the progressive youth, objects to the Gandhian norms, and considers them an obstruction in the growth of prosperity. *Shadow from Ladakh* is, thus, overloaded with Gandhian philosophy.

Dealing with the fundamental issues and ideals on which free India should be nourished, the novelist portrays his final vision of the regeneration of India in this novel. India has to make a choice between Gandhiji's path of non-violence, asceticism and village economy on the one hand, and the modern ways of power, fulfilment and material progress through machines and industrialization on the other. To test the relative value of these opposite ideologies, the author portrays the situation in the background of the shaking events of 1962. The shadow of this aggression hovers over all the events of the novel.

Influenced by Tagore and Gandhi, Satyajit, the Cambridge educated economist, patterns Gandhigram after the values dear to Gandhiji. Satyajit moulds his own life after the image of the great Mahatma, and his wife Suruchi and young daughter Sumita also believe in his ideals, dedicating themselves to a life of stern austerities. His dream is to make Gandhigram a model village for the whole India. In due course of time, Gandhigram, an experiment with simple community living with economic self-sufficiency, comes to be known as the village "with its two thousand mud houses, seeking to build a set of values. Values to be lived, to be expressed in terms of deed. Complete equality. Unreserved fraternity. Limitless non-violence, as much in thought as in action .... The Gandhian village was not its mudwalls alone. It was spirit."[9]

The Steeltown with its heavy machines and blast furnaces springs up in its neighbourhood and disturbs the idyllic life of Gandhigram. It, according to Bhashkar the principal creator of it, stands for economic progress. With the shadow of Ladakh hovering over the whole country, the Steeltown acquires a greater significance as the symbol of country's freedom, its defence, "for Steel is the core of all armament." Educated in America, Bhashkar has staunch faith in the importance of machines and industrialism. He is devoted to his work and spares no pains 'to make four hundred million lives a little more livable'. To Satyajit the Steeltown poses a threat to the basic ideals for which he has stood all through his life. In order to face the violence with love and non-violence, Satyajit decides to take a peace mission to Ladakh. In order to save Gandhigram from being taken over by Steeltown, Satyajit goes on fast unto death. The crisis is ultimately resolved when Bhashkar withdraws his project of extending the factory to the Gandhigram. Though Satyajit, at fast, gains Gandhigram, he loses his daughter who is swept away by the wave of love for Bhashkar.

The confrontation between the two ideologies serves a useful purpose. Satyajit realizes the practical limits of idealism and the futility of his peace mission in the face of ruthless Chinese aggression. Bhashkar, too, sees the evils of rivalry, jealousy and callousness infecting the gains of industrialism. What may thus be concluded is the fact that Gandhigram has to realize the value of technical progress and Steeltown must learn the significance of love and cooperation.

There is perhaps a need for the conscious synthesis of both the ideologies, Gandhism and Nehruism, the union of Sumita, nourished on the values dear to Satyajit, with Bhashkar wedded to Western modern views. This synthesis is needed by India for its progress and development:

> The great city with its giant machines had something to gain from the small centre of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self - abnegation.... Let there be a meeting ground of two extremes. Let each shed some of its content and yet remain true to itself. [10]

Thus, what is indicated is perhaps the fact that there should be no confrontation between the two extremes, but a sort of balance and sincere compromise, a midway path.

Indian fiction writers in English have dealt with the various aspects-- social, economic, political, etc.---of Gandhian ideology in their own way. Bhabani Bhattacharya, a typical Gandhian himself, concentrates on certain Gandhian ideals, such as Ahimsa, fast, celibacy, machine versus cottage industry, etc. He has also touched the various aspects of the Gandhian movement. The Gandhian impact on him is also evident in the humanitarian element of his writings. He makes an effort to link India's present with her past by means of using Gandhian myth and symbols.

The central feature of Gandhism is the humanistic mode of life based on the durable foundations of truth,love, chastity, honesty, labour, simple living, morality and equality. Gandhiji being pushed into the background soon after the independence led the intellectuals to believe that he was a spent force and was not relevant. But an ideology based on eternal values like truth, service and sacrifice can never be outdated. Gandhiji is certainly more relevant today than ever before. The need of the day is a value system which has material as well as moral basis and also supports tradition and individual freedom at the same time. In *A Goddess Named Gold,* Bhabani Bhattacharya summarises the economic situation in India after the Independence in the following manner :

> .... A river has flown between the rich and the poor. There is no boat to take the poor to the other bank. The rich cross the stream at their will.[11]

The changing social order, under the impact of Gandhiji, had liberated women from being mere 'cabbages'. Sohagi in *A Goddess Named Gold* says:

> Gandhiji touched our spirit as it slept. Wakened, we became the equals of our menfolk. Proud, chins up, we marched in a column of our own....[12]

It is not correct to remark that Gandhi died a defeated man, and his ideals crumbled before his eyes and he could do nothing. Even Jesus, in that sense, could do nothing except praying to God to forgive the ignorant people. Gandhian values have not outlived their utility. They are of greater relevance in the present context. We cannot avoid the value of equity, austerity, justice and service which should be the essential traits of the civilized society.

REFERENCES

[1]S.C. Gangal, "Gandhiji and Free India," *Employment News,* Vol. XVII, No. 27.

[2]Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Govt. of India, 1969), p. 28.

[3]Sudhakar Joshi, "An Evening with Bhabani Bhattacharya," *Sunday Standard* (April 27, 1969).

[4]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers* ! (Delhi : Orient Paperbacks, 1978), p. 24.

[5]Ibid., p. 96.

[6]Ibid., pp. 21-2.

[7]Ibid., p. 195.

[8]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (Delhi : Orient Paperbacks, 1966), p. 343.

[9]Ibid., p. 49.

[10]Ibid., pp. 273-74.

[11]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *A Goddess Named Gold* (New Delhi : Hind Pocket Books, 1967), p. 259.

[12]Ibid., p. 6.

THE ETERNAL CONFLICT: PATTERNS OF STRUGGLE IN BHATTACHARYA'S NOVELS

S.M. Kansal

Bhabani Bhattacharya is a great humanist. In his novels he has been deeply concerned with the fate of man and his struggle in the face of the host of problems which he faces for his survival in the world. His protagonist is eternally engaged in fighting injustice in various walks of life. In this war he uses certain elemental values of life as a weapon to fight the forces symbolising the decadent values of a social system. As a true humanist Bhattacharya not only exposes the ugly face of injustice, but also takes up the cudgel against the oppressors and perpetrators of injustice. He does not hesitate to expose the evil doers, whosoever and wheresoever they may be.

The struggle in the novels of Bhattacharya takes various forms. It is against hunger, superstition, ignorance, injustice, forces of tradition, base desires of man, matter with its various manifestations, corruption, sin, etc. But in the totality of the situation it emerges as a conflict between good and evil. The heroes of Bhattacharya symbolise the forces of good and are seen waging their holy war against the forces of evil.

It is not correct to say that good always gains complete dominance over and success against evil. Sometimes evil seems to be gaining the upper hand as in the case of Meera in *A Goddess Named Gold* when she starts believing that the gold acquired with the help of the touchstone will solve the problems of the poor, and unknowingly becomes an instrument of torture of the poor. However, the faith of the reader remains intact that it is good which will emerge victorious. At the same time, it is also a fact that evil cannot be totally eliminated. Human struggle is also endless, for it is a part of the eternal conflict between good and evil which goes on forever, irrespective of the timely victory of either side.

Bhattacharya is a man of social commitment. The depiction of this conflict is a part of his portrayal of social reality which, according to him, must be the main purpose of art and literature. No wonder he is a champion of the oppressed and the downtrodden. But he, unlike Mulk Raj Anand, champions their cause as a part of his overall crusade against the forces of evil which manifest themselves in

various forms. The conflict between good and evil is not confined to the external plane in his writings; it is depicted in the mind of his characters also. Swami Yogananda in *A Dream in Hawaii* illustrates this conflict beautifully when he finds that despite his elevation as a famed yogi, the Neeloy inside him still lives and needs Devjani. As a consequence, he realises that he needs his *Sadhna,* the *ashram* in Rishikesh, more than anything, and flies back from America.

Bhattacharya has immense faith in the essential nobility of human soul. Therefore, he paints his characters, representing evil, with sympathy and understanding. He believes in the Gandhian doctrine of sin and knows that there is always a possibility of the evil inside man being triumphed over by the good present in him side by side. Prof. Walt Gregson in *A Dream in Hawaii,* perhaps the most wicked of all Bhattacharya's characters, undergoes a great change. After being successful in defiling Swami Yogananda through Sylvia Koo, he realises the futility of his victory. The defeat of Swami Yogananda implies the defeat of Walt himself. As a mark of change in his perspective he rushes to the airport to meet the Swami before his departure. It is a different matter that he fails to see him because the aircraft takes off before he reaches there and he sees only its fading lights.

So Many Hungers!, Bhattacharya's first published novel, depicts the struggle of the peasantry of Bengal against the man-made famine of 1943. The hunger, which was the consequence of the famine, took a toll of more than two million people. The desperate fight of man against hunger produces both the types of images-- man at his noblest and at his worst as well. A destitute fights with dog to take control of a dustbin for the left overs. He defeats the animal (dog) outside, but can not defeat the animal inside him, i.e. the hunger. A hungry mother eats with a dead child in her lap because the sorrow of the death of the child can wait, but not the hunger of the belly. She would find some other time to weep for her child, but cannot be sure when she would get the food next. On the other hand, there are numerous instances which show the nobility of human soul. An old destitute surrenders his free ration ticket saying that it may be given to someone more needy as he has acquired enough strength to fight the pangs of hunger for some days. When advised differently, he prays: " 'Do not deny me this one joy. I beg.' "[1]

The fight against hunger is fought by the destitutes in different ways. An old man commits suicide to save his fellows from the burden of his care. The mother of Kajoli sees his frail body hanging from a tree and gets instant inspiration. It is an act of great courage which only a human being can perform; no animal, driven by hunger, has ever committed suicide. Kajoli, on the other hand, decides to fight this by selling her body like many other young destitute girls. However, she is saved from this degradation by the news of the hunger strike of her Dadu, the Devta, in jail. As a result, she decides to continue her struggle like her Dadu in the noble way.

The novel also depicts a phase of the Indian National Movement for Freedom. It is a struggle for dignity, man's right for freedom and free development. Rahoul, the Cambridge educated Physicist son of Samarendra, a compulsive profiteer, plunges headlong into the movement. He is jailed, but his voice lends strength to the united voice of his fellow countrymen. The struggle of the millions stirs the whole nation and people vociferously ask the murderers of the millions of their brothers to quit India, and the battle enters into its decisive phase.

Bhattacharya's second novel, *Music for Mohini,* is a beautiful depiction of the clash between tradition and modernity. Mohini, born and brought up in the free atmosphere of Calcutta, is married with Jayadev, the young master of the Big House of Behula. It symbolises the strong current of tradition and Mohini stands for modernity. The conflict between these two forces gains momentum and these are arranged quite openly. The mother of Jayadev, Vaidyaraj the father of Harindra, the priest of the temple of Siva and the old uncle of Sudha represent tradition. On the other side are Mohini, Harindra, Jayadev and Sudha. The conflict reaches the climax when it is found that Mohini cannot give birth to a son who will save Jayadev from the prophesied calamity and is supposed to be barren. The mother gets desperate and plans to marry Jayadev for the second time with Sudha whom she had earlier rejected on the false pretext of her not having all the luck signs in her palm. Finally, she decides that Mohini should offer her blood to the goddess, but the timely intervention by Jayadev saves the situation. The novel also depicts the struggle against ignorance and superstition. Harindra finds himself helpless before his father who would not let him treat his mother by using Sulpha drugs and injection, when she is suffering from Pneumonia. Similarly, the

life of Sudha is ruined by her old uncle who finds her under the evil influence of Saturn. The myth of Siva's devotee crocodile living in the pond in front of the temple is also a part of the ongoing struggle between good and evil in the world.

The story of Kalo in *He Who Rides a Tiger* adds another dimension to this conflict. He rises in revolt against the forces of oppression and devises a unique method to take his revenge. The struggle is in the form of the protest of the poor, as represented by Kalo, against the tyranny of the powerful in the society. Kalo suffers tremendously at the hands of those who represent the various forces of oppression. But the episode with his daughter Lekha in the brothel, when she is saved by sheer chance, is too much for him to bear. He identifies these forces and wages his war by creating the false temple of Siva.

Initially he feels elated, but gradually his transformation into Mangal Adhikari starts eating into his soul. He finds that he himself has become an instrument of the very oppression against which he has been fighting. He finds himself in the midst of a conflict going on in his soul. His dear daughter for whom he is riding the tiger starts getting estranged from him. In order to win her back, it is essential that he must kill the tiger or else he cannot dismount. And for the sake of Lekha he kills it and emerges victorious. But the victory is not the end of the war. It is only a step in the process and he moves out of the temple alongwith Biten and Vishwanath to continue his struggle on a larger plane and in a different way.

Bhattacharya's fourth novel, *A Goddess Named Gold*, is the depiction of the conflict between the sharks represented by Seth Sham Sunder, and the simple peasantry, led by the young and heroic Meera. The conflict here takes a new dimension. It emerges between the greed of the Seth and the selfless sacrifice of Meera. At the centre of the conflict is the touchstone given by the Minstrel which is sought to be used by the Seth and Meera for their own purposes. In the situation even Meera is swayed into the world of illusion. The struggle takes a social dimension and various patterns emerge where everyone is busy to find out the true meaning of kindness. The situation becomes shocking when the rag-tag-woman refuses to be helped by Meera and says sarcastically: " 'Now you have to fix on me, han? .... Use the rag tag, get rich at her cost.' "[2]

The craze for gold converts even kindness into a commodity, and

Meera, the heroic girl, comes to be regarded as the evil incarnate, causing misery to the innocent. Finally, the conflict is sought to be resolved by the Minstrel who returns to explain that no touchstone, used with even the most pious of intentions, can solve our problems. If we run after such a mirage, it will add to our store of misery. Everyone is convinced except the Seth who looks preparing for some future opportunity when he would again wage his war to fill his coffers at the cost of the innocent. Naturally, good must always remain on its guard against evil, lest it should be caught unawares.

In *Shadow from Ladakh,* Bhattacharya has depicted the conflict between two sets of values, the Gandhian and the Nehruvian models of development, Steeltown and Gandhigram, and the physical and the spiritual.Satyajit and Bhashkar symbolise two modes of thinking and come into clash over the fate of Gandhigram. Bhashkar, the America trained Chief Engineer of Steeltown, wants to annex Gandhigram for his plans of expansion and Satyajit, a true Gandhian and man of destiny, resents it. Gandhigram is not just a village but an ideal which Gandhi preached. This crisis of the existence of the village is precipitated in the wake of the Chinese aggression of India in 1962 and reaches its climax when Satyajit stakes his life to save the village.

The novel also depicts the conflict between Maovian expansionism and Nehruvian principles of peaceful co-existence of neighbours. Satyajit perceives this conflict as a challenge to Gandhian philosophy of Ahimsa and says:

> 'No! It's a challenge. Its weapons are aimed at the aggressor's inmost spirit. We have to touch the spirit of the Chinese people so that we may be brothers again.'[3]

The conflict is sought to be impressed more on spiritual plane than on the physical. It reaches even the house of Bhashkar when the five Chinese girls are put in his care as refugees by Rupa due to the hatred of the Indian masses for the Chinese. Even in the cottage of Satyajit the ideals of the husband and the wife come into clash, even though both derived their ideals from Tagore and his Shantiniketan. Satyajit, oblivious of the natural needs of woman, wants to develop his daughter Sumita as an ascetic devoted to spiritual pursuits in life. But Suruchi knows that an ascetic woman is a contradiction in terms. She must develop her love for colours and decoration.

Bhattacharya's last novel, *A Dream in Hawaii,* is an absorbing

encounter of the East and the West, two sets of values, cultures and life styles. The West, suffering from the deep maladies of materialism and excessive stress on the body, needs a way out where it may get the peace which has been eluding it despite all development. Swami Yogananda is taken there by Stella on a lecture tour to spread the message that Indian spiritualism is an answer to American problems. But his stay in Hawaii grows into a beautiful conflict between the two modes of life and thinking. Prof. Walt Gregson, the husband of Stella, represents the typical American mode of life when he says with deep understanding:

> '....This super technological society. A dead rat lies somewhere under its brightly carpeted floor, rotting away, the stench rising, filling our nostrils. The vomit comes to our throat.'[4]

He comes into conflict with the Swami and succeeds in defiling him through Sylvia Koo and the Yogi has to flee from there to reassess his own elevation.

Swami Yogananda also fights with himself when a conflict emerges inside his own self. The Neeloy in him, whom he claims to have buried, resurfaces, and he is not able to forget Devjani, his former disciple who was instrumental in his elevation into Yogananda. He feels the need of her and she remains ingrained deep in his consciousness. He confesses his weakness for Devjani before Devjani herself, but she assures him saying: " 'There is no Neeloy.... There is only Swami Yogananda.' "[5]

The conflict between two modes of life surfaces when Dr. Vincent Swift tries to develop the centre in America on purely commercial lines whereas Swami Yogananda has the Indian experience and tradition uppermost in his mind. The contradiction is clear when Swift says in his characteristic way:

> 'Uh Uh. Dedication. But let's not forget something very prosaic: a business like approach. The right sales technique. Without proper salesmanship, no movement, whatever its intrisic worth, has ever made any headway in America.'[6]

The novels of Bhattacharya assert his firm faith in the essential goodness of human soul. Howsoever bad and evil intentioned a person may be, there is always a possibility of his seeing the light of reason and the surfacing of good in him. It is true because good and evil always remain locked in the eternal conflict and with it the hope that good will ultimately succeed. This is very true in the case of Walt who

after defeating Yogananda fails to enjoy his success and feels the need of meeting Yogananda for his own sake. He moves out to meet the Swami and thereby gives a new dimension to the struggle of man, especially the American, to gain happiness in the midst of all vulgarity and abnormality.

REFERENCES

[1]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers!* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1978), p. 187.

[2]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *A Goddess Named Gold* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1960), p. 220.

[3]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1966), p. 34.

[4]Bhabani Bhattacharya, *A Dream in Hawaii* (Delhi: Macmillan Company of India Ltd, 1978), p. 27.

[5]Ibid., p. 242.

[6]Ibid., p. 59.

BOOK REVIEWS

Nathan M. Aston, *Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Stylistic Analysis of His Novels*

(New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1994), pp. 156, Rs. 200.

O.P. Mathur

Referring to "a more sophisticated interest in literature," Randolf Quirk points out the object of modern linguistic study of literature: "Where the goal was once little more than the assembly of linguistic 'facts' that might be used (if at all) by literary critics, we now find linguists confidently making critical analyses that contribute directly to literary interpretation and evaluation." Linguistic studies thus are ideally no longer mere exercises in data-collection of various kinds but analyses that help us in an exploration of those aspects of a work of art revealed consciously or unconsciously by a writer through his style which, according to the monistic school of linguistics, is not merely the body but a reflection of the soul of the work itself, resulting in an identity of style and meaning. Stylistics is therefore becoming an important tool for literary criticism.

Nathan M. Aston is aware of the issues involved in a stylistic study, for he says in his 'Final Remarks' that "Bhabani Bhattacharya is a keen observer of the socio-psychological, socio-economic and socio-political aspects of the communities whose lives he has portrayed in the novels" (p. 135). But a more or less complete achievement of such an objective is not easy especially for a linguist whose range of tools is limited. Aston has rightly realised the difficulty of making such a comprehensive study, opening up various lines like choice of words and their various grammatical contexts, sentence-structures, suggestions of images and symbols, etc.--all suggesting certain social, psychological, cultural and political ambience and converging into a spire of the meaning of the novel as a whole. Aston is therefore justified in limiting the scope of his study to a focus on "a discussion of the style in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya involving Interpersonal Relations" (p. 22).

The author has confined his study to four of Bhattacharya's novels leaving two of his most important novels, *So Many Hungers!* and *Shadow from Ladakh*. He has taken up four issues for discussion, one in each of the four novels selected by him--the use of 'mands' or

imperatives in *Music for Mohini*, the Indianisation of English in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, terms of address in *A Goddess Named Gold*, and verbal exchanges involving questions and answers in *A Dream in Hawaii*. The two novels not taken up for stylistic discussion have been just summarised in the Appendix. The issues raised in the four main chapters have been discussed with perception and thoroughness, and the conclusions derived flow naturally from the data and the discussion. Such studies are a valuable help for the literary critic also.

However, while appreciating the author's effort and achievement, I would like to make a few suggestions for consideration at the time of the preparation of a future edition of the book. The narration of the contents of each novel in the four core chapters is capable of being substantially cut down and all the unnecessary quotations given from critics in these sections can be totally omitted. The Appendix, which serves no purpose in a stylistic discussion can be omitted. Even as it is, the book is not too long, and if all the above suggestions are carried out, the author will be left with a lot of space on his hands. He can then easily accommodate stylistic discussions of *So Many Hungers!* and *Shadow from Ladakh* from different angles. Perhaps he can then choose some of the relevant stylistic problems not touched by him, e.g., the categories listed by Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction*, Chapter 3 -- lexical, grammatical, figures of speech, and context and cohesion. This is just a suggestion and the author would be free to include in his study whatever he considers relevant and purposeful. This will make the study richer and more comprehensive without, perhaps, substantially increasing its length. In any case, these suggestions do not negate or take away from the value of the present study which breaks new ground and should be able to inspire other scholars for further research in the stylistics of fiction.

Malta Grover, *Bhabani Bhattacharya as a Novelist of Social Conscience*

(Meerut: Shalabh Prakashan, 1991), pp. 160, Rs. 150.

Arun Kumar

Malta Grover's *Bhabani Bhattacharya as a Novelist of Social Conscience* promises good reading. Though Bhabani Bhattacharya has received an enthusiastic critical reception by way of numerous articles and several books, yet the present book-length study on his works is a laudable attempt. The book contains seven chapters very clearly defined by their titles: Chapter I "Making of the novelist;" Chapter II "Themes: Selection and Treatment;" Chapter III "Creatures of the Common Earth;" Chapter IV "Social Realism;" Chapter V "Dynamic Equilibrium: The Principle of Synthesis;" Chapter VI "Stylistic Devices" and Chapter VII "Summing Up: An Assessment." Apparently, the book under review is an in-depth study of the life and works of the novelist.

The first chapter clearly sets out the greatness of Bhabani Bhattacharya who is not only a realist but also has a vision of life. Tracing the formative years of the novelist, Malta Grover gives evidence of the impact of Tagore and Gandhi on him. His exposure at King's College, London and later at the London School of Economics helped shape the mind of the future novelist. Salila, his wife, too was an 'Inspiring angel' for him apart from the age itself that witnessed the "exploitation of the masses by the Imperialist rulers." *So Many Hungers!* (1947), his first novel, is appropriately titled suggesting the Bengal Famine which proved to be a traumatic experience for the author. His foreign travels developed in him a cosmopolitan outlook towards life and after being internationally recognized in the U.S.A., Germany and New Zealand, he got the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, in 1967.

The second chapter traces the recurrent patterns of Indian English fiction and narrows down the major themes (political independence, socio-economic and cultural issues, a compromise between tradition and modernity) in the various novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya. The third chapter portrays an analysis of the major characters in the fictional world of Bhabani Bhattacharya with a neat conclusion that the novelist is "optimistic about the future of his country, as also the future of the world." Depiction of social reality is not new to litera-

ture and Marxism exercises a powerful influence to give a vision to our novelist. Bhattacharya, the writer says, "may be called a social historian of his times awakening people to their duties and responsibilities." Like every serious artist, Bhattacharya does not provide easy answers to the problems raised in his novels.

The fifth chapter focuses on Bhattacharya's humanism and his dream of a "united world" with suitable examples from *A Dream in Hawaii, Music for Mohini* and *Shadow from Ladakh.* He also envisions a fully "integrated society" in a novel like *He Who Rides a Tiger.* The writer concludes that Bhattacharya "has dramatized his philosophy of integration in his novels" and that this "dynamic equilibrium" is the basis of the structure of his novels as well. The sixth chapter is an absorbing study of the technical aspects of the novelist and Malta Grover is of the view that "some of his novels can be made into successful films." He is a "master craftsman" employing symbolism, allegory, irony and humour. The concluding chapter neatly sums up Bhabani Bhattacharya's place among the Indian English fiction writers. He is rightly termed as a "novelist of social conscience."

The book also has an 'Appendix' in the form of two letters written by Bhabani Bhattacharya to Malta Grover dated January 25, 1984 and August 10, 1985 respectively. This shows how keen a researcher Malta Grover is. The Bibliography at the end of the book will prove very useful for research scholars working on Bhabani Bhattacharya.

M.M. Mahood, *Bit Parts in Shakespeare's Plays*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.251 + ix.

S.Viswanathan

M.M. Mahood has, through the present volume, significantly augmented and enlarged her contribution to the field made earlier through her classic *Shakespeare s Wordplay*, her editions of plays like *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*, and her many sensitive articles and essays in journals and books over the decades. The theme of the book is the range of function and effects which a whole host of minimal characters, 'bit parts,' can be seen to perform and produce in the plays. Professor Mahood's theme as well as her approach has a refreshing originality.

A reviewer (in *English*) who evidently liked the book immensely called Professor Mahood a 'neo-naif' with an irony quite favourable to her. Perhaps what the reviewer meant to suggest was that in the climate of post-structuralist and postmodern Shakespeare criticism Mahood writes her book on minor minor characters, the underling figures, true, with wit and elegance now generally conspicuous by their absence, but, more, without the overt and deliberate politicising and vociferous championing of the underdog, not uncommon in present-day Shakespeare commentary. It is noteworthy that Mahood through her approach to the plays via the minimal characters could highlight the 'place in the story' of the sub-altern, and thereby the centrality of the apparently marginal, with a certain quiet finesse, refraining from making claims of any deliberate oppositional or contrapuntal criticism.

The initial four chapters ['Entities and nonentities', 'Transposers,' 'Supporters,' 'Stress and counterstress'], among them, identify and analyse the amazing variety and the intricacies of the things done by the numerous First, Second and Third Citizens, soldiers, gardeners, gaolers, servants, and characters whose names most readers and playgoers can hardly recall, and also by not unremembered minor figures like the First Murderer in *Macbeth*, the Porter in the play, Osric in *Hamlet* and many others. In addition to giving body to the plays and to fulfilling the necessities of dramatic and stage action such as the removal of 'dead bodies' from the stage, these figures are found to establish interactive, sometimes proactive, and often

contrastive relationships with their major counterparts among the plays characters. Insights emerge as regards power relationships no less than human relationships. These analyses in the early chapters as in the later chapters on some select individual plays are conducted in exemplary fashion. The stage moments of the participation by the ostensibly marginal characters are focussed on not only in and for themselves in their full, sometimes unsuspected dimensions of dramatic force and meaning but also with sufficient attention to their role in the total theatrical dynamics of the play in question. Mahood takes into appropriate account theatrical practice as evident in twentieth-century productions and as adopted in nineteenth and eighteenth century stage practice in the portrayal of these characters. But at the same time the author takes care to use the likely historical Shakespearian stage practice insofar as it can be reconstructed as the real point of reference. For instance, the practice of doubling the actors and of using stage hands and subordinate theatrical personnel for marginal roles or 'shadows is invoked in relevant places. Throughout, the exposition shows an essential sensitivity to the theatrical rhythm and movement of a play and its situations and a constant awareness of the possibilities of the viewer's response to it if not participation in the play-process. No wonder she does not fail to indicate the contribution sometimes made by these characters through their silent presences and possible gestures without words.

Among the six later chapters of the book on *Richard III, Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest,* though all of them have insights to offer, the ones on *Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure* and *King Lear* are particularly illuminating. The critical finding that *Julius Caesar* is a diptych, each panel of which portrays, the same major characters (with one obvious exception) but surrounds them with a totally different group of minor personages in such a way that one panel's tone and colouring contrast with and counterbalance those of the other leads to revealing commentary on Casca, Decins Brutus, Cicero, Ligarius, Antony's servant, Cinna the poet, Lucius and Titinius and other such figures. The remarkable lead-in which Mahood provides into *Measure for Measure* through personages like Froth, Pompey, Mistress Overdone, Francisca, Abhorson, the minor Friars, Citizens and Barnadine, serves to alert us the comic tonality of this notoriously controversial play. The result is an interpretation of the play which would seem to get as

close as possible to its timbre and quality. The *Lear* chapter, 'Service and Servility in *King Lear*,' is an incisive development of the well enough established critical idea of the crucialness of variations on the theme of 'service' in the play. Its underling figures are brought under the critical microscope with reference to the idea, only to go on to relate them to other characters and concerns of the play placing them in unblinkered, larger perspectives. For instance, there is the treatment of Edmund the villain's to-be-most-villainous tool, the Captain whom Edmund commands to carry out the murder of Cordelia in prison (pp. 175-176), the Captain who agrees to do it, with words (in the Quarto, but omitted in the Folio text) [v.iii])

> I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats:
> If it be man's work, I'll do't.

The examination has a rare combination of depth and range. But, here as elsewhere in the *Lear* chapter, Professor Mahood would seem to have a little too readily accepted the new bibiographical orthodoxy about Shakespeare's revision of *King Lear*, and about the Quarto *Lear* and the Folio *Lear* being two distinct versions or two plays by Shakespeare, the latter the revised and final one. This somewhat easy credence accorded to the two-plays idea about *Lear*, is a factor that causes a recurrent unease in an otherwise penetrating and fascinating commentary.

Professor Mahood's way of proceeding with minimal dramatis personae, as she herself indicates, can be applied to other plays and other characters not dealt with in this book of hers which is comprehensive enough, as, for example, to the Citizen in *Corolanus*, the great toe of the commonwealth in Menenius's description or the 'single speech Hamilton' priest in *Twelfth Night*. Perhaps a question which would suggest itself after a reading of this study is if many of these minimal characters discussed are at once functions and persons, and if Shakespeare could make them a right balance of both, could he not make characters like Malvolio and Falstaff a right balance of function and person ? Why do such characters run away with the playwright's imagination ? In any case, the book brings home how the apparent non-entities that the minimal figures are have their identities and how that the valet's point of view incorporated in the plays, alongside the hero's, contributes to the polyphony and perspectivism of the drama.

The book is fully documented, and incorporates well digested and assimilated theatrical scholarship; there is all due attention paid to the work of predecessors in the areas covered in the book. There is one minor slip and it is in Note 10 on p.227; the journal in which Alan Dessen's article appeared is *The Yearbook of English Studies*, and not the one mentioned in the note. The book has a handsome getup, and pleasant layout of print, but is not free from the share of misprints it has, as all books would seem fated to have these days, for example, 'conformed' for 'confirmed' on p.166, second para, 1.14 and 'give' for 'gives' on p.82, second para 1.14.

Professor Mahood has given us a most rewarding book, and dare I say, a book which in its quiet and unfussy manner more than catches up with the times.

ABHINAV PUBLICATIONS
E- 37, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-- 110 016, Ph: 666387

1. *Bhabani Bhattacharya: His Vision and Themes* by K.K. Sharma
2. *Rabindranath Tagore's Aesthetics* by K.K. Sharma
3. *Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English* by M.K. Naik
4. *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English* by M.K. Naik
5. *Perspectives on Indian Prose in English* by M.K. Naik
6. *Symbolism in Anita Desai's Novels* by Kajali Sharma
7. *Symbolism in the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo* by Syamala Kallury
8. *Studies in Mulk Raj Anand* by P.K. Rajan
9. *An Integral View of Poetry: An Indian Perspective* by V.K. Gokak
10. *The Lyric Spring: The Poetic Achievement of Sarojini Naidu* by P.V. Rajyalakshmi
11. *The Great Encounter: A Study of Indo-American Literature and Culture* by R.K. Gupta
12. *The Growth of the Novel in India* Ed. P.K. Rajan
13. *Expressive Form in the Poetry of Kamaladas* by Anisur Rahman
14. *Form and Value in the Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel* by Anisur Rahman
15. *Coleridge's Aesthetics* by V.K. Gokak
16. *Jane Austen's Heroes: A Sociological Study* by Reeta Sahney
17. *Perspectives on Arthur Miller* by Atma Ram
18. *Tradition in Modern-Novel Theory* by K.K. Sharma
19. *Search for Belief in the Poetry of Robert Frost* by R.N. Mishra

POINTS OF VIEW

Declaration under Secton 5 of the Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867

1.	Place of Publication	Ghaziabad
2.	Periodicity of Publication	Biannual
3.	Printer's Name Nationality Address	K.K. Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
4.	Publisher's Name Nationality Address	K.K. Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
5.	Editor's Name Nationality Address	K.K. Sharma Indian KH/127, New Kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002
6.	Owner's Name	Mrs. Kuhu Sharma KH/127, New kavi Nagar Ghaziabad--201 002

I, K.K. Sharma, hereby declare that the particulars, given above, are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

K.K.Sharma

NEXT SPECIAL

POINTS OF VIEW

Volume II Number 2

Winter 1995

FEMINISM
SPECIAL NUMBER

Printed by K.K. Sharma for Mrs. Kuhu Sharma
at Nav Prabhat Printing Press, Street No. 2, Balbir Nagar,
Shahdara, Delhi-110 032, INDIA