

Female as an Embodiment in the Social Reform: Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya.

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ABSTRACT

The world, which faces prolonged quarrels, the social breakdown is drawn out through many years. Violence becomes part of the fabric of society; it trickles down from state, to community, to family as society struggles to cope with horrors from the conflict. In conflict, everyone in society suffers but it is women who mostly bear the brunt. Unfortunately, issues such as violence against women are less prioritized leaving millions of women alone and in danger. Gender as social and psychological realms have forced women to accept role restrictions in both the realm of life i.e. public as well as private. But the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya are a gripe against these entrenched social evils. He believes that women have thoughts more in terms of nationalism than men and they have a great sense of service to their country. One of the outstanding characteristics of the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya is the prominence given to women characters. Women are usually presented by him as highly significant-if not central characters. They are not treated as inferior to man. He considered them as a beacon as the life force itself. She is a symbol of ideal motherhood as sister, wife, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. The success of his female characters results from the process of his imaginative creation that lends them a life of their own beyond the particular context in which they appear. All his novels project before readers the social scenario of the contemporary India.

KEYWORDS

Incarnation; Conscience; Cow House; East West encounter.

Introduction

Bhabani Bhattacharya is a renowned figure among Indian writers in English for his use of art as a middling for achieving social streamlining. His novels have highly praised themselves for a study by virtue of the fascinating quality of his themes. His fervour for amalgamation and assimilation has had a deep notion in the field of Indian English Literature. Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels have an exceptional regard for women. Being a novelist with a social purpose, Bhattacharya has depicted

the social, economic and political alterations in India on the background of the contemporary historical events and social conditions. Bhattacharya has fashioned six novels. They are: *So Many Hungers!* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladkh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978). Bhattacharya gives a description of the Indian way of life in each of his novels. He refers to much customs, conventions, superstitions and peculiarities present in

the Indian society typically without commenting on their merits. One of the prominent features of the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya is the importance given to women-characters. Women are frequently presented by him as highly noteworthy if not central characters. They are not treated as inferior to men, although they happen to live in a male-dominated society.

Kajoli: Incarnation of faith

So Many Hungers (1947) unfurls the story of a chiefly man-made hunger that took a toll of two million blameless men, women and children in Bengal. Bhattacharya paints the naked repulsion of famine. He portrays the struggle of the peasantry of Bengal in opposition to the man-made famine of 1943. It also presents Bengal throughout the early stages of the Second World War, a few black-marketeers underwaged hoarding rice. The hunger, which was the result of famine, cost more than two million lives.

The tussle of man against hunger fabricates two types of images- man at his noblest and at his worst as well. An impoverished boy fights with a dog to take have power over of the leftovers in a dustbin. He overpowers the lesser animal outside for the sake of the animal inside him, i.e., the hunger. To estimate the words of the writer: Destitutes and dogs in those clays often wrestled for tenure of the rich city's ten thousand rubbish-heaps, in which bits and pieces of decaying food lay buried. It was not every time that the destitutes won, steering the dogs on the lanes and the dog within themselves. Kajoli is a 14-year-old peasant girl, who resides with her brother, Onu, and her mother. Her father and brother, Kanu, is in incarceration during the Quit India Movement, Kajoli's family symbolizes the people of rural Bengal, who find it enormously tricky to face the hunger and stride towards Calcutta, the city of dreams.

They find their poverty and desolation to be a hundred fold in the callous city. They see tired and ravenous skeletons languish on footpath and vultures roving to eat dead bodies here and there. They face diverse types of degradation which steadily lead them to evil. Kajoli leaves her unwell mother and goes in search of food. She turns out to be a helpless victim of a soldier's lust. Hunger not only forces Kajoli and her family out of their village in search of food, but also tries to force her to sell herself. To stay alive, she distributes bread to the insolvent of the famine affected and preserves the purity of her spirit by helping others. K.K. Sharma remarks: Kajoli is also an incarnation of faith in the graciousness and richness of life. She has inherited the essential values and etiquette of India, unaltered and undefiled by modern outlooks and notions.

The author's positive vision is proofed in the style in which he has endorsed her to walk into freedom. Had he been negative in his thinking, he could have completed the novel on a different note hallwaying Kajoli in the brothel. In his denial to think of such a course, the author has exposed a steadfast faith in the vital integrity and spirit of man which triumphs over all sorts of devastating and relapsing pressure. The actuality that he has chosen to demonstrate the triumph of the human spirit by means of a woman may bear a witness to the soaring ideas he has had regarding women. Undeniably, he has not botched to admit the presence of certain evil things in the society in the shape of the betel-woman and others. Paradoxically enough, the betel-woman becomes a channel in bringing about the change in Kajoli unintentionally and unwillingly. He touches every common and subtle point behind poverty and shows the facts and sources of poverty.

Chandralekha: the conscience-keeper

He Who Rides a Tiger is the story of an personage who takes retribution upon

society which acts callously in opposition to him. In *He who rides a Tiger*, Bhabani Bhattacharya made use of a lie to depict the truth about caste and religion as they get hold of in the society. The central character of the novel is Kalo. His anguish and craving for vengeance on the society comprise the main theme of the novel. Kalo's beautiful daughter, Chandralekha emerges to be very intelligent. The female characters in Bhabani Bhattacharya's first novel, *So Many Hungers!*, have been found to be moderately immobile. They are prone to accept the customs, conventions and traditions that prevails in the society without demur. The alteration from *So Many Hungers!* To *He Who Rides a Tiger*, has been observed, is a change from tameness to revolt. While mentioning on that change, Bhabani Bhattacharya observes: *So Many Hungers!* pursue the famine up to its summit, its climax. *He Who Rides a Tiger*, which was written with a dissimilar point of view. When Kalo Chandraleka's father poses as the Brahmin Mangal Adhikari, who turn out to be the chief priest of Siva temple, Lekha too, being his daughter is strained to carry out the role of the Mother of the Seven-fold Bliss. Countless people come to her from far and near expecting her to perform wonders. She espoused a little orphan Obhijit, whom she has picked up from the street during the famine. She has a motherly love for him.

This motherly affection flows in her so much that she is ready to face the rage of the entire Brahmin crowd and to accept expulsion from the temple and suffer poverty. Shantha Krishnaswamy comments that at heart she is a warm hearted Bengali girl who looks self-assured to nothing more than a pact of companionship with Biten, the unrealistic reformer, who, disdain his, Brahmanism, was a fellow prisoner with Kalo for the duration of the famine riots in Calcutta. Her physicality as the natural woman revolts against this false inviolability and attempts to reassert itself. One natural outcome is

her expression of motherly love towards Obhijit, the low caste street waif she adopts, Earlier, Lekha and her father are determined to Calcutta because of hunger. Her father has been sent to jail for a while. To unravel the dilemma of their livelihood, Lekha has been enticed to a harlot house. But just at that time, her father saves her. In fact, in regarding Chandralekha as the conscience-keeper of Kalo also a similar opposition is likely to be raised. Does he not have a conscience of his own to check him? Why does he need another conscience-keeper? The fact, however, remains that he does not desire to pay attention to his conscience for his own rationale. Conceivably it is snowed under by his all-consuming passion for vengeance. But thanks to her education, fine-tuning and inborn gifts, Chandralekha is able to keep her conscience intact. And her father has to depend on it in a large measure for judging the propriety-or lack of it - of his own thoughts and actions.

Cow House Five: modern fable of rural India

A Goddess Named Gold is a story of struggle flanked by a group of women, called Cow House Five and Seth Samsundarji who is voracious, egotistic and shrewd and, works for money and power. The group tussles against the Seth for the sake of the village. *A Goddess Named Gold* is a modern fable of rural India described against the background of freedom struggle. It is a masterly satire on those who live by the decoy of gold. The characters are launched one by one in a gentle manner, and we meet among them an appealing girl, a itinerant minstrel and a magnificently mustachioed seth. Skillfully unifying fable and actuality it explores deep into a human mind. The plot centers roughly a hallmark given to Meera by her knowledgeable grandfather. It is assumed that the talisman would facilitate Meera to turn copper into gold, provided she acts benevolently as a natural and impulsive expression of herself. Wearing it on your

person, if you do an act of real kindness, then all copper on your body will turn into gold...parted from your arm, the amulet will be dead, a worthless pebble. It is a hugely entertaining tale, yet it disturbs. It disturbs as a warning and as a prophecy. This present and its attendant power motivate even further the voracity and egotistical acquisitiveness of the money-lender- seth, a man whose intellect is clouded by his overwhelming cupidity and unbridles a chain of actions which culminates after causing much dim-witted behaviour and a great deal of discontent. The attempt is conceivably over-ambitious for the result is often discomfited and illusory. The plot is, however, interesting, and heart-warming as well as amusing.

Suruchi And Sumita: two modes of life

Shadow from Ladakh has been woven with the premise of the tragic period of 1962, in India which was facing a near probable war from Ladakh, China. The hub of the novel deals with the crucial victory of the condition principles. Bhabani Bhattacharya attempts to syntheses the differing ideologies. He makes some women instrumentals in these syntheses along with men. These women comprise Satyajit's wife, Suruchi, and his only daughter, Sumita. Bhabani Bhattacharya has shown that the Gandhian principles of temperance led women to repress their personal desires. Suruchi was erudited at Shantiniketan. There she encounters Satyajit and they get wedded. Suruchi shares her aesthetic ideals with Satyajit and life becomes a sweet music for her with him. Satyajit, who had come under the influence of Tagore and Shantiniketan, now has the sway of Gandhi and Sevagram. He espouses Gandhiji's principles of asceticism.

The real problem begins, when Suruchi finds to her apprehension that Satyajit has started to shun her and their home. He feels embarrassed and culpable of himself, whenever he feels attracted

towards her. She felt she had mislaid her womanly stateliness by this approach of her husband. But Satyajit's asceticism was anti-life as his friend Biresh has pointed out. He lay down his ethics to trial at the price of his wife's gratification. She had to restrain her wish for a son and all her feminine urges, and ultimately she had to let her own daughter to be brought up in Satyajit's pattern. She has a blind admiration for her father and allows his asceticism. It is very agonizing for her when she notices Sumita clothed like a widow and wearing no bangles. K.R. Chandrasekharan has rightly said that Sumita is a better paradigm of Satyajitism than Satyajit himself. As a mother, she feels sorry for her daughter, Sumita, when she finds that she is wedged in the same net as her father. She is keen to see her daughter ornamented like other girls. She tries hard to bring about a change in Sumita as well as Satyajit. Sumita is a devoted reflection of Kasturba's diffident persona. Bhattacharya has dealt with two modes of life in the plot of the story. They are Gandhigram and Steeltown. The Gandhigrarn is symbolized by Satyajit, who is a true admirer of Gandhiji and Bhaskar stand for the Steeltown.

There is an unruly conflict flanked by them as they both have entirely different ideas and attitudes. Steadily the conflict between them grows weaker and at last it absolutely vanishes. Eventually, the two dissimilar modes of life amalgamate with each other. This synthesis is noteworthy as it represents the indulgent between Bhaskar and Suruchi. Dorothy Blair Shinier is liable to give the honour for fusing the worlds of Steeltown and Gandhigram to Sumita alone, although she could not have brought about that conquest in seclusion. The mitigation in the severity of Satyajit has been prejudiced mainly by his wife, Suruchi. Suruchi is the author's ambassador in endorsing the mixture of

conflicting views under the sway of Rabindranath Tagore.

Mohini and Rooplekha: Village-bred and City-wed

Music for Mohini is broadly applauded as his masterpiece. It depicts an effort at rural restoration as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. It also presents a conflict between Indian orthodoxy and modernization and attempts their amalgamation. Such an amalgamation is accomplished by means of two sets of characters that stand for diverse principles. Mohini's Old Mother and Jayadev's Mother stand for the traditional standards presented in the novel. Jayadev, Mohini, Rooplekha, Harindra, Mohini's father and Heeralal stand for modernism. Bhattacharya describes the augmentation in Mohini from a carefree girl of teenage to the mistress of a house. She is exposed as tattered between the taboo of village life and her passion for a bright and elated life. Mohini loves life in all its ensign and has disdain for all that be tedious and dead. It is tough for her to tolerate the images of crumble.

As a young maid, she is famous for her beauty and melodious voice. When she has a longing for a lover and has really none, she does not feel very miserable. Her dream of an ideal happily nuptial life is shattered and she is surprised by the behaviour of her silent, solitary husband. She is entirely deserted by her husband and feels forlorn. Her mother-in-law is very conformist and traditional while she herself is a modern, city-bred girl, and full of new principles, beliefs and interests. But her sister-in-law, Rooplekha, suggests to her to manage with the hitches with audacity. Rooplekha is villagebred and city-wed while Mohini is city-bred and village-wed. When Rooplekha goes to the city with her husband, she has to give up her old diffidence while Mohini has to traditionalize herself and adjust herself to the ambience of her husband's village and

the Big house. In spite of joylessness in her married life, she does not accept her fate. She made a decision to bring joy to her house. She is ready to accept the traditional way of life of village and her traditional mother-in-law, just for the sake of her husband. Though it was a great chore - full of challenges, errands and problems, Mohini decides that she would play her part to win the faith and support of her husband. To be his true collaborator in life, she hurls herself into this great mission. Her detestation for her mother-in-law turns into love and she decides to let her follow her own way of life. She becomes prepared to co-operate with her to offer her heart's blood to the Virgin Goddess, so that she could bear a son. At the significant moment of this ritual offering, Jayadev reaches there and stops it. When Mohini finds that she was already expecting a child, she feels that her life has been fulfilled with diverse notes of music. Harish Raizada's comments on the incident may be significant. He says: 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.

Unlike other contemporary writers, Bhabani Bhattacharya has presented the Indian woman as the pure woman in his novels who has been victimised in spite of her high ideals and vitality. This concept of the innocent victimised Indian woman is a stable characteristic of his novels. He has also formed some woman characters in his novels. They are full of gracious ideas, which are more cultured than those of their male counterparts. He has successfully depicted the responsibility of motherhood in his fiction. He feels that a woman in her capability as a mother is competent of great performance. As a mother, she is a symbol of tenderness, love and sacrifice. He confirms that the woman as a wife is also human and is an equal partner of man.

Most of his heroines are untainted and simple.

Devjani and Nishi: Symbols of East West encounter

A Dream in Hawaii deals with the stress and pretension of the modern world and presents an appealing description of East West encountering with special emphasis on the reputation of Eastern ethnicity in America and other countries of the West. They are people like Devjani and Yogananda who try to amend the idea that are wrongly given to the Western psyche. Devjani, the heroine of this novel, swap over a dialogue with two young people, Alfred and Naomi. They question her about the Hindu notion of Kamasutra and they are keen to know more about it. They have a incorrect idea that it was a type of Bible for Hindu people. They are astounded at Devjani's answer. Devjani tells them that she had certainly not seen a copy of Kamasutra in her life, which is very strange to them. What the author has tried to point out is that the Westerners have a kind of predetermined design about Indian people and sexuality. The actuality is that in India, spiritual and ethical value is higher than corporeal bliss and is strange to them.

Nishi is a moral fibre that can be studied in this area. She is a young conjugal woman who feels that she must have her familiarity of the West. She has left her home and she is all set to get pleasure from her life as much as feasible. She is a paradigm of Indian woman living in the western society. After leaving the Indian way of life, Nishi feels that she can find pleasure if she lives her life at her own will.

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Through Nishi, Bhabani Bhattacharya has tried to point out the life styles of the Indian women who think that they take gratification in freedom by imitating the Western way of living. Living a Bohemian life by wearing a bikini is not always the true sense of life. To get life's delight, one has to know the significance of spirituality and the Indian philosophy. To the Western people, contemplation, yoga and pious lessons are something that can be learnt suddenly. They cannot understand the truth that it takes over years and years and long reparation to achieve spiritual supremacy.

Conclusion

The world of Indian woman is typically cramped to the ramparts of her home. It is rarely that she discloses either social or political consciousness to an incomparable extent. But Bhabani Bhattacharya supposes that woman has thoughts more in terms of nationalism than men and they have a great sense of service to their country. It highlights on the protrusion of India and Indian culture in the novels of Bhattacharya. As a novelist of contemporary Indian life, his total highlighting is on the presentation of the appraisal of the Indian society and its socio-cultural facets in its whole. Bhabani Bhattacharya is thus a promoter of social transformation and human betterment and through his novels he tries to comprehend the problems of contemporary Indian society and brings out an authentic picture of life in the country.

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