Chapter 5

Spinning Wheel versus Steel Mill

The opening chapter of Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* points to a clash between two different ways of life, represented by Gandhigram and Steeltown: as Suruchi lands at New Delhi airport, she is handed a letter from her daughter Sumita who has not come to receive her as planned. Sumita writes that Gandhigram is in danger from Steeltown, which threatens to swallow the village as part of its expansion plans and she mentions a hard struggle ahead (Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* 11).¹

The houses in Gandhigram are all of mud, with walls of split-bamboo framework with layers of soft clay hardened into plaster and a foot-deep straw thatching overhead—in traditional Indian village style (*Shadow* 13). It is one of the villages donated by a zamindar as part of the Bhoomidhan Movement of Vinoba Bhave with the hope that it would be "a replica of Sevagram, the 'village of service' that the Father of the Nation had founded." Vinoba gave the village its name of Gandhigram and left it in the charge of a younger fellow worker from Sevagram, namely Satyajit (*Shadow* 13-14).

As a teacher of Economics at Santiniketan, Satyajit
Sen was attracted towards one of his female students named Suruchi. He proposed to her in two months and married her. Sumita was born two years later. Gandhiji, while on a visit to Santiniketan, asked Satyajit to come to Sevagram. Satyajit went to Sevagram with his family a week later. In the year of freedom the family moved to Gandhigram (Shadow 20).

One day Satyajit told Suruchi that, in keeping with Gandhiji’s ideals and prescriptions, he wished to take the vow of brahmacharya—complete chastity of body and even of thought. He begged Suruchi to help him. He suggested to her to free herself of him and marry again. Suruchi’s faith in her husband was strong and her surrender complete. So she remained with Satyajit. Occasionally they did break the vow. But Suruchi never left longing for her two unborn sons whom she had named Ajoy and Sanjoy (Shadow 22-23).

Bhaskar Roy, the Chief Engineer of Steeltown, is a workhorse, so made by America. A visiting Indian minister met him at an embassy party, was impressed by his attitude to work and challenge, and, drew him to India. So Bhaskar found himself in the new Steeltown (Shadow 34-36).

Sumita always wears a white sari and a white jacket made of cotton fabric woven out of yarn produced
with her own spinning wheel. The wheel once belonged to Gandhiji, who gave it to Satyajit as a gift. Satyajit gave it to Sumita as a birthday gift when she turned fourteen. Sumita wears no jewellery (Shadow 42-44).

General Manager Rangaswamy goes to great pains to impress upon Bhaskar the need to adjust his ideas to Indian conditions. He points out that Bhaskar is too young for the post he occupies. Bhaskar is bitter that only age counts in India. Bhaskar wants to annex Gandhigram to Steeltown and refashion it on modern lines. He thinks that the proposed Meadow House will, as a centre of social communion, expose the villagers of Gandhigram to modern amenities that have become part of everyday life. He is sure that the villagers will be won over. His aim is to capture the spirit of Gandhigram, not merely the acres of earth (Shadow 58-63).

Seeing a cowherd grazing kine on the meadow and playing on a bamboo flute, Bhaskar approaches him. He wants to play on the flute. The boy hesitates because he has touched the flute with his mouth. Bhaskar is tickled because the flute can be played only if it is touched by the mouth. Bhaskar plays a folksong with a fast, merry beat. The cowherd says that Didi loves that kind of tune. Bhaskar is surprised because he can associate Sumita only with devotional songs (Shadow 63-65).
The Chinese invade Indian territory. Seeking communion with Gandhiji in spirit and inspiration from his practice, Satyajit finds the answer to the Chinese problem. He will take a Shanti Sena (Peace Mission) to the Himalayas. The Peace Mission will be armed with the lost slogan of brotherhood between the two nations. Its proclamation will be heard beyond the Himalayas in Peking. If the Peace Mission is attacked, in death it will become deathless (Shadow 67). A small Mission of ten people or less will do. But history will watch the Peace Mission because the issue at stake is peace or war (Shadow 68).

Invitations for the opening ceremony of the Meadow House in Steeltown are delivered at Gandhigram by a messenger (Shadow 83-85). Sumita sees a new determination and joy in Satyajit's eyes. He says he is going to the city library to study maps. She guesses that he is happy because of the possibility of talks and eventual peace between India and China. A parallel movement is also occurring right before them. Steeltown had threatened to destroy Gandhigram. But now a house is being built in the meadow to serve as a meeting ground for Gandhigram and Steeltown. Satyajit is confused about Bhaskar's intentions. Suruchi thinks that Bhaskar plans to conquer Gandhigram by non-violence. Bhaskar has already attacked the minds of the village boys by
arranging for two buses to take them to the Steel mill (Shadow 85-88).

Sumita goes to the upcoming Meadow House looking for Gopal and runs into Bhaskar. He explains the salient features of Meadow House. He expects it to arouse in the people of Gandhigram the natural instinct to want a fulfilled life. Sumita does not agree with him because the essence of the Gandhigram way of life is not to impose anything from outside. He speaks of electrical illumination as if Gandhigram lives outside civilisation. Bhaskar says that he wants India to resort to industrial progress to attain higher standards quickly by mobilising available resources. Sumita says that Gandhigram also believes in action and is trying to build a new social order. Bhaskar says that Satyajit is a sage out of the Ramayana, reborn after three thousand years, and filled with remembrance, with no idea of time having gone by and he adds that Sumita is her father's "alter ego." He explains the Chinese strategy of disrupting India's economic progress by creating a second front, namely defence. Sumita, however, says that it is only one way of thinking. Bhaskar impulsively dismisses Satyajit's alternative way of thinking as "dangerous delusion" (Shadow 87-91).

Satyajit tells Suruchi and Sumita of his decision
to lead a Peace Mission to Ladakh. It will be from Gandhigram. In due time hundreds of villages and cities all over the country will send peace brigades to Ladakh, if necessary. Other countries also will do so, making the response international. Thereby a world moral force will bestride Ladakh. No brute force can prevail against that power, the roused conscience of man. Ultimately India and China will rediscover their heritage of friendship. He says that the Peace Mission will consist of four leaders of Gandhigram and Sumita (Shadow 103-06).

When a labourer in the steel mill dies in an accident, Bhaskar is moved and suggests liberal assistance to the widow. The Labour Officer is surprised at this because he knows Bhaskar to be a ruthless man who will not hesitate to dismiss an indisciplined engineer (Shadow 120-21).

Bhaskar admires Rupa, the Secretary from the Security Unit, who comes to his office twice or thrice a week. She is an Indo-American with no inhibitions. He has told her that India needs women of her type just as India needs Western machines. He believes that women like Rupa may destroy the stability of Indian social life and create chaos but they will give something dynamic, by restoring the youth of the nation (Shadow 122).
Feeling restless, Bhaskar drives out and meets Sumita and she agrees to show him an old temple at the end of the village. He finds out that she and Gandhigram are not as warped in their thinking as he imagined. She tells him that she and Gandhigram will resist Bhaskar and Steeltown but no hate will be involved. She says that hatred is evil and will mean defeat in the moral struggle. Bhaskar realises that he has not yet understood Sumita (Shadow 123-24).

Bhaskar and Sumita enter the door-less deity-less temple. Friezes cover the walls, depicting episodes from mythology. A large sculpture shows a woman sitting astride the knees of a man, her melon-round breast cupped in his hand. Sumita is not conscious of the eroticism. She is not abashed. The sculpture seems to have no meaning for her. Bhaskar does not understand how she could fail to react to the reality of the sculpture (Shadow 126-27). Then he realises:

She was India, wasn't she? The India of Satyajit. The India that had to be transformed.

It wasn't enough to fight Satyajit on the economic front. The battle must touch every facet of living. The machine age as sweep over the country could give no quarter to repressions. (Shadow 127)
Sumita tells Bhaskar of her father's plan for a Peace Mission to Ladakh. He is aghast. When she tells him that she will be a member of the Peace Mission he feels utterly exhausted (Shadow 128).

Rupa brings Bhaskar a file on Satyajit. Bhaskar tells her that, in carrying out its plan for expansion, now rendered urgent by Ladakh, Steeltown may have to not only take Gandhigram in its stride, but also fight Satyajit, because he is the soul of Gandhigram. He declares that Satyajit must be destroyed—the inner man, the man of crystal purity, the man who abhors vice, by making him fall from his moral height, persuading him to declare himself unworthy of leadership. He cites the ascetic in Tagore's story *Attainment* as a precedent (Shadow 130-32).

Rupa decides to tempt Satyajit off his moral pedestal without Bhaskar's knowledge. She goes to the library. She meets Satyajit and offers assistance.

Bhaskar goes to the upcoming Meadow House and sees Sumita assisting the workers. He observes the contradiction in her. She regards machines as the enemy but she is fascinated by the life spark in machines—electricity. He invites her to Steeltown to see the turbogenerators that produce electricity. She is eager to visit Steeltown (Shadow 142-43).
It starts raining and Sumita, who has a horror of lightning and thunder, prepares to go home. He offers to drive her home in his jeep. As lightning flashes, she misses her footing on the steps and falls. As Bhaskar helps her to her feet, she clings to him. A thunderclap sends her crashing into his body. Emotion wells up in him and Sumita perceives it. She has sprained her ankle. He wishes unkindly that she had fractured it so that she would be unfit for the peace march (Shadow 143-46).

Bhaskar helps Sumita into the house. When she sits on a chair, he drops to his knees and takes the mud-stained foot in his hands. She observes the emotion welling up inside him. He observes her flushing in shame. She gets some of her father's clothes for him. Bhaskar comes with some dry clothes for her. He goes inside to change asking her also to change. But she does not change. She calls out to him. He comes and finds that she is still in her wet clothes. She is fascinated to see him in her father's clothes. She tells him that she has been thinking. She asks him to give her some more time (Shadow 146-48).

With a bare week left for the inauguration of Meadow House, Bhaskar cancels the proposed showing of lantern slides of Steeltown and, instead, wants a
cultural programme, which would build a more congenial atmosphere. He suggests song and dance at the folk level, using the talent displayed by the mill workers. However, two high-placed wives of Steeltown, with marriagable daughters to show off to Bhaskar, ruin his plan. On the appointed day Bhaskar, to his dismay, sees no millhands at Meadow House. It is filled with only women from the higher echelons of the social pyramid. At least he refuses to sit behind the wings, preferring to sit with the guests in the back row cross-legged like the others. He is dressed in simple garments like Satyajit, though not homespun (Shadow 151).

Bhaskar is happy that his dream has been realised, though it is a bad beginning. The women in charge have blundered because they did not comprehend his dream but went by the accepted belief that "humble peasants, drawn out of darkness into glare and glamour, would readily let their roots be severed" (Shadow 155). He muses:

Steeltown had the right economic values, after all. India needed the big machines, not spinning wheels. Change, not tradition. Not the heritage of philosophic inanity, but the dynamism of technological progress even with all its inevitable chaos. Yet all that
could be oversimplification. ... He knew the pattern and all the patterns in Steeltown—at every level. ... Insatiety, frustration, intrigue, graft. ... And he, the Chief Engineer, would one day be troubled by the wish to sit atop the pyramid.

Satyajit had no wish to be bigger than he was. Except on the moral plane. There, on that plane, he would be fulfilled.

Was there a woman in Steeltown ready to go on a peace march, the reward of which would be nothing but suffering and possibly death? Would Steeltown even understand such dedication? (Shadow 155-56)

Bhaskar is reassured by the conversation he overhears from the row beside him:

"This is what Gandhi said: '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!' ..."

"No less meaningful are the words that follow: 'I refuse to be blown off my feet, though I do not propose merely to feed on the
ancient cultures of our land; we have to enrich our old traditions with the experience of the new times. But the alien elements in their turn will have to be affected by the spirit of the soil. One dominant culture absorbing the rest—that cannot mark for harmony; that will be an artificiality and forced unity. That we do not want. So Gandhi spoke."

"Satyajit has gone one step further, hasn’t he? He said the other day: 'Steeetown 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.'" (Shadow 156)

The next day Sumita discards her all-white apparel and wears coloured clothes, bangles and slippers. She also adorns her brow with the red mark. Looking into the mirror she thinks she resembles the stone woman in the sculpture in the old temple (Shadow 163).

Talks between India and China are deadlocked and the field lies open to the Peace Mission. However,
permission from India’s Foreign Office is required to enter Ladakh now. Satyajit is busy preparing a memorandum to the authorities in New Delhi. Rupa’s mission to dislodge Satyajit from his high moral pedestal has not made much headway. However, during lunch, when Satyajit tries to heap food on her plate, she remonstrates and grasps his hand. A sudden helplessness comes upon his face. Rupa senses victory (Shadow 164-69).

Most people in Gandhigram are pleased with Sumita changing over to coloured clothes and bangles. The women give her gifts of coloured saris, spinning and weaving for her sake. The girls want to celebrate the change. Sumita suggests a show in Meadow House to which the working women of Steeltown will be invited. Some girls oppose Sumita joining the peace march. Suruchi suggests that, if Sumita is left in charge of the show, she may not join the peace march (Shadow 172-76).

Rupa reports that her mission to Satyajit has failed. But, actually, Satyajit’s armour has been pierced by Rupa. That evening he is very restless. In the night he betrays his vow of brahmacharya again (Shadow 177; 179-84).

Going to Delhi, Satyajit meets the Minister without
Portfolio, who had been close to Gandhiji. The Minister warns Satyajit that his march will be plain suicide. Satyajit is adamant. The Minister finally says that Satyajit's request will be considered when a hundred men and women answer his call. But the Minister still cannot make a promise (Shadow 185-93).

Bhaskar's Private Secretary, Mrs. Mehra, comes to the conclusion that the Chief Engineer is in love with Sumita. She thinks that Sumita will need some orientation. For this she must visit the city. She takes Sumita pillon-riding on her bicycle to Steeltown. Sumita goes to Bhaskar's Private Secretary's room. But Bhaskar is called away. Sumita is disappointed (Shadow 194-202).

Bireswar Basu, Satyajit's life-long friend, opens his eyes to the fact that his ideals have run away so far with him that he has never known the value of his wife or his daughter and that that is why he has neglected his wife and now wants to take his daughter along on the peace march (Shadow 203-06).

Satyajit meets the Press. The pressmen come with bad news on the battlefront. They ask pointed questions on the relevance of Satyajit's idealism in the current circumstances. Satyajit repeats his well-known principles. At the end of the talk Satyajit announces that any number of volunteers may join the Peace Mission (Shadow 207-08).
After a week not even fifty men have answered Satyajit's call for volunteers. Bireswar tells him that only a Gandhi should make a Gandhian gesture. But Satyajit believes that Gandhiji's spirit could still live after Gandhiji. Then Bireswar informs Satyajit that Steeltown is going to take over Gandhigram by invoking the eminent domain principle in the national interest. Satyajit visits Rajghat, the samadhi of Gandhiji. He feels that he should not accept the end of Gandhigram without resistance. Then he decides to use the other Gandhian instrument, which even lesser men could use (Shadow 208–13).

Suruchi is relieved at Satyajit's call to the nation for volunteers for the Peace Mission. She carefully impresses upon Sumita that now it is no longer her father's mission or hers, but the people's. Sumita realises the reality that her place beside Satyajit is gone and that Satyajit too is insignificant in the crowd (Shadow 214).

Suruchi encourages Sumita to put out her best in the show at Meadow House. She suggests a flute duo by Sumita and Bhaskar, like the one she knew of at Santiniketan. The next day there is no mention of the peace march in the newspaper at all. Then the call is forgotten. Bhaskar arrives. He tells Suruchi that Gandhigram is going to face a crisis because of the cold
war with China. He confesses that a telegram has gone to the Government for the take-over of Gandhigram using special powers. Suruchi advises Bhaskar not to tell Sumita since she hardly knows him. She suggests that he work with her for the show at Meadow House. She asks him to take Sumita out and tell her to remain in Gandhigram and not go to Ladakh. She repeats her advice not to tell Sumita of the appeal to the Government until she knows him enough not to misunderstand him (Shadow 215-18).

Bhaskar drives Sumita out. He is angry with Sumita for her Gandhian fixation, nurtured by her father. He feels that only the life force itself could change Sumita. They pass the old temple. Bhaskar stops the jeep and reverses it to the temple. They enter the temple. They stand before the stone sculpture, but this time Sumita's cheeks flush. He pulls her to him and she nestles in his arms (Shadow 219-20).

They drive back, holding hands. He recalls that, in the temple, she gave way to his insistent passion. But, realising her innocence, he withdrew, lest he shock her and violate her reserve. His adventures in America had not touched his core. All along there had been a quest for values that could outlive moments. He realises that he, apostle of modernism, is himself
disillusioned, seeking something beyond. He sees that, if Sumita attains normalcy, she is sure to revolt against Gandhigram, against a philosophy that denied men and women their common birthright of earthy pleasures (Shadow 221-22).

Sumita enters her house, eager to tell her mother, but finds her sad. There is a letter from Delhi about the impending take-over of Gandhigram. Satyajit has decided to fast unto death in protest. Sumita feels that Bhaskar has deceived her. She decides to go to Delhi (Shadow 224-26).

Sumita arrives in Delhi and is received by Bireshwar. Everyone is talking about the unexpected all-out attack by the Chinese. Answering her query, Bireshwar says that Satyajit will fast, not in Delhi, but only in Gandhigram. In any case the problem may be shelved for the present because there is no time for long-term projects till conditions return to normal. The President has declared a state of emergency. The Prime Minister has officially announced that India has been invaded (Shadow 227-28).

Bhaskar's Private Secretary Mrs. Mehra tells him how three children were beaten and driven out of St. Joseph's Convent School, because they were Chinese—the children of the fashionable shoemaker Ah To. The
next morning she informs him that the Chinese shoemaker has been arrested as an alien. She is concerned about his five motherless daughters. They have only an old and helpless ayah. Since there is no other Chinese family she feels that they are responsible for the five girls. Bhaskar tells her to do what she likes (Shadow 234-36).

That evening Bhaskar finds that Mrs. Mehra has installed the five girls in his house. Bhaskar meets the five girls. They do not want to go to school. They offer to help with house work to earn their keep. One of them can cook and two others can do house work. The last two are too young to work. He asks for their names. Since he cannot pronounce them right, he renames them by the names of the fingers of the hand. They agree to the idea. Since they will not go to school, he thinks of a private tutor. Sumita comes to his mind, but he knows that she has gone to Delhi. Then he thinks of Rupa. He rings her up. She agrees (Shadow 236-41).

Sumita stays with Nandini, Bireswar's niece in Delhi. The two girls run a canteen on a platform of the railway station, serving soldiers in transit (Shadow 242-50).

The five Chinese girls bring a gift of flowers to Bhaskar. Forefinger gives him a massage in which she
is an expert. Rupa arrives. Bhaskar tells the girls to pay their tutor with massage. Rupa tells them to leave Bhaskar alone and massage her instead. Their communion deepens every day. At night they wait for his return and serve him. They refuse to eat with him. One day he forces the little twins on to his knees and makes them eat cashew nuts. The other girls also eat now. One day Bhaskar sees the five girls praying to Mao Tse-tung (Shadow 251-57).

Nandini's brother Debes comes to the canteen. He wants to take Sumita out and show her the sights of Delhi. Sumita says that she cannot leave the canteen to be managed by Nandini alone. He leaves. An hour later Debes returns with his mother. They learn that he has been given leave for ten days before going to the front. He wants his mother to help Nandini while he shows Sumita the sights of Delhi. Debes drives Sumita round on his scooter (Shadow 258-67).

One day Great-Uncle's grandson, who has fled to Steeltown, comes to Gandhigram, meets the rebellious girl Jhanak, his former love, tells her of an English film he saw, and invites her to an outing the next day. Jhanak goes out the next day and sees a film in the company of the boy. She also speaks publicly of it in the village. The council could do nothing with her. They leave her to Suruchi. She realises that Jhanak
is, unconsciously, the spirit of the age, just as Satyajit is, consciously, the spirit of another age, in part long gone, in part unborn. Suruchi decides not to stop Jhanak who has courage (Shadow 268-74).

Bhaskar speaks to Rupa about the five children praying to Mao Tse-tung. She explains that they do what they have been taught from infancy. She says that, one day, he will be more to these children than Mao Tse-tung. Rupa says that she would like to adopt the twins. Bhaskar now understands Satyajit, at least some of the things he stands for. Rupa tells him that Middle Finger has changed her name on the cover of all her exercises to Erh-ku Roy. She wants to go to school again. She is confident that, as Erh-ku Roy, she will not be sneered at in school. Bhaskar now recalls that every evening Middle Finger waits for him at the gate and gets into the car for the short drive and nestles against him (Shadow 283-85).

Bhaskar is restless and decides to meet Sumita's mother. He takes Erh-ku with him. Suruchi is in a class room. Bhaskar introduces Erh-ku to Suruchi, who leads her inside the room for a spinning lesson. Coming out, she leads Bhaskar to a patch of grass. He pleads with her to redeem Steeltown with the cleansing spirit of Gandhigram. She reveals that the separating walls
are about to fall, much to her joy. She tells him the story of Jhanak's adventure and calls the girl over. She tells Jhanak that she can go to Steeltown at will and she hopes that others will soon follow. Suruchi is prepared to disagree with the village council as well as Satyajit (Shadow 236-38).

Suruchi says that an ascetic woman is a contradiction in terms and that it has taken her years to realise that plain truth. Bhaskar says that he and Suruchi seem to be on the same side in this combat. But she says that she has to be against him too, in a three-cornered fight (Shadow 289-90).

Erh-ku comes out with a spinning wheel which has been gifted to her by the school. Bhaskar takes her to his bungalow. Entering his bedroom, he is amazed to see Rupa face up in her panties, receiving a message. Now Bhaskar understands the scent on his bed—a woman scent. Rupa comes out of the bathroom fully dressed. She prepares to change the sheets but Bhaskar stops her. She understands. Bhaskar's reverie is broken by the youngest girl's call to play—throwing her in the air—followed by the other twin's demand to make faces. Bhaskar obliges both of them (Shadow 290-93).

Satyajit meets the Dalai Lama in his bungalow. The Dalai Lama asks him many questions about Gandhiji. He
is sure that, if Gandhiji had been alive, he would have launched a non-violent movement for the liberation of the Tibetan people. He thinks that, with the Ladakh experience, India will understand better the sufferings of the people of Tibet. Leaving after two weeks, Satyajit hears only bad news from Bireswar (Shadow 294-97).

Nandini speaks lightly of love—that there are several false starts until one day a terrific wave comes and sweeps one on its crest, helpless. She asserts that any love is worthwhile till the terrific wave comes. Sumita recalls how, at the age of fourteen, she was miserable because her breasts started growing. She remembers her eighteenth birthday. Suruchi was thinking of Sumita's marriage. Satyajit was not keen, unless some boy with a dedication similar to Sumita's was available. Sumita herself did not want to marry at all. Now, after several experiences and Nandini's clarification, Sumita's dedication is gone, leaving a vacuum (Shadow 307-11).

Rupa takes the five children to the circus one day. After a few items, Rupa excuses herself, leaving the children in the care of the ayah. She goes to Bhaskar's bungalow. They talk. She offers herself to him, content to be a moment in his life (Shadow 313-20).
On the thirtieth day of their invasion the Chinese proclaim a ceasefire. With the national emergency ended, Satyajit turns to his own battle with Steeltown (Shadow 324-26).

Ah To has written from prison that he wishes to leave for China with his children. They will now happily return to their homeland (Shadow 327).

Mrs. Mehra foresees the return of Sumita from Delhi and wishes to protect Rupa. She mentions an advertisement for the selection of air hostesses for Air India. Rupa says that it is too late. But Mrs. Mehra says that Rupa has been called for an interview. She reveals that she sent an application in Rupa's name. Now she prepares a letter announcing that Rupa will attend the interview and gets her to sign it. After Mrs. Mehra leaves, Rupa prepares a letter of resignation. She leaves Steel House (Shadow 327-30).

Rupa wants to leave before the children of Ah To leave the next day. As she pedals away, tears flow down her cheeks. Suddenly she wonders why she should not leave that day itself. She goes to the bungalow. She tells the children that their father will come the next day and take them to China. Erh-ku breaks down utterly. The spinning wheel she brought as a gift from Gandhigram was used by Bhaskar for half an hour everyday.
When she wished to go back to school, Bhaskar took her and saw several girls crowd up to her enquiring after her sisters. Rupa eats with the children. She then receives a last massage. She takes one of Bhaskar's pipes as a memento. All the children give her small gifts. One of them offers a steel pin from her hair. Rupa leaves on her bicycle (Shadow 330-35).

Six days after the ceasefire, Satyajit returns to Gandhigram with Sumita. His fast-unti-death has already been proclaimed in the newspapers. It is proposed that, instead of Satyajit alone, the whole Council of Five undertake the fast. Satyajit agrees that they will do so one by one (Shadow 337-40).

Satyajit begins his fast, Sumita chanting beside him. Bireswar arrives by car and says an alternate site has been found for Gandhigram. Satyajit rejects the proposal out of hand. He swears by the challenge: "'the spinning wheel against the steel mill!'" (Shadow 341-43).

Bhaskar is sad that Rupa did not take leave of him. When Ah To arrives to take his children home they stand voiceless, heads bowed. Ah To perceives their attachment to Bhaskar. Erh-ku wants to stay on with Bhaskar. In the next three days Erh-ku spends as much time with Bhaskar as possible. Bhaskar is humbled by the love of the children (Shadow 347-49).
Before their departure, the children kneel before Bhaskar, holding offerings of flowers—as they used to do before Mao Tse-tung. Erh-ku's arms go round Bhaskar and she sobs till Bhaskar's eyes smart. The children leave with their luggage, including Erh-ku's spinning wheel (Shadow 350).

On the third day of his fast, Satyajit suffers fits of nausea. The mill workers are agitated over the fast. The press carries reports of mass meetings, impassioned speeches. The workers gather and shout slogans. Scores of millhands move to Gandhigram for news of Satyajit's health. There is perfect intermingling and brotherhood. The fast is seventeen days old. Suruchi continues to give Satyajit salt and water (Shadow 350-53).

There is a call for a torchlight procession by the millhands. Mrs. Mehra warns of a possible attack on Bhaskar's bungalow. He says that he will not be there. There is a fear of a strike. The next day, as the procession is about to start from Meadow House, Bhaskar arrives there. He seeks permission to join them. He proposes that they march to the village and ask Satyajit to end his fast at once. He explains that the workers of Steeltown have expressed their united will and that will must prevail. He assures that Gandhigram will stand and the expansion project will be altered (Shadow 354-55).
Mrs. Mehra tells Bhaskar to lead the procession. Everyone else says so. When he reaches the front of the procession, someone gives him a torch to hold. He asks Mrs. Mehra to send word to Gandhigram in advance. It is done. Sumita comes with a hurricane lamp to meet the procession. Both Bhaskar and Sumita are happy. He gives her the torch and asks her to lead them and he takes the lantern from her. The people shout victory to both Satyajit and the CR (Shadow 356-58).

The ordeal of change spares practically no one in Shadow from Ladakh. Bhaskar has to learn to humble himself before the pristine purity of Sumita whom he cannot summon as he summons Rupa. When she switches over to coloured saris he longs to see her in white as before. The impetuous American lover is all caution and restraint when alone with Sumita.

Sumita is partly blind to reality because of her father fixation. But, when she awakens to reality, she changes fast. The alacrity with which she switches over to coloured saris is quite remarkable. Equally remarkable is her sliding back to white when going to Delhi to join her father.

Satyajit himself undergoes a good deal of change in the course of the novel, thanks to Bireswar and Rupa. Satyajit sees himself for what he is and comes to terms
with what he sees. Yet he cannot betray Gandhigram and so he must fast unto death to save it.

Now it is Bhaskar's turn to change some more. The process started in him a long time ago with the construction of Meadow House. The mutation is perfected by the five Chinese children whom he houses temporarily. He now knows what love and devotion are. He can now bend and humble himself. He can change.

Suruchi is changeless. She has just accommodated her husband's every whim since their marriage. But her heart has always remained hers. She can look through Satyajit's heart and at his weaknesses but she will not speak of them or expose them. She is an individual, but she prefers to remain a traditional wife, because, if she opts to exercise her individual personality, Satyajit will go to pieces.

Reizada, in "Bhabani Bhattacharya: Novelist of Social Ferment," says that, in Shadow from Ladakh, Bhattacharya presents his vision of the regeneration of India from the ideological point of view. By using the device of dialectics of antithesis, he juxtaposes the conflicting ideals of soul power versus armed power and village economy versus large scale industrialization to explore their
relative value in the Indian context in the background of the unprovoked Chinese aggression on Ladakh in 1962. (164)

In "Nationalism in Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers! and Shadow from Ladakh," Rani says, "Shadow from Ladakh takes a pragmatic view of the evolving Indian society right from the stage of independence to the stage of the Chinese aggression" (92). Desai says, the limitation of the Gandhian ideal of brahmacharya is feelingly brought home in the relationship of Satyajit and his wife, Suruchi and later in the open rebellion of Jhanak, a buxom girl from Gandhigram, whom ultimately Suruchi defends and protects. The abnormality of the younger generation sticking to the slightly outmoded Gandhian discipline is symbolised in the father-fixation of Sumitha [sic], who, a devout follower of Satyajitism, goes to Delhi barefoot and clad in white. Her orientation to modernism, that is to Bhaskar, the apostle of science and technology, forms the main line of the story. . . . (132)

Susheel Kumar Sharma, in "Bhabani Bhattacharya's Shadow from Ladakh: A Plea for Syntagmatic Relationship," says that the novel is "a plea for syntagmatic relationship
between spiritualism and materialism" (55).

In "Coming to Terms with Gandhi: Shadow from Ladakh," Jasbir Jain says:

The voluptuous presence of Rupa, the Indo-American typist from Steel house, awakens his [Satyajit's] dormant desires and compels him into a relationship with his wife, Suruchi. This forces on him the realization that though he is a Gandhian, he is not a Gandhi. He is merely the shadow of Gandhi and while trying to cling to the form, he is losing his hold of the substance. (21)

In "Bhattacharya's Shadow from Ladakh: A Study," Ramesh K. Srivastava says, "Gandhi's truth and non-violence which could stand well against the British fell ineffectively before the Chinese aggression. The Chinese invasion was virtually the death-knell of Gandhian values" (241). In "Shadow from Ladakh: A Critical View Point," Krishna Rao says:

The neo-Chinese imperialism is not the same as the old British colonialism. It is a new danger that compels us to seek new weapons to fight but not resort to the same old Gandhian technique of non-violence; for, the values of the yellow race are quite different
from those of the Whites, Blacks and Browns. India's unique response to this Himalayan challenge provides the aesthetic motivation to Bhattacharya whose creative sensibility transforms the grim struggle into a drama of tradition versus modernity, Gandhian economics versus Western technology, idealism versus pragmatism and finally the intellectual and emotional integration of a nation on the march. (78)
Note

\(^1\) All subsequent references to Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh* are indicated by *Shadow*, followed by the number(s) of the relevant page(s), the text used being the Hind-Orient Paperbacks edition of 1966.