CHAPTER - IV
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MAN AND THE WORLD

We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community in which all sections of the human family can participate... Human progress, however, can no longer be achieved by focusing on one section of the world, Western or Eastern, developed or undeveloped. For the first time in human history, no part of humankind can be isolated from any other. Each person's future is in some way linked to all.¹

A Brav New World

A historian by academic training, a thorough-going internationalist by outlook and a political philosopher by experience, Bhattacharya is primarily a humanist artist "who dreams of a great destiny for humankind, and not of its ignominious end under nuclear fission".² Also as one who is engaged in historical and socio-economic research, he feels that he could

¹ "Humanist Manifesto II", issued by American Humanist Association, California, n.d. n. pag.

also envisage the future and set down the possible outlines of a brave new world to come. In one of his unpublished papers he says:

We who are engaged in historical or socio-economic research do not possess the art of crystal-gazing. However, hard facts do not have to be the end-all in our methodology. We also may venture once in a while to look beyond the material of collected facts into the likely shape of things to come. Futurism is now an accepted term in scholarly parlance. To set down the possible outlines of a brave new world to come is not the exclusive privilege of the creative writer. There is, admittedly, a basic difference in approach. The futurist has no use for rhetoric. Even while his eyes look beyond the horizon of known facts, even while he envisages what will happen, he has his feet firmly planted on the solid rock of what has happened. 

Thus, if Bhattacharya comes forward to outline the future of mankind, it is because of his interest in man and his well-being and also because of his firm belief that in this complex world, the welfare of the individual rests not only on the welfare of his society or nation, but also on the welfare of the world. As Bhattacharya is a "universal man" whose interests in man extend from individual to the humanity at large,

Paul Verghese rightly comments that "The dignity of man both in national and international contexts is uppermost in his [Bhattacharya’s] mind." 4

With man as the central focus, could it be possible to outline Bhattacharya’s world view? Yes, it is. Before making an attempt to define Bhattacharya’s world view, it is worthwhile to recall to our minds some of the most vital formative influences which shaped and moulded his world view. First his education abroad—Bhattacharya had the good fortune of reading under the famous political philosopher, Harold Laski from whom he developed a respect for the Marxist principles. Also he had the rare opportunity of having close contact and personal relationship with many British intellectuals and liberal thinkers like Col. F. Yeats Brown and Ralph Fox. Secondly, during his London years, while continuing his doctoral studies, he found time to travel extensively on the continent—Berlin, Warsaw, Paris, and Vienna—which travel widened his understanding of European life. Thirdly, Bhattacharya had the honour and privilege of being the Press-attaché at the Indian Embassy in Washington: a cultural Ambassador to Russia.

West Germany, England, New Zealand and Australia; a participant in the international seminars held at Harvard, Tokyo and Hawaii; a senior specialist at the Institute of Advanced Projects, The East-West Center, Hawaii; and a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Washington and British Columbia. These varied experiences not only helped him to see life in its widest perspective but also made him a thorough-going internationalist. Fourthly, the influences of Western writers like Whitman, Tolstoy, Knut Hamsun, Romain Rolland and John Steinbeck were so overwhelming that he was drawn to and attracted by their concern for basic human values. And lastly no less was the telling influence of Indian thinkers and philosophers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Gurudev Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, whose ideas of universalism had an abiding impact on the progressive mind of Bhattacharya. These diverse experiences in life widened his horizon of understanding life in a broad spectrum, helping him to form his own world view.

Bhattacharya is happy that the world is slowly becoming one community as the geographical separation is vanishing gradually. The credit of it should go to modern science and technology. In one of his seminar
papers, Bhattacharya observes:

Jet propulsion has brought us nearer in distance than ever before to the countries of Europe and to America and even to Australia. 5

Again in *A Dream in Hawaii*, Swami Yogananda says:

The globe has shrunk vastly since Swami Vivekananda passed away sixty years ago. All the world is now a stone’s throw from India. 6

With the world shrunken in size, the concept of viewing the entire world as one community has become a social reality. That is why Bhattacharya happily expresses himself thus:

There is a vast lot of Europe in today’s Asia. There is also a vast lot of Asia in today’s Europe. Universal humanity bestrides both these continents and others too. 7

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6 *A Dream in Hawaii*, p. 11.

7 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 99.
And hence the necessity to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and the need for free flow of ideas and endeavours. In one of his articles, Bhattacharya observes:

With space-time concepts altered under jet propulsion, with the world shrunken in size and under more and more pressure to be monolithic, as it were from forces that seem to have laws of their own, how could one set of ideas, one class of human endeavour be insulated from another? 8

This awareness in turn leads to taking a desirable step – a step to establish closer kinship between nations. Commenting on this Bhattacharya observes:

... transcending every gap of physical communication, a new barely discernible communication has arisen between Asian lands, a communication of which history itself has been the sponsor. 9

What is true to Asian lands is true to humanity at large. And that is why, today we have so many conferences, seminars and meetings of minds, wherein the

8"Literature and Social Reality", p. 594

9"A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 99
basic question raised is how best inner kinship
between peoples can be achieved. Speaking at a semi-
nar Bhattacharya observes:

This session of the seminar will perhaps
centre its thoughts on the common denomi-
nators which tend to establish an inner
kinship between peoples. 10

Along with this is a healthy sign of one
nation’s concern for the other. And this springs
from the cognisance of the fact that a nation’s pro-
gress is by and large linked with that of the other
nations, in the idea of interdependence and mutual
help. In one of his papers, Bhattacharya envisions
humanisation of a ravaged people for he is happy to
see Americans and Asians working as equal partners in
a vast enterprise to re-establish human values, not
only in Vietnam, but throughout the world. Also in
equal partnership West and East will no longer be held
artificially apart but they together will create a
destiny that will be something other than the doom of
transformation into handful of radio-active ash’. 11

Commenting upon America’s ideological involvement, he

10 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 99
Vietnam, Bhattacharya says:

The idea was the defense of liberty at a time when it was faced by destruction under external stress. And the dream was the changing of the destiny of an ill-fated people stunned by the ravages of war by lifting them out of subhuman levels of living. 12

Another happy feature is that there is increasingly a need for better international understanding and the means of promoting it. This is a social reality, seen all over the world. Cultural exchange programmes, meeting of minds, international peace conferences and seminars, formation of peace brigades, study groups abroad— all these go to show that today definite steps are being taken to promote international understanding and establish a feeling of oneness among peoples and nations.

Bhattacharya is a practical man, not a dreamy idealist. That is why he is more concerned with action than with mere consciousness. He says:

Consciousness alone will not be adequate. It has to be followed by a resolve to attain full-bodied understanding. Now is

that to be achieved? It cannot happen just by itself. There has to be some sort of a planned action. But - what action? 13

A similar view has been expressed by Bhattacharya in *Music for Mohini*, with Jayadev as his mouthpiece.

Thought had to be related to action. Abstraction had to be resolved in human terms. The philosopher had to step out of his temple of silence and lead his people...

Himself setting an example, Bhattacharya tries to suggest the course of action by saying: "Our action has to be centred on adequate preparation of the ground and the atmosphere". 15

**Eschewing War**

In this atomic age, there lurks in man's mind the fear of extinction in the event of a world war. Modern warfare is so advanced that it may reduce man to a handful of radio-active ash in no time.

13 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 100
15 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 100
Bhattacharya is pained to acknowledge this fact.

Added to this, wars destroy human values also. That is why in one of his papers Bhattacharya condemns and denounces war. He says:

War destroys not only human lives but something else no less important - human values. Modern war with its terror weapons is as activistic as Tamarlane's path of conquest marked by mounds of severed human heads. 16

As a sensitive artist, Bhattacharya presents the evils of war, with a view to drawing the attention of his readers to its worst qualities so that they could avoid war if possible.

War gives opportunities for people like selfish Somendra to find means of amassing wealth by exploiting the war conditions. Considering it as 'a God-sent opportunity', Somendra's mind thus works:

Tomorrow there will be a storm in the share market. The bulls will carry all before then, the bears will be nowhere. Steels will rise steeply. So will gold - Which to choose? The chance of a lifetime. 17


17 As Early Events, pp. 5-6
If Somendra is worried about minting money, exploiting the war conditions, his simple-minded wife has her own domestic worries - the scarcity of the essential commodities. She says:

War? It has started, then? Why, we must buy rice and mustard oil, a half-year's supply, before the grocer has an inkling. Prices will touch the sky. 18

Her fears come true. Appraising the situation Bhattacharya describes thus:

1943: The Japanese army stood poised at the eastern front, facing a wall of resistance. But no barricades had been put up against the enemy within the borders: no rationing of food grains, no price control, no checking of the giant sharks who played the cornering game on a stupendous scale. 19

The result was hunger, poverty and privation. Bhattacharya is pained to record the people's miseries thus:

Barns were empty... Markets were empty... The tillers of the soil, reduced to starvation, had no recourse but to sell land... Weavers sold their looms to traders... Artisans sold their tools. Fishermen's boats were chopped up for firewood to sell. 20

Again pictorial posters like "your property is valuable to you, isn't it? The soil of India is rich, isn't it? Your wife is beautiful." planted grim panic in the simple hearts of the peasants.

And therefore to Bhattacharya war is mass murder, a murder of peace, happiness, security and above all of human values. In answering a question about the impact of World War II on him, Bhattacharya writes:

So Many Hungers is a plain dramatization of the multiple ways by which World War II wrecked almost every human value that has gone into the making of man through the centuries of struggle to attain civilized norms. I personally witnessed the wreckage on the streets of Calcutta. Even so, I also saw in the deep dark sunbursts of the richness of the indestructible spirit of man. You must have noted those episodes, which are as significant as the Hungers. While many values got lost, many non-values held sway, the humanity in man never died altogether. That is the essential element in the novel. 22

It is felix culpa in the sense that though the Second World War destroyed human lives and values, it has proved beyond doubt that humanity had not cast away the richness

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21 As Many Hungers, p. 69
22 Bhattacharya's letter to me from Calcutta dated Feb. 25, 1948, vide Appendix.
of its spirit even at the trying conditions. Moreover, the war had altered the human psyche to a great extent. Bhattacharya's mind is thus reflected in the words of Rahoul:

In the agonies of war the soul of human kind will be cleansed. Humankind after war would not be the humankind of before.\textsuperscript{23}

Though Bhattacharya approved of resorting to war as a last resort for gaining political freedom for a nation - to put it in Rahoul's words: "ridding the world of some pest"\textsuperscript{24} and sometimes for safeguarding the freedom and liberty of a nation as in the case of the Vietnam War and the Indo-China War, Bhattacharya pleads for eschewing war and expresses his desire for establishing world peace.

World Peace

It is Bhattacharya's firm belief that it is possible to establish permanent world peace because he has so much faith in man - that is why he quotes Gandhiji's words in \textit{Shades from Ladakh}:

\textsuperscript{23}In Daily Drama, p. 9
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 40
Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature. 25

With implicit confidence in man and in his inherent good nature, certain desirable steps should be taken to establish permanent world peace.

As we have seen earlier, history teaches us that many a time, world peace has suffered when a nation fights for its political freedom. It is Bhattacharya's firm belief that political freedom is a must to a country if the country is to prosper and shape its future destiny. By giving political liberty to all countries much bloodshed could be avoided. Merely giving away political freedom will not suffice. For the country must be free to choose its own way of governing itself. Democracy and dictatorship, capitalism and communism are only ways of life. There is nothing wrong in people adopting any one of these ways of life if they feel that it is conducive for their welfare. It is criminal to try to force down a principle by using violence and military strength. There are bound to be differences of opinion but they should

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*From Czar Laxmi, p. 32*
not pave the way for perpetual enmity and antagonism. The best solution is to provide scope for all the ideologies to be presented to all people. People know best — and will choose the way of life they shall lead. Though Bhattacharya's mind is open to all forms of government, he seems to prefer Democracy to the rest. At one time Bhattacharya was drawn to communism and Marxist principles. But later on he preferred the democratic form of government because it gives the individual liberty and freedom. In answering a question which sought clarification and explanation for the change in his preference, Bhattacharya replies,

Yes, I was strongly attracted by Marxism. Later during the war, I was bewildered by the contradictions. I hated the anti-intellectualism. But my interest in the Soviet System continued.

Negotiation

When the life-styles vary, there are bound to be differences of opinion and sometimes even disputes over many things. But Bhattacharya fervently advocates that all disputes however provocative they

McBhattacharya's letter to me dated Feb 29, 1932 - vide Appendix.
be, must be settled at the table and not on the field of battle for such action endangers world peace. Inspired by and drawn to this idea of Gandhiji and Nehru, Bhattacharya pleads for a meeting of minds to settle all disputes. In *Shadow from Ladakh*, Suruchi, the Indian delegate to the World Peace Conference, explains India’s faith and hope in establishing satisfactory peace even at times of arises. Endorsing her view, a Chinese delegate quotes Nehru’s letter –

Again India and China look toward each other, and past memories crowd in their minds; again pilgrims of a new kind cross or fly over the mountains that separate them, bringing messages of cheer and goodwill, and creating fresh bonds of friendship. 27

Truly imbued with Gandhian idea of peaceful co-existence, which Nehru put in practice, Satyajit suggests to his daughter Sunita, the possibility of settling the border dispute justly and honorably even at the time of Indo-China conflict. He says:

Sunita, this is my belief. Let men from New Delhi and Peking meet, discuss. Both are committed to the Five Principles laid down in the memorable Conference of Asian

*Shadow from Ladakh*, p. 10
Countries at Bandung. Bandung — that is a city in Indonesia. The Principles include mutual respect for territorial integrity and nonaggression under all circumstances. With goodwill on either side — of that there's more than enough — the borders will be demarcated justly and honorably. 28

Echoing her father's sentiment, Sumita poses her friend Mandini with a few basic questions:

Killing and being killed. What for? Was it not possible to settle the issue by peaceful means? Was human life so much cheaper than acres of uninhabited mountain side?

Not only the elite but the simple minded village women are also concerned with peace. Bhattacharya happily records this thus:

They were concerned only with the human aspect. All fighting was hateful. None more hateful than fighting with neighbors. India had to stand for peace. In this village, as in all others, every ritual — at birth, marriage, funeral — ended with the words proclaimed by Vedic sages three thousand years ago: Peace and Peace and always Peace! 36

28. Peace from Laos: p. 27
29. This: p. 263
30. This: p. 75
Non-violence and Ahimsa

Sometimes negotiations may fail and peace talks may not yield any tangible result and settle the dispute. On such occasions Bhattacharya pleads for the adherence to and practice of the principle of non-violence and ahimsa, which Gandhiji gave to the world not only as a political expedient but also as a philosophy of life. His interest in the principle of non-violence and ahimsa is so telling that in his novels he has created two important characters who are Gandhian in action and thought. In So Many Hungers, Devesh Basu who is affectionately called Devata by the people of Naruni is a true Gandhian. He teaches the people the cardinal principles of the concept of non-violence and ahimsa and makes them practise them at the time of India's struggle for Independence. When he is arrested he speaks these words of exhortation to the people.

Friends and comrades, do not betray the flag. Do not betray yourselves... The supreme test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless. 51

[Note: Excerpt from a source, p. 73]
Again he teaches them the art of fighting without hatred. He makes a distinction between the British rulers and the British people by saying:

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. 32

Satyajit is Devesh Basu’s counterpart in Shadow from Ladakh. He is a true Gandhian who strictly adheres to the principle of non-violence and ahimsa. He is so absorbed in this principle that he is never tired of quoting Gandhiji’s words when he speaks. On one such occasion, he says:

Now listen to his /Gandhiji’s/ words. Human nature is in its essence one and therefore the aggressor unfailingly responds (in the end) to the advances of love..... No power on earth can stand before the march of a peaceful, determined and God-fearing people. Non-violence is more powerful than all armaments in the world,... If blood be shed, let it be our blood. Cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing. 33

32 Devesh Basu 33 Shadow from Ladakh
Inspired by this principle, Satyajit plans for a Peace Mission to Ladakh at the time of Chinese aggression on Indian borders. Describing his peace-mission he observes:

The Peace-Mission will pass across the mountain ranges, along the deep valleys, and reach the frontier between India and China. It may be the frontier at Tibet or it may be Sinkiang—I don't know yet. The demand for peace will be our only weapon. And the faith in the spirit of man our only shield. 34

Devash Basu and Satyajit are exponents of non-violence and ahimsa. Bhattacharya himself is so fascinated by that idea that he is never tired of glorifying this creed by quoting Gandhiji's and Nehru's words in his novels. For example he quotes Nehru's speech at the time of the Chinese aggression.

I would like to stress that I do not want that aspect of the cold war or hot war which leads to hatred of a whole people. I hope no such emotion will rise in our country. We have nothing against the Chinese people. We must not transfer our anger and bitterness at what has been done by the Chinese Government to the Chinese people. 35

34 Shaday from Ladakh, p. 104
35 Ibid., p. 296
Again Bhattacharya feels that if Gandhi had been alive at the time of aggression, he would have said thus:

The rulers were the Dragons, not the people. The people of China were like the people everywhere. 36

And finally Bhattacharya's interest in and attraction for the creed of non-violence is so much that he does not hesitate to describe in detail and glorify Gandhiji's non-violent resistance in South Africa and concluded with an observation made in The Times.

In London The Times declares that the march of these Indian laborers must live in the memory as one of the most remarkable manifestations in the history of the spirit of passive resistance. 37

Non-alignment

Closely linked with this concept is the policy of non-alignment or Neutralism. Bhattacharya is happy that this is India's contribution to the promotion of world peace. Commenting upon India's political thinking and stand on the revolution that took place in China in 1949, Bhattacharya observes:

36 Bhattacharya, p. 82
37 Ibid., p. 83
India watched the rebirth of a nation. India was all warmth for China's new way of life, even though it was not her way. India believed in many paths leading to one goal—human happiness. Those many paths had to coexist. Universal brotherhood was the ultimate value. So India stood for enlightened neutralism. That was Nehru's gift to his people; in its long-range meaning it was a gift for many peoples. 38

Again Bhattacharya is happy to note that even at the time of the terrible crisis during the Chinese aggression, India stood fast to its policy. He says:

A world balancing armed might on a knife's edge. But India had given it the concept of non-alignment, of dynamic neutralism. 39

Peace Brigades

If the concept of non-alignment and of neutralism is Nehru's gift to the world, Gandhiji's share is in putting forward the revolutionary but worth-practising idea of forming Peace Brigades to promote world peace. Intellectuals may meet, plan and discuss as to what should be done to ensure permanent peace; but what is needed is planned and organised concrete actions. In one of his papers Bhattacharya observes:

38\textit{Hindustan Times}, p. 79
39\textit{Ibid.}, p. 81
In the realm of organised effort, one of the notable contributions has come from the peace brigades. These have a completely new orientation. Formed exclusively of dedicated men and women, they have asked for nothing except the opportunity to render service.\(^4\)

After giving a graphic picture of Gandhiji's historic mission in November 1946, through the villages of East Bengal which had just been the scene of the most horrible communal carnage, Bhattacharyya proudly says:

Let it be recalled also that peace brigades, Shanti Sena, were originally Gandhiji's own idea - he not only conceived the idea but gave it form long before America started the experiment.\(^4\)

Defining the scope of these peace brigades Bhattacharyya observes:

These peace brigades - the military term is used, for this is a war against war itself - these peace brigades are thoroughly inter-racial in their composition. Americans and Asians from many countries work side by side, equal partners in a vast enterprise. New human relationships have been established within the peace brigades themselves, and that had made it far easier to achieve a projection of these relationships on a far-flung basis.\(^4\)

\(^4\) After Vatican What?, n.pag.
\(^4\) Ibid., n.pag.
\(^4\) Ibid., n.pag.
Bhattacharya is happy that peace brigades are achieving not only widest support but also far-reaching results. Commenting on this he observes:

The peace brigades, as I see them working to re-establish lost human decencies, are not restricted to Vietnam. They are in the villages of Thailand, Indonesia, India. This is far apart from a neo-missionary movement. The men and women of these brigades do not wear the cloak of superiority. They have no pedestal of self-glorification on which to stand. They do not preach. They speak the language of the people, eat their food, feel and think and dream just as they do. Unobtrusively, they create a new image of the alien. The American, for instance, is no longer the Affluent American or the Ugly American or even the Anguished American, but the intellectual American and the warm-hearted, the big-hearted American. 43

Over Population

Yet another serious problem that threatens world peace is the problem of over-population. Bhattacharya considers the population bomb as fateful as the nuclear one. Aware of the steady increase in population Bhattacharya says:

43 “After Vietnam What?”, n.pag.
Satyajit did not know that eighteen thousand babies were born in his country every day and had to be fed, brought up, given the material that would turn them into civilized citizens. 44

Bhattacharya is happy to note that this serious problem is now being tackled satisfactorily - steps are being taken to control and de-fuse the population. His happiness is thus expressed:

The population bomb, which could ultimately be as woeful as the nuclear one, has been de-fused. 45

Much more happy is Bhattacharya when he learns that even the most conservative peasants are open to the idea of family planning.

True, the pressure of population on land leads to constant sub-division of the available acreage; and individual holdings shrink in size. The problem is met by industrialisation. Along with this goes family planning. Happily, the peasant man and woman have shown freedom from inhibitions in this regard. 46

It is quite interesting to note that in all the novels of Bhattacharya, there is limited number of

44 Shagai from Ladakh, p. 197
45 "After Vietnam What?", n.p.e.
children. When he was asked for an explanation of this—whether it has a social purpose or purely a novelistic technique to limit the action—Bhattacharya writes thus:

Your question about the very limited number of children my characters have. I think you are right when you suggest that there was a social purpose behind it. It could be that the purpose was rooted in my subconscious thought. I don't think it was just accidental or a matter of technique. But let me stress the point that much of my writing comes from my subconscious awareness. To find a logical explanation, I have to be psycho-analyzed. 47

And so it is not out of place to infer that the following words of Mrs. Mehra in Shadow from Ladakh, reflect the novelist's conviction: "People with ultramodern outlook don't have many children." 48

International Understanding

Yet another major concern of Bhattacharya is promotion of international understanding, that is, better understanding between peoples and nations. 'The human mind is responsive to certain common feelings.

47Bhattacharya's letter to me from Manchester, dated June 16, 1977. — vide Appendix
48Shadow from Ladakh, p. 97.
and to build those feelings on a suitable course of action is to promote better understanding between peoples. It presupposes that man is man whether he lives in America or in India or in China. He has the same human instincts, the same joys and sorrows wherever his hearth and home may be. Also it includes the basic idea that no nation is superior to another for each nation has its own strength and weakness.

To Bhattacharya, one of the healthy steps to promote international understanding is holding conferences and seminars - to put it in Bhattacharya’s phrase, the meeting of minds - wherein ‘such things as commercial links, interchange of goods, sharing of a common market and all else that can a group of countries contribute to the material well-being of each other’ are discussed and definite lines are chalked out. But Bhattacharya goes a step further and says that the seminars and conferences have a serious purpose. To put it in his own words:

The main requisite is a meeting of minds, filled with determination to attain mutual understanding and response. But then what is the nature of this understanding? It


50 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 100
is comparatively simple to learn about each other's socio-political motivations. It is not so simple to discover each other deeply through the terms and images of life. Yet, that alone is the lasting way of discovery. External bonds may snap under the stress of various factors. Inner kinship, once achieved, will survive a hundred strains. 51

Since seminars and conferences go a long way to establish inner kinship between peoples and nations, Bhattacharya encourages such.

In one of the seminars on "India and South-east Asia", in which Bhattacharya himself was a participant, the Chairman, P.S.Lokanathan, explained the object of the seminar thus:

The object of the seminar is therefore to provide a forum for a meaningful discussion of our problems and to help us trace the common elements, the differences and the diversities so as to understand each other better and also to explore ways and means of close collaboration among our countries. 52

It is quite interesting to note that women are in no way inferior to men in contributing their

51 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 100
52 "Welcome Speech" by P.S.Lokanathan, India and South-east Asia: Proceedings of Seminar on India and South-east Asia, Rajat Sarkar, ed. (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1968), p. 4.
share to promote international understanding and ensure world peace. In *Shadow from Ladakh*, Suruchi goes to Moscow as an Indian delegate to participate in an international 'Peace Congress'.

**Going Abroad**

If Suruchi's short trip to Moscow has widened her understanding of life, it is true with others also who go abroad for higher studies or as members in study groups or as members in cultural exchange programmes. It is with the training he got in America that Bhashkar is able to preach the need for industrialisation for India for its better future. Bahoul's Cambridge studies help him fight the opponents without hatred. So is the case with Satyajit. Devjani's stay at the East-West Center helps her not only to shed some of her inhibitions but also paves the way for more knowledge and understanding of life as a result of which she is even prepared to compromise with her mother's sexual lapse. Not only this. These visits go a long way to promote better understanding of other peoples, — their feelings, cultures and life-styles.
Granting that going to other countries on any capacity widens one's understanding of life and promotes better understanding of other peoples, a common charge levelled against such people is that they lose their own identity and sometimes national identity too. Anticipating this charge, Bhattacharya hastens to answer thus:

Puerile arguments had been used even by Indian educationalists who must have better known that close contact with alien cultures would make Indians lose their own identity. It was conveniently forgotten that the very concept of Indian nationalism was born in the universities of Britain. Most of our top-ranking national leaders had their education in those universities. Far from losing their identity, they launched the powerful struggle that brought the country complete independence from alien rule. 53

Not satisfied with making plain statements, in his fictional world, Bhattacharya has created a number of characters who go abroad and yet retain their own identity, even maintain and preserve their national identity. Of all the characters — Rahoul, Satyajit, and Devjani — Bhashkar is an interesting example. The following passage is self-explanatory.

53 "After Vietnam What?", n.pag.
He [Bhashkar] absorbed America with all his senses. Not how alone. He absorbed much of the human scene. He drank hard with men. He dated with the woman. He was now very far from his homeland - in something other than mileage. Yet it could be well that within him India remained as real as ever before. That, may be, was the reason why, even after a stay of twelve years, he could cut the strong pull of America all at once and fly back home. 54

To these, we may add people going abroad on specific mission, a mission to build human understanding and better relationships. How happy Bhattacharya is when he makes a reference to missionaries:

Our missionaries crossed the mountains and passed through the deserts of Sinkiang where the cave temples dedicated to Buddha still stand. And though many died, it was a two-way traffic - our ancient universities, like Nalanda, were graced by the presence of men like Hsuan-tsang and I-tings. 55

Much more happy is Bhattacharya when he refers to Swami Vivekananda's mission. Swami Yogananda, his mouthpiece in A Dream in Hawaii, says:

Swami Vivekananda's mission was to build human understanding rather than dispense knowledge. He was a pathfinder. That's it.

54 Shadow from Ladakh, p. 35.
55 Ibid., p. 9.
In the past half-century, many Indians have gone abroad over that path. Vivekananda's mission has been continued through all these years. 56

I have no patience for artificial barriers in human relationships. I do not understand casteism and things of that kind. Nor do I understand narrow chauvinism of any calibre. 57

so writes Bhattacharya of his opinion on inter-caste and inter-continental marriages. While he prefers intercaste marriages at the national level as discussed in earlier chapter, Bhattacharya advocates inter-continental marriages at the world level because such marriages in the long run will help to shed all national and racial prejudices and therefore promote better human understanding and a feeling of oneness.

In Shadow from Ladsakh he creates a liberal minded character - Bhashkar's father - who gives his son absolute liberty to choose by himself his life-partner, no matter even if she is a foreigner. Bhashkar reminisces thus:

56 A Dream in Hawaii, p. 11
57 Bhattacharya's letter to me dated Feb 29, 1980 — vide Appendix.
His father....? He - and Mother - had suggested more than once that he should marry, have a proper homelife. Race, caste, language, social status of no account - that pointed to Father's liberal mind. "Have you a fiancee in the States?" he had asked in a letter a month back. "If so, why not let her come to India and marry you? Nothing stands in your way". 58

Bhashkar's father is none other than a replica, a self-projection of Bhattacharya himself. 59

**Interculturation**

If Bhattacharya was drawn towards Gandhiji and Tagore, it was one of the reasons that his broad vision of life accommodated the idea of interculturation which Gandhiji and Tagore preached and practised.

58 *Shadow from Ladakh*, p. 94

59 On a prior appointment with Bhabani Bhattacharya who had come from the States on a three-months' visit, I went to Calcutta to meet him. Unfortunately the meeting could not take place as he fell sick and was detained at Hyderabad where he had gone on invitation. But I met his daughter Mrs Indrani Mukherjee at her apartment in Calcutta on February 15, 1980 and discussed with her Bhattacharya's personal views on many things - one such is inter-continental marriage. She said to me that her father had given them all unlimited freedom to choose their life-partners, whoever they be and that her brother had married an American girl.
Bhattacharya quotes Gandhiji's words in *Shadow from Ladakh*.

No culture can live if it tries to be exclusive. I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want all cultures to flow freely about my house. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.

Interculturation means integration or synthesis of various cultures. The pre-requisite for interculturation is interplay of cultures. Explaining what he means by interplay of cultures, Bhattacharya observes:

I say interplay, and not exchange. It is anomalous to speak of cultural exchange. We do not actually part with some of our culture and take something of other culture in return. The give and take in this context follows a law of its own. We give and yet retain everything and in addition we make an acquisition.

The question is under what conditions could this interplay of culture be possible and virtually practised. Anticipating this, Bhattacharya hastens to qualify his idea thus:

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*Shadow from Ladakh*, p. 156

"A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 100
The pre-condition of this interplay is acceptance of the idea that no country is culturally superior to others. All peoples are equal in this regard. To deny this because of cultural chauvinism would be fatal to the entire concept. We have to be as eager to take as to give. The capacity denotes an inward maturity which is an invaluable asset. However, no precise balance-sheet can be drawn of what we are in a position to give and what we can most profitably receive. This has to be left to the working of the forces of natural selectivity. 62

How deeply Bhattacharyya is involved in the subject may be seen from the way in which he harps on it. Here is Jayadev's picture of the India which he and Mohini are to build up.

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 'West-polluted' city. Both change unaware. They are less angry with each other. This is more urgent today than even before. 63

What is true to India is true to the world also.

Tagore advocated such a synthesis. And Bhattacharyya echoes this idea of Tagore in Shadow from

62 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 109
63 Music for Bahini, p. 113
Ladakh. Speaking to her daughter about Shantiniketan, Suruchi refers to one of Tagore's most important teachings:

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. 64

To this, we may add Bhattacharya's own remarks:

He (Tagore) was resolved to work not only for a coordination between India's past and present, a fusion of the best elements, but also for a synthesis of the East with the West, a 'union' between them. Western materialism, he believed had to be tempered with 'creative ideas' from the East. And the inwardness of the East had to be supplemented with the Western genius for social organisation. The world could not afford to remain split for ever into the orient or the occident. The march of mankind had to be a unified progress. A setback in one sector would inevitably be a drag on the other. 'If the great light of culture be extinct in Europe, our horizon in the East will mourn in darkness.' 65

The East-West Center

And it was precisely for this reason that

64 Shaden from Ladakh, p. 215
Bhattacharya was personally attracted to the East-West Center, Hawaii. Himself a Senior Specialist, Institute of Advanced Projects, the East-West Center, Hawaii for more than a year during which period he carried on an independent research on a project entitled "South and Southeast Asia: Some Strategies of Solidarity", in which he was planning to seek practical answers to these intricate problems /inter-cultural history (including religion), education, economics and other areas of social sciences/, so that multiform cooperation may not appear as a mere wish-thought and an empty phrase." 66 Bhattacharya has all praise for the East-West Center as he sees the concrete realizing of interculturation in terms of life-ways. Commenting on the impact of this Center on him Bhattacharya says:

I should add a few words in regard to the East-West Center's impact on me. Inter-culturation, in a broad sense of the term, is one of the key elements in two of my novels (Music for Mohini and Shadow from Ladar). Hence, when I saw another dimension of the same idea institutionalised at the East-West Center, I felt pleased. The East-West Center with its unique human content along with its concrete realizing of 'interculturation' in terms of lifeways has illustrated for me over again what Tagore's Visva-Bharati (World University)

envisioned several decades ago. And I value this experience deeply indeed. Perhaps I may be able to dramatize some of this stuff of experience in a novel I have in view, tentatively titled *A Dream in Hawaii*. That of course, will just be one of the dimensions of the story, which is itself a dream so far. 67

Yes, his dream has come true, for he has been able to dramatize this stuff in his recent novel *A Dream in Hawaii*. How happy Bhattacharya is when he records Devjani's reactions -

Interculturation at the East-West Center was expressed above all other things in terms of living and that pleased her most. She could see Hyong Wang of Korea with his American date, Karen, from somewhere in Oregon. At the same table sat Yasunari from Japan with Miriam of Pakistan - they were to be married in a month. Two rows away, four young people were in an animated discussion: an American student from Stanford, a Thai college instructor from Bangkok's Thammasat University, an anthropologist from New Guinea, and ... she did not know the fourth. 68

Incidentally the passage also throws light on Bhattacharya's forward looking idea on inter-continental marriage to promote better understanding between the

67 Bhattacharya's statement quoted in Shimer's, p. 20.
68 *A Dream in Hawaii*, p. 156
peoples. And Bhattacharya’s attachment to this Center is so enduring that Dr. Vincent Swift’s remarks could be well taken as his own:

All the world knows our Hawaii as a tourists’ paradise. So it is - correct. But our Hawaii is a multiple image. The unique East-West mix. The strong inter-culturation. You cannot find the like of this ethnic spectrum anywhere else on the globe. 69

Literature a Bridge

As one who has rejected the idea of 'art for art's sake', one of the prime concerns of Bhattacharya is 'how could values in art help getting involved in the values of human living?' 70 To Bhattacharya literature is a bridge between peoples. True to his belief, Bhattacharya begins one of his seminar papers dramatically thus:

This is a many-spanned bridge reaching out over vast areas of space - and areas of time as well. It is designed to carry a two-way traffic, outward and inward, regardless of volume and weight. The bridge is literature. 71

69 A Dream in Hawaii, p. 55-56.
70 'Literature and Social Reality', p. 394
71 "A Bridge between the Peoples", p. 99
He has stressed the same view in other articles of his also.72 Never satisfied with making a sweeping remark, Bhattacharya, proceeds to give an example to validate his argument. He says:

I may cite an example. For well over a century, we in India have been intensely absorbed in the spirit of English literature. While we have learnt highly developed techniques, we have attained something else — a compassionate understanding of the life reflected in that literature. We fought our battle of freedom against the British rulers of the country, but we seldom lost our deep links with the British mind. Of late, those links have suffered the greatest strain. In our annoyance we have sometimes contemplated cutting our ties with the Commonwealth in which the United Kingdom is still the dominating force. Yet, the inexorable fact stands that we want no severance of our mind’s relationship with the people of Britain, a relationship that their literature has fostered. English literature continues to be a solid bridge between India and the United Kingdom. 73

With literature as a solid bridge between peoples and nations, now comes a pertinent question —

72 Speaking about literature as bridge, Bhabani Bhattacharya observes: “That traffic eliminates distances far more effectively than even jet propulsion.” "Baseless Prejudice Against Indian Writing English", The Statesman, August 1968. Quoted in Shimer, p. 92.

73 "A Bridge between the Peoples", pp.100-01.
establishing literary contact through a linguistic medium, common to all. "That medium, whether you relish the idea or not, must be English language" — so observes Bhattacharya. It is Bhattacharya’s firm conviction that English language is the most potent medium and moreover it is "the international language". In one of his articles he says:

"An accident of history (or whatever else it is) has ordained that English, admittedly a great international language, is to be our main transport vehicle on this two-way bridge." 75

That is why Bhattacharya vehemently attacks the anti-English cry.

The anti-English business is plain nonsense... English is a language that does not belong to only a few nations. It is a universal heritage. 76

Though a Bengali by birth, Bhattacharya preferred to write in English as he aimed at speaking to the world.

74 "A Bridge between the Peoples", pp. 100-01

75 "Basisless Prejudice Against Indian Writing English"; quoted in Shimer, p. 92.

audience - 'not only to the English speaking countries but to most of the other countries as well, in translation'. 77 And Bhattacharya's hope was not misplaced. His works have been translated into 26 languages of which 14 are European. Bhattacharya is happy that his novels have spoken to many peoples all around the world. In a letter Bhattacharya says:

The Russian reader has welcomed my writing. Three novels of mine had a total sale of nearly a million copies in Russian translation. 78

Science and Technology

"The world is shrinking so fast - during my twenty years spent abroad I have seen how technology changes the human psyche" 79 - so writes Bhattacharya in a letter. To Bhattacharya, modern science is a boon to mankind, for with its help, life could be made freer and easier. He envisions changes in all walks of life.


78 Bhattacharya's letter to me dated Feb 29, 1980 vide Appendix.

79 Ibid., vide Appendix.
Bhattacharya is happy that with the aid of science and new technology man has been able to cast aside his age-long belief in fatalism. Commenting on the Green Revolution which science has ushered, Bhattacharya says:

The revolution is beyond the material plane; it is deep in the people’s thoughts, in the people’s attitude. Over a span of thousand of years, the Indian peasant was a fatalist. “What is writ on thy brow must happen.” But he has been jolted out of his apathy into a new awareness, a reawakening. He has seen crop yields expand fivefold by the application of modern technique. He has seen his more receptive neighbors reap unheard-of harvests. A mechanical process, just technique, is as powerful as fate! That realization, dawning for the first time in the year 1970, started a chain reaction. It set the farmer’s expectations afire. The rural change in India with its seven hundred million people is now a vivid signpost in the landscape of Asia’s most challenging decade. For, the revolution on the corn fields swept over to the industrial sector. It had to produce more fertilizers, more tractors. And since ox-carts were no longer adequate to carry the ever-mounting bags of grain, a great boost was given to motorized transport. 80

The same idea has been expressed in different words in another article of Bhattacharya titled “The People of the Villages Change Their Theme.” 81 Again in

80 “After Vietnam What?”, n.pag.
A Dream in Hawaii, Swami Yogananda speaks about his faith in technology to solve many problems and reduce misery and pain.

Unlike many faddists in the religious field Yogananda had faith in technology. It was no longer a Western product, a Western challenge. All human society was set on being technology-based. This was a need for the preservation of life itself. Adequate food had to be produced; without ever-advancing technology that was not possible. Health care a necessity for all mankind. 82

With so much of faith in science and modern medicines, Bhattacharya happily records how the wonder drug, Penicillin had saved the leg of a soldier, wounded at the warfront: "The wonder drug came on the fifth day and it saved his leg!" 83 Science apart from deepening man's relationship with nature, 84 strengthens the defense of a nation. That is why Bhashkar is all our for industrialisation. His idea is recorded thus:

83 A Goddess Named Gold, p. 122

84 Clarifying Stella's doubt, Swami Yogananda 'had said that to be back to nature was a human need, universal and timeless. It did not eliminate the usable gifts of science. Science could even deepen the relationship between nature and man.' A Dream in Hawaii, p. 160.
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 country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defense - a compulsion of our current history. 85

While Bhattacharya is able to acknowledge the benefits conferred on mankind by science and technology, he is also aware of and therefore never hesitates to point out the evils of industrialization also. One example is the description of an accident in the steel plant, in which a worker is killed. Also there are others which affect the minds and outlook of the people. Insatiety, frustration, intrigue, graft - these are a few which one could easily notice in any large industrial establishment where large number of workers are thrown together and compete with one another for more possessions, and for position and power. To these we may add also machines dehumanising men. Instead of becoming the masters of machine they have made, men let themselves to be led by lifeless computers, electronic brains and automatons losing the touch with the life of mind; forgetting his godly nature and descending to brutish

85 Shadow from Ladakh, p. 30.
cruelty; allowing his reason and commonsense to
rust and perish. Alex in *A Dream in Hawaii*, inter-
preting the poem on the 'dead rat' as super technology
echoes Bhattacharya's mind thus:

The dead rat - I call it technology. Up
to a point, technology is good for mankind.
It's a tool of civilized living. Beyond
that point it turns anti-social and defeats
its original purpose. Under severe tests,
Western man loses his boundaries and his
targets. While it goes on hitting at every
aspect of traditionalism, technology -
super technology - becomes an end in itself.
Machines with monstrous power take over the
functions of human brain, control human
action. All machines get humanized, men
get dehumanized. You see the outcome in
old institutions on which society has built
itself over the centuries. Family life,
for instance. Marriage, for instance. 86

Commenting upon the American society with its over-
civilization Bhattacharya is pained to record thus:

Marriage reduced to a convenient contract.
For the young and unmarried, dating and
mating were the same. Virginity became a
sin when you were over-sixteen. Virgin
girls and virgin boys beyond their teens
were all too rare anyhow. 87

86 *A Dream in Hawaii*, p. 135
87 Ibid., p. 109.
That is why Bhattacharya is always for controlled technology and stresses the need for restraint. He says,

Science did not have the means to restrain itself - that was the problem. Restraint had to come from deep within the spirit of man. 88

A Meeting Ground

It is quite interesting to see that Bhattacharya's approach to many world problems is reasonable because being no extremist, he always advocates the policy of reconciliation and re-adjustment. In this complex world especially when various ideologies are preached and practised, points of view adhered to and put forth, there is bound to be differences of opinion, resulting in conflict, antagonism and even mutual destruction. To Bhattacharya, the only possible solution is synthesis — choosing the path of sympathetic understanding, of reconciliation and re-adjustment. Finding a suitable meeting ground would ensure maximum happiness and mutual understanding of maximum number of people. That is there should not be rejection of one

idea in favour of the other but a happy synthesis or integration of the conflicting ideologies. To put it in Bhattacharya's words -

Let there be a meeting ground of the two extremes: Let each one shed some of its content and yet remain true to itself. 89

Such a sympathetic understanding and the give and take policy will certainly promote and ensure universal brotherhood.

World Community

Viewing the entire world as one big family, taking cognisance of mutual dependence between peoples and nations, establishing world peace, eschewing war, promoting international understanding, forming a common world culture and fostering universal brotherhood - all these which form the bedrock of Bhattacharya's world view clearly indicate his intention - his vision of building a world community. As the welfare of an individual by and large rests on the welfare of the entire world, Bhattacharya feels that it is high time to promote the idea of building a world community. Man

89 Shadow from Ladakh, p. 274
willed that he should land on the moon and there was the victorious landing. If man wills, he could build a world community. With so much confidence in man and humanity at large the future that Bhattacharya envisions is not 'altogether a utopian fantasy, a fairy tale, a Disneyland!'

With all his material comforts and accomplishments man needs something more - the spiritual nourishment to live a full life. For, man does not live by bread alone.

90 "After Vietnam What?" n.pag.