Chapter 5

SYNTHEISISING ENCOUNTERS
Bhabani Bhattacharya focused upon the great Indian tradition of synthesis of diverse and differing aspects, perspectives and cultures in his novels. His novels creatively represent in miniature the theme of integration originated from the compromise between the diverse aspects of life. It is worth to mention that the essential theme of his fictional writings is that of integration: integration of the old and the new, of the real and the ideal, of faith and skepticism, of asceticism and aestheticism, of East and West.

In its ordinary and broad sense, the term ‘integration’ may mean, as it does, merely the joining together of disparate things or ideas, but in relation to Bhattacharya’s novels ‘integration’ does strictly mean the joining together and reconciliation of opposites, of opposed values, for achieving the goal of common good. On one hand, in Bhattacharya’s novels, the reader comes face-to-face with orthodoxy and obscurantism and a number of other cramping phenomena that are the necessary concomitants of a tradition-bound society. On the other hand, one also encounters in them various forces that operate against long-entrenched socio-political, economic, religious and cultural norms.

The process of blending between two divergent ideals started in India during the British Empire. The cultural tradition of India, imbued with many socio-religious, economic and philosophical backgrounds, has an excellent integration. The impact of the colonial rule is reflected in life, literature and culture. Bhattacharya has witnessed the colonial and post-colonial situation in India. His
writings have been greatly influenced by the political and social condition during the independent and post-independent India, which reflects a panoramic view of India’s socio-cultural life. Bhattacharya, what Cromwell says, is a multi, cultural person who uniquely equipped to mediate between several groups in a culturally diverse world [123].

The synthesis of the traditional and modernity is the most noticeable feature of Bhattacharya’s writings. K. R. Chandrasekharan observes:

With his progressive ideas and his vision of a glorious future, he has also great admiration for the spiritual and cultural heritage of the country. Like the great men whom he admired, particularly Tagore and Gandhi, he is also a builder of bridges between the present and past [124].

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s first novel, *So Many Hungers*, chiefly portrays the realistic picture of Indian rural life under the British rule and its subsequent emergence as the crux of the Indian freedom movement. The novel sets in a corner of Bengal. The peaceful village is suddenly thrown into a political revolution, deeply under the influence of Gandhian movement. It is noteworthy to mention in this context is that in the colonial rule corruption and greed slowly but steadily crept into the political system and placidity is mere deceptive façade. The presence of the West is not presented in the form of industrialization as in his novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, but through the suppression
imposed by the alien government, which operates perversely, and the rampant corruption in the public servants.

The unsympathetic attitude of the foreign rulers, the greedy practices of the merchants, and dishonesty in the public servants resulted in utter chaos in Indian society in general, in Indian villages in particular. The common man’s life took a batter and bore the brunt of the political and societal chaos.

All sections of society suffer the devastating effects of the Western presence. The grain produced by the peasants is carried to huge rice mills located in the cities. In turn, the polished rice reaches the villages through greed merchants and is sold at higher price. The villagers cannot afford to buy rice at this price. Fishermen, who were living with dignity in their occupation, turned to land as the merciless police damaged their fishing boats to stop Japan from invading. As result, an artificial famine dawned upon in the villages, forcing the villagers to migrate to the city to survive. The countryside is thus exploited by the rulers. In So Many Hungers, the Bengal famine is more than thus a background; it is the very heart of the book [125].

Police who are supposed to take care of people and justice become subjective and become a source of torture to the peasants. The British Government imposes a ban on the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. One of the peasants of the village starts to propagate revolutionary views against the colonial rulers. The police descend on Baruni to stop this proliferation. The villagers are
conversant with the corrupt practices of the police and how they demand bribes from the innocent people.

Devata gives the villagers inspiration and guidance when they are in difficulties. When they join the national movement, he advises them to be non-violent. Early in the novel, sometime after Rahoul’s first visit to Baruni, Devata himself is arrested and taken to prison.

Indian society comprises of countless castes, creeds, beliefs and geographical, religious variations. The maintenance of this diversity with their differences, in one way, helped the British to strengthen their hold over India. They did not involve in any large scale social and religious reformation in the country, which gave them the title of being non-interfering in a colony. The administrative set-up established by the British is flawed with its officers being negligent in function due to the vastness of the country. By the time the freedom struggle was at its peak, corruption was high and rampant in every field of public life. It should be noted that how deterioration in the society was one of the negative results of the alien administrative system.

The novel unequivocally reveals the novelist’s belief that life is compromise [126]. People with divergent attitudes can come together to forge an integrated mode of life. The family of Samarendra symbolizes the idea of integration despite the differences. The male members of the family have strikingly different natures and views on life. Devata is totally dissimilar from Samarendra Basu and nobody can easily believe that he is his father. Similarly, Rahoul and Kunal
are absolutely different from him. And yet there is no clash among these four members, representing the three different stages of life—Devata representing old age, Samarendra middle age, and Rahoul and Kunal youth. In spite of their different perspectives, they do not censure and detest each other. Devata leads an austere life in a Baruni, whereas his son and grandsons riches.

The National movement gathered momentum and force in a large scale and it included the young and the old, the high-born and the low-born, man and woman, in an unprecedented way. The people of Baruni threw their orthodoxy to winds and joined hands in the mass upsurge. The movement revolutionizes the lives of even women.

*So Many Huners* presents the consequences of the East-West political encounter in so far as it impacted the attitudes of the people and their morals. Steady decadence set in in every walk of the Indian society. The obstinacy, ruthlessness and exploitation that were practiced by the police and the merchants like Samarendra Basu subsequently changed the traditions and customs practices by even women.

Rahoul, the elder son of Samarendra Basu, is an alumnus of Cambridge University. He is a complete opposite of his father, who is a selfish business man. Against the wishes of his father who wanted Rahoul to become a scientist, Rahoul develops an insight into the tragic suffering of the poor in the villages under the colonial rule. So Rahoul joins the National movement foregoing a job in the government.
Western influences sneak slowly into the attitudes of the Indians and the external aspects of life get modernized. This change in the society due to Westernization inevitably represent the internal change in the outlook of the Indians. Even Rahoul cannot evade from this impact. The external pleasures of the Western culture attract the average Indian who do not strongly believe in his tradition.

Rahoul’s stay in Cambridge University made him westernized in his appearance and food habits. Rahoul develops a habit of going to clubs exclusively established for Indians. He also drinks whisky like a European. He is fond of the Western music and dance. With respect to the way of dressing, there is a complete metamorphosis. His dress conforms to the western standards as he wears a suit adding to his self-esteem. He also takes his wife to the hotels and encourages her to wear sari more attractively, wishing to see her in Western or modern clothes.

Rahoul’s return after graduating in Cambridge is a significant incident in the novel. His contact with two cultures and civilizations grows his concern for his own identity. Though his homecoming does not form a central incident in the plot, it obviously illustrates the interaction between two divergent cultures.

After returning from Cambridge, he continues his research on cosmic rays. He is blessed with a daughter and leads a happy life. He, sometimes, wonders at age old custom in India. The harmonious relationship between Devata and Kajoli’s family illustrates Bhattacharya’s idea of synthesis. Devata is an outsider in the family
and there is a great gap between his family and Kajoli’s. Devata is highly educated while Kajoli is a peasant girl. The two have entirely different ideas and values. This is the reason why Rahoul feels flustered and upset when Rahoul arrives at Kajoli’s house with Devata, Kajoli receives them in a traditional way, removing his shoes. She pours cold water on the feet to wash off dust. Rahoul is embarrassed at this, but Devata tells him she is a “well-bred peasant girl with a legacy of manners as old as India” (SMH 28).

In spite of staying in England for a long time, Rahoul is not detached from the soul of India. His relation with the innocent people of the village is strong. His affection and sympathy for them results in his offering the people food and shelter during the Bengal famine. He starts a relief center to feed the destitute. He fights for them and even goes to jail. He represents the class of foreign educated patriotic Indians. He is found to be playing different roles. Even though he is foreign educated, he is benignant to mitigate the suffering of the people.

The strong desire of Rahoul is to protect the self-esteem of the freedom fighters. As a staunch nationalist, he does not want to withstand the hypocrisy of the British rulers. Though he faces difficulties from the Government, his heart is with the innocent people of Bengal suffering untold agony due to the manmade famine.

The novelist artistically articulates his faith that there can be true understanding among different classes of society. He showed through the characters of Devata, Rahoul and Kajoli that the class
barriers can be eliminated if people show genuine kindness for each other. The closing of gap among the classes certainly brings about happiness and the expansion of the self. The novelist unambiguously shows Rahoul mixing well with the Kajoli’s family. This shows integration of two different classes-an educated scientist and the illiterate village folk. Curiously enough, Rahoul becomes an integral part of the Kajoli’s family and addresses Kajoli’s mother as ‘mother’.

The novelist describes the scene thus:

Mother! The word had slipped his tongue without thought. Happiness came upon him that he had broken out of his class sophistication and called a simple peasant woman mother. What was there in this woman of a Bengal village, not unlike others of kind, that he had the urge to call her mother? The peasant mother had tears in her eyes because of his kindness (SMH 99-100).

The original desire of this foreign educated young man is to throw in his lot with the people struggling for freedom and self-respect. He is a staunch nationalist and cannot forget the hypocrisy of the foreign rulers. He faces difficulties from the Government. His heart is with the people of country fighting for their freedom and particularly with the people of rural Bengal suffering untold agony because of an artificial famine.

The new system of education introduced by the British changes the way of thinking of the Indians. It totally adapted the shape of public opinion and the mode of expression. The system of education is
seen as a major cultural influence that ushered in that age. The Indian middle class population was greatly influenced by new system of education. The most significant change because of this system is the creation of upper middle class in the Indian society.

All sections of the society welcomed the new system of education as it appeared to open new employment opportunities. The early batches of people that were educated were appointed in the government services lucratively. The new education took the new generation farther away from age-old Indian traditions and culture as it is evident from Bhattacharya’s first novel to the latest. It is more visible in his later novel *Music for Mohini*. Unfortunately, this system made men less sentimental and more pragmatic, and sometimes self-centered. The English education system also made some of the characters rebellious.

There is a degree of modern thinking and westernization attained through education which changes the mode of life of the people in the country, as they come to question the validity of old practices like dowry, insistence on horoscopes etc. If education for men brings such radical changes in society it has even more far-reaching effects on women. There are references to girls being educated in his novels.

An analysis of the four male characters of the novel, Devata, Samarendra, Rahoul and Kunal clearly shows that even though they are blood relations, they are diametrically opposite to each other excepting Rahoul and Devata, who share similar lofty ideals. But they
never despise one another. These four major characters exemplify that life is compromise and one should live life peacefully despite the differences of attitudes. In fact, Bhattacharya succeeds in portraying them as an integrated family.

Bhattacharya’s second novel, *Music for Mohini*, presents the conflicting characteristics of the Indian heritage and Western culture. The novel deals with the theme of synthesis in *Music for Mohini* at several levels of plot, characterization and view of life. R. S. Singh says, “The plot of the novel offers contrast between city and village, doctor and vaidya, education and superstition, selflessness and cooperation” [127].

The two conflicting values are shown up in direct contrast with each other but as the novel progresses the conflict becomes less severe, ultimately, to reach the stage of reconciliation and synthesis. On one hand, The Old Mother, the grandfather of Sudha, Kabiraj have faith in old values. On the other, Jayadev, Harindra, Mohini, the Professor and Sudha believe in the modern values and attitudes. In the beginning, the conflict is fierce, then the adjustment between the old and the new ideas is represented by the Professor and the Old Mother.

The novelist portrays two characters in clash with each other, later on, in harmony with each other. The novelist does not show either of the two characters yielding to the other. Regarding the theme of the novel, G. Rai points out:
The central theme of the novel is the tie or tussle between orthodoxy and modernity which remains a glaring problem in Indian Society even today. The rural-urban clash is an important feature of the novel. The traditional ways of lie stand in sharp conflict with those if modern ways [128].

The contrast between city and village has been elaborated on many occasions. It refers to both the physical appearance of village and city and also to the different attitudes of the people. Bhattacharya utilizes every opportunity to comment upon their respective pleasures. The novel is a combination of opposite cultures of the city Calcutta and the village Behula in Bengal. It is a mixture of two cultures, a friction of the East and the West. While accompanying Mohini on her journey to Behula after marriage, Heeralal is impressed by the village scenery:

The village had sights and smells and a silence denied to hustling cities....feeling and holding Mother Earth with their hands gave them strength and pleasure. The simple country folk had not heard of modern city toys, telephone, radio, but their luxuries satisfied all the senses (MFM 76). Mohini is a young girl enjoying her eventful life by playing and fighting with her brother Heeralal. The novelist describes her life before marriage thus:

With a jump she was on her feet. She grabbed her sarcastic Brother, and shook him soundly. She pulled his
snub nose. “Tongue clever! Am I not your elder? Bad enough that you so often call me Mohini and not Didi, Elder sister”
She swept back a loop of hair, damping her brow. “You should knock your head on my feet at every sunup and bet my blessing”
“All right, then: Didi, Didi, Didi pleased? Satisfied?
Hoon! How fitly old Mother calls you image of golden grace! Huh!” (MFM 6).

Mohini’s father is an educated man with modern views. He does not support blind beliefs and superstitions. He does not believe in orthodox views and horoscopes. Though he respects his old mother, he does not concede to her superstitious views as she is a staunch pillar of orthodox views. Shyamala Rao rightly says:

A sincere attempt has been made in the representation of the conflict between old values and modern ones as indicated by the old mother and Mohini respectively. The need for a change of social outlook and re-orientation of social values is Bhattacharya’s major concern [129].

As one can easily identify, Mohini’s father stands for Western concepts of liberty of thought, reason and innovation. Therefore, he condemns the rampant evil religious practices of the Hindu society. It is protest against the Hindus who have forgotten their true religious concepts. It is a criticism against a society where religion is replaced
by ritualism and blind faith. Through the character of The Professor, the novelist attempts to reform several serious social evils.

The novelist exposes the way of thinking of Western educated people and how they deny the age-old practices, questioning their validity. Bhattacharya shows the new perspectives of educated people on social institutions such as marriage. The concept of love has come to occupy the minds of the westernized as an individual affair and no more a concern of the family endowed with a certain religious sanctity. Personal fulfillment has become more important than family welfare.

Mohini is pulled toward the modern ideas of love and marriage. She feels elated when Somir, a handsome boy of her age, praises her beauty and sweet tone. She has some other admirers, Ananda and Arun. She considers love as a sweet memory in life. She curiously watches Reba, one of her classmates, who always receives love letters from her boyfriends. She also takes interest in the love affair between a house maid and a snake charmer. All this leads to the development of interest in Mohini for a boyfriend as a lover. She also fancies of going to a movie with her boyfriend. And when she does, she feels very thrilled to watch a movie without her father and Old Mother.

When Somir, her boyfriend, finds her in the theatre, she is invited to the box to sit by him. She feels excited to talk about the film and the other films till the lights go off. When lights go off, Mohini, with her face blushed in the darkness, stares ahead, twisting handkerchief with trembling fingers. Somir takes her hand and
presses a little. He tries to kiss her, but she curbs it smoothly. In her anxiety and shock, she remembers the novel *The Poisoned Kiss*.

This incident marks the theme of cultural pollution. The novelist is very successful in describing the results of the conflict between two divergent cultures. The Western influences and practices, such as watching films in the theatres, travelling by cars, smoking cigarettes, are depicted as new tendencies in the lives of Indians. People begin to consider falling in love is a great fulfilment. In *Music for Mohini*, there are other characters who are under the negative impact of Westernization.

Reba is one such free minded girl who finds bliss in managing many boys as her lovers. She feels exalted as she receives love letters from them. She says, “I get a letter almost every day, don’t I? Almost.” (MFM 23). Mohini considers Reba lucky to have many lovers. This kind of thinking is foreign to Indians, and is surely an impact of Western culture.

The Professor, in spite of being a well-educated man, bends before foolish customs and traditions and arranges her marriage as per the Indian culture. Bhattacharya forcefully points out the hypocrisy in the age-old traditions and their shortcomings. According to him, all the malpractices are invented to make women weak and reduce women slaves to men. One can see the novelist struggling to voice his protest against dowry system and blind faith in horoscopes. Mohini is the mouth piece of the novelist as she questions her father:

In our Hindu society a maid is addressed as Lakshmi, the
gracious goddess. Married, she walks into her new house
hold proud as the Devi. Vulgar minds have cast pollution
upon the old ways. If we must be Old-fashioned, why
don’t we go all the ways back to ancient times?
Swayamvara! (MFM 48).

The Old Mother asks the Professor to find a match for Mohini.
As an ardent believer in astrology, she insists on the matching of the
horoscopes before the marriage is fixed up. But the Professor, an
educated man, regards this idea as a joke. The Father says, “There’s
to be a cultural synthesis of a horoscope and a microscope” (MFM
52). Though the Father says so jokingly, it may well be Bhattacharya’s
own view.

The Professor is against the traditional methods of bride-
showing. Yet, he reluctantly agrees. Some prospective grooms treat
Mohini as a commodity and show no consideration for her feelings.
Mohini is found to have gulped down her tears of shame. Her father
finds it hard to bear it all. He grows furious and bursts out. His
behaviour in the context may suggest Bhabani Bhattacharya’s own
aversion to such disgusting practices prevailing in the society of his
time.

Mohini is one of the great exponents of Westernization. She
grew up in the city and was under the Western influence. She is a
radio artist and she wants to become a film artist. She has many
western habits such as reading novels, watching films, traveling by
car. She desires to be flattered by boys, to be loved and moved with
them. She never saw countryside and does not even expect to go to a village. Ironically, a match from village turns to marriage as the horoscopes meet. The Old Mother forces her to accept the alliance. She agrees to marry Jayadev. Nevertheless, she is attracted to Jayadev for his handsomeness. When the Professor inquires about her decision to marry a man from a remote village, she says, “Good to live in Bengal village, the space, the clean air to breath, the land covered with greenery, Lovely. What have we here in the city? Din, dust, hustle, suffocation” (MFM 53).

Her father advises Mohini, “Space and emptiness could be more suffocating than din, dust and hustle unless you have a mental preparation (MFM 53).

It is not surprising to think that Bhabani Bhattacharya’s passion for synthesis is responsible for Mohini’s decision in the matter more than anything else. After marriage, Mohini accompanies him to the Big House of huge traditions and convictions. Her journey, first in a train and then in a bullock cart and a palanquin, is symbolic of her change from the urban to the rural environment.

As a new bride, Mohini goes to Behula with great expectations. Mohini feels ‘lonely within’ (MFM 95) in the busy Big Behula house because she is not accustomed to village background. She even tells Rooplekha, “City and village are apart. Perhaps they should stay apart: perhaps this inter-marriage is wrong. We girls suffer, not the man” (MFM 93).

Mohini falls into a torturous state of loneliness and isolation.
Yet she shows great fortitude and prepares herself to make adjustment with the stern rules and traditions of the Big House. K. R. S. Iyenger comments on Mohini’s transformation:

She throws herself into new tasks, and she strikes roots into the soil of Behula. The strain is nothing, what matters is the sense of fulfilment alone. She is thus able to establish rapport with her husband readily furthering the causes so dear to him [130].

Mohini is a complete misfit at Behula. Women ridicule her modern clothes. They and her mother-in-law belong to a world older than that of the Old Mother. Even the Old Mother is shocked by the old ways strictly observed at the Big House. When Mohini wears a sari of silk, the mother-in-law tells her that a plain cotton one woven in village handloom is more becoming than mill-made muslin and that there is dignity in simplicity and quietness. But Mohini is adaptable. The rebel in her gets softened as time passes. It is natural that she realizes, ‘this life is my own free choice. There is no other way’ (MFM 109). The novelist writes:

The village offers a happy synthesis. In it lived the various caste groups Brahmins, near-Brahmins, the professional castes- blacksmith, barber, washerman, milkman-and the largest group of all the peasants, both Hindu and Muslim (MFM 120).

Jayadev is an ambitious man, busy with his research work and public service. He spends more time with the public than with her
wife. His aim to develop his backward people lends to neglect Mohini. She expects his nearness but his aloofness makes her loneliness and gloomy. Her heart is full of love for her husband and she wants to be admired by him in turn. She feels suffocated and lovelorn and finds life unbearable in the Big House. The unexpected behavior of her husband makes Mohini, a girl from city, annoyed and she pushes herself into deep gloom. One day she puts on a blue Banaras silk sari, ornaments and comes to Jayadev and she suddenly bursts, “I hunger for thy love. Remember this Sari? I wore it for my Flower-bed night. Pearl goes well with my complexion nah? I – I do not exist for you?” (MFM 152).

This silent struggle between Mohini and Jayadev indicates an encounter between the cultures of the east and the west. K. K. Sharma remarks:

The marriage between Jayadev and Mohini symbolizes the union of asceticism and aestheticism. Jayadev is an embodiment of ascetic qualities; while Mohini is an incarnation of the aesthetic and emotional side of human life [131].

Jayadev, though well-educated, is not completely western-minded. He prefers to live in the countryside and dedicate his life to improve the living conditions of the village. He is a combination of old and new, as he loves traditions but fights against orthodoxy. Throughout the novel, he is seen working hard to eradicate the anomalies in the society. He aims to remove the defects in his own
culture. He feels that his culture is great and tries to revive the glory of the Indian culture and reform the society and religion and to bring about improvement in every field of life. Rooplekha says about him:

A strange mixture of the old and new is he, my brother. Self-divided, as it were, if you get me. We’ve known him as a scholar in philosophies of the East and the West, but of late he seems to have become more, much more (MFM 113).

The Western concepts such as liberty and equality inspire him to remove the shortcoming of our culture. Western education provides him scope to think about the taboos deep-rooted in Indian society. He fights against orthodoxy, horoscopes and astrology. He dares to protest against his mother, who takes Mohini to the village shrine and compel her to offer blood from her bosom to Virgin Goddess. Believing in the goodness of Indian culture, he tries to revive the glory of the Indian culture, reform the society and religion and bring about change in every walk of life in the village.

Music for Mohini displays a variety of philosophical or conceptual integrations. As the action of the novel takes place in free India the novelist writes in it about many other freedoms besides political freedom. Jayadev thinks:

India was on the verge of freedom: a new page of world history was writing itself. The political implications were visible to all but not the social problems. What was political liberty worth to the common man if it was not
part of a renascence in social life? (MFM 67).

Jayadev also wants Mohini to realize that ‘our political freedom is worth little without social uplift’ (MFM 127). It is for this reason that Jayadev works for social uplift at the cost of paying adequate attention to his wife. He does a lot for the uplift of women in Behula. He opens a school for adults and women. He convinces Mohini to serve the village as teacher to play her role in improvement of the village. He says:

If we win, as we must, Behula will be an example for all Bengal. In this difficult undertaking you too, Mohini, have your part. To start with, the women of Behula must be taught how to read and write. They need the first elements of knowledge (MFM 156).

Jayadev has in his character a fusion of various other contrasted contexts needing synthesis. He is not only for a compromise between past and present, ‘union of today with yesterday’ (MFM 78) but also that between past and future. He wants people to ‘look back that you may look forward’ (MFM 68) Jayadev’s father-in-law says about Jayadev’s ‘broad outlook’ and vision and ‘enlightened mind and wide sympathies’ which ‘could never make his wife unhappy’ (MFM 130).  

Jayadev is also for a synthesis between science and tradition as he is for the fusion between horoscope and microscope. In its compromise between East and West, *Music for Mohini* approaches a work of fiction dealing with the theme of East-West encounter. Jayadev is a dreamer whose eyes are set on taking the best out of
both the east and the west. He shares this view with his friend Harindra. The message of compromise implies that one-sided approach is erroneous. K. K. Sharma points out:

Jayadev is deeply interested in the synthesis of intellect and emotion, mind and heart, asceticism and aestheticism. Thus his great desire and effort is to see Mohini an embodiment of intellectualism and aestheticism by making her develop in her Maitreyi and Gargi – the two greatest intellectual women of ancient India [132].

Rooplekha’s marriage with a Calcutta-based surgeon and Mohini’s with a University educated visionary scholar living in a village in preference to leading an academic life in a city are symbolic of the union between the two modes of life [133].

Like Mohini, Rooplekha has to adjust herself in a city because born and bred in the village, she was unable to adopt herself to the modern city life after her marriage but she tries her best to make an adjustment with new life. It is a well-known fact that an Indian woman faces an entire change in her life after marriage because she has to adopt the culture, tradition and customs of her spouse’s family. Rooplekha expresses her feelings in such words,

You are city-bred, village-wed. I am village-bred, city-wed.

We share one common lot: we have been pulled up by the roots. A city has as little mercy for an alien as the country, no more, no less. Years it was before I could fit
Out of a clash between city and village is born a philosophy of compromise which is preached by Jayadev and also his sister, Rooplekha. She too comments, “a city has as little mercy for an alien as the country” (MFM 92). Being village-bred and city-wed she can fit in the city life. Rooplekha exhorts her that the marriage between city and village or village and city serve as ‘a bridge between two banks of a river’ (MFM 93). She stressed the need for a compromise between the rural and the urban attitudes to life.

Mohini does not agree with the statement of Rooplekha that city is cruel. She defends that life of city of Calcutta as so knowing and reasonable. The novelist shows that dwellers of particular place commonly like it and defend it. Rooplekha understands the feelings of Mohini and tries to convey her opinion that a woman has to compromise to the new situations after her marriage in the country of age old traditions. She reminds the responsibilities of a married woman when she says:

We who’re so we serve some real purpose. It’s as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture with culture, Mohini, our old Eastern view of life with the new semi western outlook. The city absorbs a little of the ‘barbaric’ village, the village absorbs a little of the ‘west polluted’ city. Both change, unaware. They are less angry with each other. This is more urgent today than ever before. Our new India must rest on this
foundation (MFM 113).

The above lines reveal the idea of the novelist to bring about desirable change in the nation. It is a firm belief of the novelist that Indian culture is in no way inferior to the Western culture. He feels that our culture needs only revival to stand up or even surpass the other cultures. In most of his novels, he expects the cooperation of women in the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

Bhattacharya shows the conflict between the old and the new and the adjustment between them in Harindra’s family. Harindra, a young man from the village of Behula, lived and read in the great and modern city of Calcutta. He has graduated in the western system of medical education. His father, Kabiraj, would always reject the Western medical system and would condemn himself for sending his son to town and let him study modern medical science. But the son is an enlightened young man and often pleads with his father for the use of the best in the Indian and European styles of medicines.

Unlike other young men of his generation, he opts for the village and decides to work as a medical practitioner there itself. On many occasions, he reminds us of Rahoul in So Many Hungers. He is a young man, with a missionary zeal, and with his own aims and aspirations. He never thinks in terms of narrow selfish interests. Harindra is a large-hearted person, but he is also a man of firm conviction. He is fiercely opposed to myths, superstitions, religious taboos and social constraints that have been crippling the village life
in India. With all the determination at his command, he takes up the task of social construction. He lends powerful support to Jayadev.

In his campaign against obscurantism, Harindra has to take on his father himself who is Kabiraj, a fanatical believer in Ayurveda, and who is all contempt for the modern system of medical treatment. Kabiraj obviously stands for the East. Kabiraj has no faith in English medical system because he is a doctor of Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medical science. He feels proud to practice Ayurveda because it prevailed for a millennium, enhanced by the genius of the great physicians, Charaka and Susruta.

Harindra has to ride a two-wheeled contraption, the bicycle. He walks with his head bare in hard September sun; Harindra must have a broad-rimmed topi to shield him. Whenever Harindra goes outside without hat he gets headache. Kabiraj comments him, “A doctor trained in the western way!” (MFM 172).

It reveals a country man’s little faith in Western education. Harindra does not completely put aside the ayurvedic system. He is not contemptuous of Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine. At the same time, he is convinced of the efficacy of the modern drugs. He accepts only a systematic medicine made in laboratories. He says:

There are many good drugs in our ayurveda system, we know them, we use them, not the home products but those made in modern laboratories. What’s wrong in using in the fight against disease the best that East and West have to offer? Medicine knows no race or
nationality, father! No greater blessing for our people than the sulfa drugs (MFM 172).

It is unfortunate that Harindra’s obscurantist father does not permit him to undertake the medical treatment of his own mother. Her condition gets worse, and it is only when the Kabiraj is left with no option that he runs up to his son and requests him to save his mother from death. Harindra responds actively and succeeds in saving his mother’s life with the help of modern equipment and drugs. The old man Kabiraj admits his mistake of under estimation of Western medical system and weeps on his blunder of blind adherence to orthodoxy of native medical knowledge. Thus, Bhattacharya cleverly shows the encounter of the East and the West through the characters Kabiraj and Harindra. More importantly, it is also thus that he achieves his victory in his fight against ignorance and conservatism.

Harindra not only cures the diseases of the country people but also resolves to cure the society. He takes support from Jayadev, the master of Behula, and young people of his kind. He is the recognized leader of the fervent young men of Behula, who are treated as ‘ruffians,’ (MFM 139). Ironically, it is they who take up the programme of social reform with all the sincerity. Harindra and his associates decide to clean up the ancient village tank, the Crocodile Pool, in order to minimize the mosquito threat troubling the locality. The priest of the Shiva temple tries to prevent them from doing so in the belief that a crocodile god has been living at the bottom of the tank for generations, and that if it is killed or disturbed, the village
would be ominously affected. The tank is finally cleaned up, but the crocodile is nowhere to be seen. This incident records the one of the Harindra’s victories in his persistent fight against superstitions and spiritual blindness.

Harindra, being open-minded and benevolent, feels extremely sorry about a young Brahmin girl, named Sudha, of his own village. Although he is not a Brahmin, he thinks of marrying her. The very idea of inter-caste marriage in a village like Behula is shockingly preposterous and absurd. The village is the very ‘citadel of Brahminism’ (MFM 161). Harindra is annoyed with the village people because they have wronged Sudha. He discusses this issue of marrying Sudha with Mohini, but even though she is all sympathy for him, she fears ‘the rock like barrier of caste’. Mohini is afraid that the caste barrier is too strong for him, and wonders if ‘the bold, impulsive Harindra’ (MFM 158) would dismantle it. In the novel it is not mentioned whether Harindra and Sudha get married, but it is perfectly clear that he would go his own way.

Harindra is not just an individual, he is also a symbol of the new age, the age of liberation and progressive outlook. He is a rebel character because he represents ‘the forces of progress’ that are in ‘an open clash with reaction’ (MFM 156). His courage, his stubborn frankness, his firm determination, and his commitment to direct action seemed to be result of the English education system.

Sudha is a queer character in *Music for Mohini*. She is a Brahmin maiden of Behula. She is fair and comely, almost ‘a fairy’
and ‘winsome’ and it seems as if she has been made out of ‘the white flowers of jasmine.’ However, she is an unmarried girl because her horoscope is ominous. She is supposed to be a God-forsaken, ill-starred girl, ‘Saturn’s Eyesore’ (MFM 89). Sudha grows ‘lopsidedly, scornful of human values, asocial, frigid yet darkly passionate’ (MFM 111) in isolation, alienated from the main stream of village life. It is for this reason that the novelist speaks of her growth in darkness, in the cramping space of a cold cell, in emotional bondage. Nevertheless, Sudha loves life. She speaks to Mohini, “I have always hated knowledge and loved life” (MFM 174).

Although one does not really see Sudha and Harindra getting married in *Music for Mohini*, there are sufficient hints in the novel to suggest that their marriage is almost a certainty. There is an essential kind of kinship between the two. Both are rebels in their own ways. Both of them are rejected by the people, but both are determined to push their way through life. Moreover, since Harindra considers Sudha to be a girl who has been patently ‘wronged’ (MFM 158), he is seized with the passion of rebuilding her life.

Dorothy Shimer comes out with striking epithets for Sudha. She calls her ‘the co-protagonist of the Mohini story,’ ‘the dark shadow of Mohini’s sun,’ ‘Mohini’s evil alter ego’ and ‘the Iago of her marriage’ [134]. These epithets may seem to be appropriate and relevant in a certain context. However, they leave out one thing which is that Sudha is a self-possessed character. Vinita Jha rightly points out:

Sudha is a rebel character, and may be looked upon as
such, because for whatever reasons, reasons more personal than ideological, she aligns herself with those forces in the village that are opposed to orthodoxy and conservatism [135].

Heeralal is a city-bred boy who thinks old Indian traditions are meaningless. While travelling in train with Jayadev and Mohini, he presents many doubts before Jayadev. Feeling sympathetic towards her sister, who is going to her in-law’s house, he questions himself about the taboo of sending a girl with her husband after marriage. With moist eyes, he broods, “Why did she have to marry? Why did she have to go away? And live among strange folk?” (MFM 83).

This is obviously a Western thought expressed by the novelist himself. Bhattacharya pities on the condition of a newly-married girl, who has to go along with her husband. He points out that one does not see this kind of tradition in the West.

Heeralal makes friends easily among the village boys. They teach him how to swim. He is moved by their affection and love. He also compares the scenery of village in which the nature contains beauties with unpolluted atmosphere. It is an encounter between the East and the West shown through the village boys and city boy Heeralal.

Bhattacharya also contrasts the city girls with the country girls. Mohini has friends in the city with Western culture. Her city friends are west-polluted and the village girls are stark contrast to them. Mohini makes Renu, Meera, Maloti as friends in the village. They are
traditional girls who follow the Indian customs and traditions. They speak frankly and freely with Mohini. A girl says:

Jayadev Dada has done well to marry a city girl. City girls know the hundred-and-one facts of life – no over-much shyness in their making. You must show him the way and lead him on, sister. A shy, simple ascetic. It will be fun for you to waken him! Truly the stars have bespoken a royal union (MFM 105).

It is a clever and comparative description between the cultures of the West and the East by the novelist.

*Music for Mohini* also displays confrontation between superstition and education and their final compromise. It is old Mother’s superstition that she favours ‘no compromise’ (MFM 17) in the beginning. She has ‘her-iron prejudice against modernism’ (MFM 44). She is ruled by ‘the taboo of countless centuries’ (MFM 45). She has also a deep faith in marriage based upon the union of horoscopes. But the old Mother is not as strict a disciplinarian as the mother of Jayadev. Comparing them the novelist comments:

Old Mother had compromised with modernity and her struggle to uphold the orthodox way was without passion. But the mother of the Big House was stern, adamant, like iron. Old Mother was of the old and of the new; this mother had nothing in her nature that would allow change (MFM 130).
Music for Mohini is an ardent plea for synthesis that the past should not be rejected as irrelevant. Similarly the present has not to be accepted wholesale. It is in ‘a profound union of today with the yesterday,’ (MFM 78) of village with the city life, of the east with the west, of thought with action, of contemplation with commitment, of asceticism with aestheticism, that the political freedom can be rewarding. In the end, there is perfect adjustment and sweetness in the Big House, and all clashes between mother and son, mother and daughter-in-law, and husband and wife disappear. Shyamala Rao rightly sums up the novel as:

Probably Bhattacharya wished to design an ordinary story. To drive home the underlying principle of the unanimity Between the East and the West, it brings out the eternal conflict between the two cultures of the East and of the West [136].

In his third novel He Who Rides a Tiger, Bhattacharya makes an attempt to eradicate class and caste barriers so as to achieve their synthesis. The background of the novel reflects the atmosphere of the late twenties and the society is filled with the dust of politics and infected man with inhumanity to another man. The novelist is preoccupied with the problem of the downtrodden and the underprivileged.

Through the protagonist of the novel, Kalo, the novelist records his protest against the oppression and exploitation of the lowest classes by the upper castes of the Hindu society. He also makes a
mention about the ignorance and superstition of the people resulted from illiteracy and orthodoxy. The ruthlessness, the cruelty and the hypocrisy of the high-caste Hindus is vividly portrayed in the novel. Again, this is in stark contrast to the passive suffering and agony of the low caste people.

Bhattacharya also tries to depict the contemporary conditions of India under colonial rule. He wants to expose the economic exploitation of the innocent Indians in the interest of the capitalists and financiers. The policies of the British, on one hand, disordered the traditional economy of India and, on the other, failed to improve a modern economic structure. The Indian economy remained neither traditional nor modern. The consequent result was complete impoverishment of its people. Bhattacharya describes the situations of the time in the country as:

The dark year started three or four months after Chandra Lekha won her silver medal. It was almost the darkest in the history of Bengal. A Plague took the land in its grip, the plague of hunger, in the wake of war. 1943! . . . The tillers of the soil, reduced to starvation, had no recourse but to sell land, to buy back the produce of that land. And now rice was five times the old rate. Weavers sold their looms to traders from big cities who scoured the countryside for bargains. Artisans sold their tools. Fishermen’s boats were chopped up in fierce tides. Bengal was dying. Jharna was dying (HWRT 15).
Bhattacharya describes the negative results of war. War is waged by the rulers but the victims are the people. The disturbance is due to encounter of the West. The British rulers damaged not only the economic system in India, but also the system of highly valuable age old traditional customs.

Kalo, the protagonist of the novel, suffers a lot because of his low caste. His daughter stands first in the class and is awarded a medal. But nobody appreciates her, since she belongs to a low caste. That is why Kalo with the help of his daughter exposes the falsehood of the caste barriers. He makes himself a Brahmin and puts the sacred thread across his chest. He rises to great heights in the disguise of Mangal Adhikari, to whom even the richest people of the city would bow down with reverence.

He easily befools all those bloated with caste pride. He shatters the old social order, as there is hardly anything substantial in it. Kalo boldly tells the wealthy people of Calcutta that the, a downtrodden kamar, has been in possession of their inmost souls - souls corrupted by caste and cash [137]. He exposes the hollowness of caste barriers and pleads for their elimination and a healthy synthesis of the different castes “Do not dare judge me or call me a swindler. I have been as Brahminic as any of you” (HWRT 228).

Bhabani Bhattacharya makes a strong attack against the discrimination based on caste, class and creed. He vehemently pleads for their synthesis. Motichand, one of the richest men of Calcutta, proposed to marry Kalo’s daughter, Chandra Lekha, the goddess of
seven-fold bliss. Chandra Lekha expresses her approval of the marriage. But Kalo opposes his daughter's wish to marry him, she observes, “I would at last be with you in your battle. That proud man would have a casteless spouse!” (HWRT 220).

Biten is a man of Western views. He is a born Brahmin, shakes off his Brahminhood, as he finds it worthless. When his sister dies of orthodox traditions, he protests against his parents who do not agree her love affair with a boy of low caste and forcefully give her to an old man in marriage and cause for her death. He is against orthodoxy and the other rampant evils in the society. He never reveals his name, Biresh Mukherjee, which indicates caste to which he belongs, as he doesn't want to disclose his caste and creed.

Biten wants to marry Chandra Lekha in spite of knowing of her low caste. Ultimately, their marriage is settled with the consent of everyone - Kalo, Chandra Lekha and Biten. Marriage of Lekha and Biten stresses need for the integration of the highest and the lowest castes. When the possibility of this marriage is being discussed by Biten and Kalo, Kalo makes a meaningful observation on life. The statement unfolds the author's concept of synthesis and its immense significance for human life, “In life, sometimes, a big compromise has to be made” (HWRT 182).

Viswanath is another character of western ideas. He is also a kamar like Kalo. The Bengal famine of 1943 takes its toll on his family and he loses everone. He always remembers them and he helps such hunger people. Being a man against orthodoxy, he firmly believes that
every being has element of divinity. So, he serves the milk used for the milk ceremony to the destitute. When caught by the priest, he boldly admits his mistake.

Bhattacharya juxtaposes the two different characters, Kalo and Biten. Biten is a born Brahmin who renounces his Brahminhood. Kalo, who belongs to a low caste, mocks at the Brahminism in the way of deception. Both of them protest against the evils in the society in their own ways. *He Who Rides a Tiger* is a novel of protest not only against a political and economic system which degrades the human being but also against but also an established social order.

*A Goddess Named Gold* only touches upon the theme of synthesis, though, of course, in a very effective and interesting manner. Bhattacharya’s belief that life is compromise finds expression in the relationship between Lakshmi and the Seth. Lakshmi is a noble woman who is devoted to the welfare of the Sonamitti. She is busy in helping the innocent people of the village. She participated very actively in the fight against her husband. Her husband, on the other hand, is busy in making money at the expense of the poor people. He is unscrupulous, inhuman and unpatriotic, while Lakshmi is essentially good at heart and nationalist. The novelist writes:

She had gone to prison with two hundred others, both men and women, but her husband? On crucial day set for saluting national flag, an act against the Englishman’s law, he had managed to disappear (AGNG 8).
Lakshmi and Seth are not happy with each other. Their ways are different. Yet they live together as wife and husband under the same roof. Their life affirms the novelist’s belief in the synthesis in life. Adjustment has to be commonplace in the man-woman relationship. In fact, true union between husband and wife is possible only when both each other as equals [138].

The roving minstrel, Atmaram, is an embodiment of spiritual faith but with the modern outlook. He represents the synthesis of the tragic and the comic, fancy and practical wisdom, and social and anti-social. His life is both unhappy and happy. He sings both tragic and comic songs. He sings to amuse the village folk and keep them alive. The novelist describes the impact of his songs on the villagers as:

The throats of listeners grew thick with feeling when his theme was tragic; but when he made a mock of bigwigs in doggerel he had composed, there was much laughter (AGNG 49).

He taught the poor people lot of practical wisdom. In fact, the amulet that he gave to Meera is a symbol of practical wisdom. He suddenly disappears into the mountains for months, and comes back one day to partake actively in the freedom movement. He is also aware of the existing social conditions and the malpractices of the rich people who exploit the common masses for their self-aggrandizement. Bhattacharya also condemns the deep rooted social evils such as caste and superstitions. The novelist advocates the synthesis through, The Halwai (confectioner), who desires to marry
Meera, but for the caste and tribal system. The Halwai knows the villagers do not give consent for their marriage.

Bhattacharya illustrates two opposite Western views in the characters of the Seth and Meera. The Seth stands for the wolfish exploiters of the poor, while Meera stands for the Western values of dignity of labour and liberty. The ultimate triumph of the democratic values are exemplified in the vision of Meera.

In the earlier novels, the theme of synthesis is dealt with indirectly and secondarily. But in the latest novel, entitled *Shadow from Ladakh*, it is conspicuous and dominant from the beginning to the end of the narrative. Throughout the novel, the novelist attempts to bring about the integration of large-scale industrialization and the small-scale industrialization, the East and the West, Gandhian asceticism and Tagorean aestheticism, the old and the new values, village and city, India and China, etc. The concern of the novelist is the Tagore’s lifelong quest, “Integration—that was the poet’s lifelong quest: integration of the simple and the sophisticated; the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West” (SFL 215).

The novel deals in detail with conflict and compromise between two contrary modes of life represented by Gandhigram established by Satyajit and Steeltown founded by Bhashkar. In the beginning, the towns are two poles apart, incapable of meeting each other. Satyajit, Gandhi’s true follower in the novel, has built another village, Gandhigram, based on the principles of Gandhi’s Sevagram. Self-sufficiency of the country is one of the fundamental aspects of
Gandhian philosophy so is of the Gandhigram’s. Gandhigram comes in direct conflict with Steeltown that aims at rapid industrialisation for the economic self-sufficiency of the nation through heavy industry.

Satyajit and Bhashkar both aim at the same end but their means are poles apart and sharply opposed to each other. Satyajit believes in what Gandhi said:

Mechanisation, was inevitable when there was dearth of labour. It became needless and an evil when there was a surplus of hands. The problem in India was not how to find leisure for the teeming millions in its villages, but how to utilise their idle hours (SFL 29).

The Chinese aggression of 1962 created the desperate need for modern weapons to face the Chinese army. To produce more weapons, Steeltown needed expansion at the expense of Gandhigram. Expansion of Steeltown surely annihilates the Gandhigram, Satyajit and what he stands for. Bhashkar aims at maximum production of steel to safeguard country’s freedom, peace and prosperity. He tries to convince Satyajit, “Steel means economic progress. Machines, tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country’s freedom” (SFL 30).

Gandhigram is built upon the ideal of selfless service and love. When men from Steeltown begin to measure the parts of Gandhigram with a metal tape, the residents of the village are upset. They felt that people of Steeltown will never understand the values for which
Gandhigram stands for. Satyajit, their leader, intends to transform the heart of Chinese army with the weapon of non-violence.

Bhashkar is of the view that Gandhian philosophy of non-violence is not relevant to the modern age. At the time of Chinese aggression, the sovereignty of India will be at danger if the country continues sleep on the cosy bed of love and non-violence. He is bent upon quickening the process of producing more steel for the nation’s survival. In Bhashkar’s opinion, Satyajit’s way of thinking is the way of dangerous delusion (SFL 91).

Bhashkar and Satyajit meet each other to express their different points of view. Bhashkar is dressed in the westernized way. He emphasizes the relevance of steel for India. Asserting that steel is the means to economic progress, he says that India can fight poverty and hunger only with machine tools. On the other hand, Satyajit wants to move forward from the point where Gandhi left off. He is opposed to the Western way of life.

The philosophy of love and non-violence, in Bhashkar’s opinion, is acceptable if it does not make us coward. The weapon of love and non-violence can be worthy only when the country accumulates sufficient arsenal strength to fight against the enemy. India cannot escape from war by its blind acceptance of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. He wants to annex Gandhigram, not because he does not have any other scope of expansion but because he wants to debunk the irrelevant ideals preached by Gandhigram.
Gandhigram has to be dismantled and replaced by the center of social communion. But Bhashkar does not desire to annihilate Gandhigram but to induct into it the features of a modern city. He feels that the people of Gandhigram will ultimately be attracted towards the Steeltown type of life. To materialize his plan, Bhashkar starts building Meadow House Gandhigram’s dooryard. Both the Gandhigram’s residents and Steeltown people can visit the Meadow House. Satyajit and his followers are surprised to see the healthy attitude of reconciliation of Bhashkar. They do not know what to do because they expected a headlong clash.

The clash between Gandhigram and Steeltown represents the clash between ancient and modern, spiritualism and materialism. The conflict reaches its peak when the government allows Bhashkar to expand his project by annexing Gandhigram to produce arms and ammunitions speedily. As soon as Satyajit knows about this, he declares the Gandhian method of protest, fast unto death, to preserve Gandhigram and his Gandhian ideas. The novelist writes, “The Challenge is not just between Gandhigram and Steeltown. It is between two contrary thoughts, two contrary ways of life. The spinning wheel set against the steel mill” (SFL 343).

Bhattacharya, throughout the novel, tries to bridge the gulf between the old and the new, East and West, and the different cultures. The chief aim of the novel is to bring about integration. The novelist reasserts the Gandhian preaching that Indians should not only follow the ancient culture of their land but also enrich their old
traditions with the experience of the new times. However, the alien elements should be adapted by the spirit of the soil. Narendra Pratap Singh rightly points out:

Our blind and irrational adherence to our glorious past, decayed tradition and culture is mainly responsible for retardation of progress and healthy social change. The novelist very clearly suggests that we may have respect for our traditional values and cultures but only to an extent. Our blind adherence to them would be dangerous and imperil our national liberty and prosperity [139].

But Satyajit thinks otherwise. He believes that there is no permanent gulf between the ways of life represented by Steeltown and Gandhigram. The two can be complementary and supplementary to each other. He remarks:

Steeltown belongs to the present. Gandhigram to the future. Steeltown must do its work. But when that work is done, when the material benefits of production have been fully attained, Steeltown, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek new moorings. Then it will be Gandhigram’s turn to come forward (SFL 156).

Suruchi, the wife of Satyajit, is the first person to understand that neither the Gandhigram type of life nor the Steeltown mode of living deserves to be accepted or rejected totally. Owing to her thorough understanding of her husband, she knows that he does not completely discard Steeltown. Because he is aware of its significance.
But she is disappointed to see that Bhashkar is not able to realise the importance of Gandhigram and its spiritual values for the fuller growth of human life and nation. Suruchi wants the integration of the two different ways of life and wishes that Bhashkar should realise the significance of Gandhigram:

He could not see values that lay beyond—values that Steeltown would do well to possess. The great city with its giant machines had something vital to gain from the small center of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self-abnegation. Or else the rot of corruption would prevail. Materialism, the gospel of unlimited accumulation, could never be self-sufficient (SFL 273).

Suruchi is instrumental in putting the theory of cultural integration into practice. She encourages Sumita’s love with Bhashkar Roy because she knows that there can be no better blending of East and West, ancient and modern than the marriage of Sumita and Bhashkar. Sumita, the symbol of ancient India, needs brilliant engineers and technocrats like Bhashkar to fight poverty and famine. Bhashkar Roy, the symbol of modern technology, needs Sumita to make a controlled and judicious use of his scientific knowledge. Since knowledge without wisdom is dangerous and wisdom without knowledge is lame, the co-existence of knowledge and wisdom is inevitable to build a happy, peaceful and progressive nation.
The novelist shows how the gulf between Gandhigram and Steeltown, disappears gradually bringing about a true adjustment between them. The two contrary modes of ways of life come to terms with each other slowly. Bhashkar and Satyajit understand each other and this results in the ultimate integration of the two divergent ideas. Bireswar calls them phenomena and regards them as essential to each other in spite of their differences. He explains his views to Satyajit thus:

You and he, facing each other like night and day.....Night and day in the hour before the sun rises and in the hour of sunset. The eternal clash—light against dark-ness and darkness against light. Could we have one and not the other? Could we sleep if it is only light? Or waken if darkness is without end? You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhashkar. There’s Bhashkar deep within you, Satyajit! And...there’s you somewhere in Bhashkar, of that also I am sure (SFL 352).

As the novel ends, the crisis resulted from the assault on Gandhigram by the Steeltown is resolved. The people of Steeltown go to Gandhigram and announce that they do not have any opposition with the spinning wheel and that they are brothers of the men of the village. A large number of men and women go to Satyajit’s house in procession and enquire about his health. They speak in friendly tone with the village folk. The people of Gandhigram cordially welcome
them and show them the fields, small workshops, schools and the huts. As Bhattacharya writes:

There could be no easier intermingling... When the visitors had crossed the threshold of the homes, all barriers between city and village were gone. The slogan of brotherhood, enriched with emotional content, became real....The divisions were gone. Gandhigram was a frieze carved on one slab of rock. And it was rock that lived! And would make itself deathless through death! (SFL 352).

The love sprung between Bhashkar and Sumita also helps in pacifying the conflict between Steeltown and Gandhigram. Bhashkar is educated in the West. He has travelled widely in Europe. He understands only the body and mind as a westerner does. He is not for the soul and high morals. Naturally, he sometimes feels restless and finds it difficult to work continuously. At such moments, he would ask himself if he is a machine, a thing of steel. Apparently, he has a typically Westernized outlook on life.

On the other hand, Sumita is a typical Indian woman. She leads an ascetic's life just as her father. She has tremendous respect for Indian spiritual values. She belongs to the India of the epic age. A true follower of her father, she is an out-and-out Gandhian. When she meets Bhashkar, the two opposite poles irresistibly attract each other. When people see them drawing near to each other, they believe that they will never marry because of a wide unbridgeable gap between their ways of life.
Sumita’s marriage with Bhashkar is symbolic of the integration of two different cultures and ways of living. In spite of the differences between them, she is drawn towards Bhashkar and loves him and ultimately marries. Thus, Sumita becomes the bridge of cultural synthesis between Gandhigram and Steeltown, between village and city. This amalgamation of large-scale industrialisation and small-scale industry such as cottage industry is essential for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

Bhattacharya also spotlights the synthesis of Gandhian asceticism and Tagore’s aestheticism. Satyajit is an amalgam of the two modes of thinking. He is a true Gandhian who believes in and practices simplicity of life, social service, village uplift, non-violence, truthfulness, fast as a means of penance and spiritual strength, rejection of materialism, abstinence, etc. The marriage between Satyajit and Suruchi is significant as it symbolises the unification of asceticism and aestheticism. Satyajit, despite the powerful influence of Tagore on him, is a Gandhian.

On the other hand, Suruchi, devoted to her husband and to the vow of brahmacharya under his influence, is an embodiment of the aestheticism of Tagore. On the other hand, Satyajit has the essential Tagore in him. When he returns to India after getting higher education at Cambridge, he, under the influence of Tagore, becomes a teacher at Santiniketan. Tagore has impressed on him the belief that there are other values as vital as Gandhian ideals and that want of happiness but not want of riches is man’s greater concern.
Satyajit feels that happiness is creative and has a source of riches within itself, and that it is fullness of life which makes man happy, not fullness of possessions (SFL 14). Even when Satyajit rejects aestheticism, the novelist cleverly shows the defeat of his asceticism by aestheticism, resulting in a healthy and happy synthesis of the two.

Bhattacharya’s concept of compromise and integration finds a convincing expression in this novel. In Bhattacharya’s opinion, synthesis means the acquiescence of life in its wholeness. It is not the denial of life in any form or the suppression of identity. His idea of synthesis is clearly embodied in his observations on the adjustment between Gandhigram and Steeltown.

Post-colonial writing in English attempts relocation of the self and retrieval of the native culture from foreign dominance. Whether it is a travelogue of a Western writer of Indian origin or Indian writer aiming to reach out to the Western readership, there is an interaction between the Eastern and Western sensibilities. The degree of cultural amalgamation depends upon the maturity of the sensibility of the writer. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to “the specific intellectual” and “the universal intellectual” [140]. The question is whether the intellectual—writer of a travelogue, novelist, or philosopher—can rise above the limited sphere of his own specific culture and attain the universal level.

The post-colonial Indian English novelists have dealt with this intellectual exploration describing both the Indian culture and the
hybrid Indian culture on account of the Western influence. This interculturization have been widely touched upon in the post-colonial times, the writers giving expression to cultural displacement and discontinuity.

Bhattacharya’s swan song *A Dream in Hawaii* depicts a fascinating encounter of the East and the West cultures and life styles. It shows the reader the American society, plagued by the deep maladies of materialism. Despite all the development, Americans need a way out due to extreme stress on the body. Hawaii, which forms the locale of the novel, is befitting to present a synthesis of the old and new values of the East and the West.

Bhattacharya attempts to integrate the spiritual values of the Orient with those of the practical society in the United States. The novelist throws light on the increasing sense of confusion of the people with the materialistic culture and their anxious search for inner peace. Kunjo Singh observed that, “*A Dream in Hawaii* deals with the Bourgeois value system, sex, Yoga, the Guru theme, mysticism and Materialism” [141].

In the beginning, the novelist tries to analyse the cultural values of India and the Island of Hawaii. He appeals for the significance and the need for the amalgamation of the two divergent cultures for having the best of both the cultures. The spiritualism of the East and the materialism of the West are to be blended for attaining fulfilment. Man always wavers between materialism and mysticism, myth and reality, mortality and immortality, desire and disillusionment, in life. The
novelist artistically presents the ever-repelling poles of carnal desire and spiritual fulfilment.

The plot revolves around two main aspects- Yognanda aka Neeloy Mukherjee’s quest for spiritual realization in the West and his love for Devjani’s beauty. Yogananda’s perspective of relationship between art and religion and Stella Gregson’s thoughts over his quest for spiritual fulfillment have strong implications in the novel’s underlying themes. Yogananda is the mouthpiece of Bhattacharya as he, throughout the novel, stresses on the relevance for reconciliation between the East and the West.

Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer represent the Western malady. Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Alfred and Naomi consider Kamasutra as the best gospel for America, whereas Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer want to convert ‘The World Centre for Yogic Disciplines’ into a profitable business centre. They bring a Hatha Yogi from India against the wishes of Yogananda. Hatha Yogi is an astrologer and an exorcist. Swami Yogananda feels that the West is endangered by its self-induced venom called progress. On assessing the causes of the crisis, Swami Yogananda emphasizes the importance of the Bhagavad Gita. He appeals to the Westerners to live a life with purpose and strive hard for the true understanding of God.

Yogananda finds spiritual degeneration in American society and concludes that success in terms of materialism cannot fulfill the needs of the disenchanted soul. In this complex competitive world, the finer aspects of life are replaced by violence, perversions, and the use
of drugs. Stella Gregson’s life is a standing example of this
degradation in values. Her marriage with Walt Gregson is a failure.
Her husband, Walt Gregson, wishes to write a book on the sexual
habits of American women. Stella finds it very hard to digest his way
of thinking. She tells him, “The bed, he believed was a key symbol for
the new American, the American of the century’s seventh decade”
(ADH 26).

Walt Gregson stands for the modern American way of thinking,
which extols the materialistic prosperity. He has no faith in moral
values of life. He advocates free sex and gets involved in several
extramarital affairs. He wants to show himself to the world as a free
human being. He advises his students to adopt his way of life. In spite
of all this, he is not satisfied within and cannot find inner peace. He
craves for something else, other than physical pleasure. As the novel
progresses, he understands that entire American society is intrigued
by this problem of self.

Dr. Vincent Swift is a realist and a down-to-earth visionary. He
pleads for a synthesis between the conflicting values of life. Believing
in give-and-take theory, he pleads, he firmly considers that it is not
justifiable to stick to one’s ideas. He affirms that one must be
pragmatic and compromise oneself to the values of life.

Bhabani Bhattacharya presents the binary opposition not only
in the East-West encounter but also within the East and within the
West. This conflict is multi-dimensional which depicts the social and
spiritual ideas of the post-colonial life. Transference, displacement,
and alienation engulf the post-colonial experiences of Indians settled or born abroad. These also have an impact on the Indians living in India due to the Western influence. The binary conflict presented by Bhattacharya involves ‘movement’ between two realms. The movement may not be experienced by the Indians abroad, but it is felt by the natives such as Yogananda who experiences alienation within the Indian culture due to interculturation.

When Swami Yogananda says, “Our Ancient Philosophy is boldly modern in its own way. The West has read that same story in our ancient temple sculptures at Konarak, at Khajuraho!” (ADH 18). Stella feels that the East and the West are so readily coalesced (ADH 18) in him. Ironically, this coalescence goes counter to Yogananda’s preaching of dhyana which leaves him confused. It is not the external East-West conflict but the inner turmoil of his own soul that disturbs Yogananda. This is the basic binary opposition.

The novels draw special attention to the spiritual desolation that is prevalent in the American society. Set against the mesmerizing scenic landscape of the Hawaii, the novel cites several examples to exhibit how the Westerners sought spiritual succor from the East.

Stella’s frustration exemplifies the failure of marital bliss in the American society. Marriage has been simply reduced to dating and mating. Walt Gregson, her husband with his of promiscuous habits harasses her. Their conjugal life is severely disturbed since Gregson believes only in the consummation of sexual passion and any restraint
of this urge is considered abnormal. He does not accept the Eastern theory of restraint:

The right to enjoy sex—that’s normal. Abstinence, societal or self-imposed that is abnormal. In our permissive society abstinence has no validity whatever... A fire is quenched by being starved, smothered out my question is: Whatever for? Why kill fires which are the very substance of life (ADH 57).

Stella Gregson, on her visit to India to do her research work, deciphers a new perspective of Vedanta from the lectures of Yogananda. She persuades him to visit Hawaii to deliver more such spiritual lectures. She feels that Yogananda set her inner life and she is indebted to him for this. She also realizes that Americans are in dire need of such spiritual support. She determines to be useful and helpful to others R. Poli Reddy observes:

Bhattacharya, through the character of Stella, obviously attempts to illustrate a cultural synthesis between her as a lady deeply rooted in the Western value system who moves over to accept an alien culture and philosophy [142].

Devjani has deep faith in the Indian moral values. She is pure, modest and simple to the core. She is utterly shocked to see her mother having an extra-marital affair. She loses her respect towards her mother in the stream of hatred. Her mother remarks that self-denial is not the idea of life. A tremendous emptiness is noticed by
Devjani within herself. She gets disgusted at the turn of the events and leaves for Benares to continue her studies. In the University, she finds Guru in Neeloy Mukherji. She begins to believe that he is cable of helping her in her spiritual crisis.

Devjani persuades Neeloy to renounce the world and lead a spiritual life for teaching Vedanta to the humanity. In fact, Devjani herself seeks refuge in his spiritual ideas to fill her inner vacuum. She discovers that “Within her was a hunger for the spiritual life” (ADH 82). Incidentally, she leaves for America, to join the East-West Centre, Honolulu, for her research work.

She observes that the contemporary American society is in a hopeless disorder in spite of being sophisticated technological society. American society is glamorous externally but stinking internally. The novelist writes, “A dead rat lies somewhere under its brightly carpeted floor, rotting away, the stench rising, filling our nostrils. The vomit comes to our throat” (ADH 28). Therefore, the West is willing to turn towards the East for values. The disenchanted Americans are pulled towards the spiritual ideas of the East in their desperate quest for mental peace. “Yellow-robed men from the East held out the bright promise of inner adjustment and peace” (ADH 49). Ironically, the American society is in the need of light from the East, while Devjani, born of that light, is out on finding what America can give.

Bhattacharya utilizes various characters to comment upon the American life style. The novelist observes widespread spiritual degeneration and sterility in a highly complex competitive world
concluding that material success has not fulfilled the needs of the soul which grows increasingly disenchanted and craves for something better. The finer values of life are replaced by perversions, violence and indiscriminate use of drugs and intoxicants.

As an experiment, Walt Gregson sent his girlfriend Sylvia, dressed in Indian attire to seduce Yogananda but the plan failed. Walt realized his folly and had a desire to know the Swami better. The novelist has reiterated the fact that man ought be less satisfied with achievements in life and must indulge more in self-searching [143].

Bhattacharya condemns permissiveness in the Western society. If a woman feels liberated because she has sexual freedom then it is nothing but self-deception. His idea has been expressed through Mildred who says:

I speak as a woman. The so-called sexist revolution based on a superholy ideology! Personal fulfilments have no relevance. It’s only the superholy ideology that matters, only that has meaning and value.... Here’s the plain truth.

Our sexual liberation does not give us the freedom to be free (ADH 132).

A sort of cultural synthesis has been advocated throughout the novel, *A Dream in Hawaii*. Swami Yogananda believes that much can be achieved in the realm of universal peace through a synthesis between the East and the West which would be the confluence between the ancient and the modern, between science and spiritualism. Yogananda had progressive views about life and his first
message to the people of Hawaii was to accept all faiths and thereby to harmonise all beliefs.

In this sense, the East-West Centre at Hawaii becomes the veritable seat of cultural synthesis. Scholars from various parts of the world came to the Centre which could accommodate up to four hundred scholars at a time and where various cultures found a suitable meeting ground. Sr. Swift sees this harmony as a promising symbol of hope when he says:

One great glory of our Hawaii is its magnificent rainbow. Rising from housetops in the valley, spanning the entire curve of the sky, ending on housetops near Diamond Head; and sometimes the second parallel rainbow is equally brilliant! Seven brilliant colours building a symphony. Our World Centre will be a transcreation of that rainbow, though in a medium not of colours! (ADH 69).

Vivekananda sought God through meditation and he yearned to promote universal fellowship. Yogananda was in no way different from Swami Vivekananda who recognized and propagated India’s historic role as a spiritual guide to the world. He desired a proper interaction with the other nations on the basis of equality without feeling the enigma of political bondage, abject poverty or technological insufficiency. One should have a strong personality. He advised the youth to imbibe in themselves ‘life giving,’ ‘character building’ ideas and insisted like Vivekananda that women should be educated but
education should not be delinked religious and spiritual values which are indispensable ingredient of life in India.

Bhattacharya seems to endorse the ideas of Swami Vivekananda when he sketches the characters of Devjani and Nishi in the novel. Devjani is well educated, even goes to Harvard on an academic tour. Nishi too has become Americanized in many ways without giving up the Indian philosophical ideologies. On the other hand, Bhabani Bhattacharya portrays the plight of Sujata, and eighteen-year-old widow who is forced to lead a life of seclusion and austerity in Varanasi. She is uneducated and in the absence of proper engagement of her youthful energy she elopes with Anami. Devjani and Nishi are able to have more freedom to develop their personalities because they are educated, Sujata suffers due to lack of education. Hence, a merging of the two cultures—one progressive, the other well-rooted in the ancient tradition is necessary for the development of a balanced personality.

Swami Vivekananda was conscious of the gulf between the East and the West which is apparent from the following passage:

Your ancestors gave liberty to the soul and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and the society did not grow. The opposite is the case with the West...every liberty to society none to religion....the West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality [144].
Swami Yogananda shares the views of his philosophical mentor when he talks about cultural synthesis in *A Dream in Hawaii*. Dr. Vincent Swift recalls the speeches of Vivekananda and quotes from one of the lectures of the Swami:

...Swami Vivekananda proclaimed that universal religion must be accepted by all men while they retain their own faith and mode of worship. Diverse voices must co-mingle in one swelling chorus, one universal anthem (ADH 62).

Hence, in the centre at Hawaii the main objective was to bring about a social change by assimilation.

In the novel, another movement called the Hare Krishna Movement was founded by Swami Bhaktivedanta which was an answer to the American crisis. The followers practiced Bhakti-Yoga in order to realize the Divine. Gradually the movement spread to various parts of Europe, Australia and Africa. Bhattacharya locates the cause of popularity of Indian yogic systems in America when he writes:

Youth in America is very much more sensitive and receptive than the older folks.... There are many other routes to these important goals, including traditional psychotherapy. Meditation is another route and perhaps a more direct one (ADH 106).

The Western mind, deeply disenchanted by the American lifestyle frantically searched for ways to escape. Much of their brave experimentation had gone to waste. The Eastern ways of life was certainly an answer to their troubled psyche. The established Church
failed being materialistic and money-minded like a self-satisfied society.

Swami Yoganda sheds a little of the ancient India in him and had absorbs a little of modern America, a proper way of harmonizing the diverse cultures believing that a world culture will be possible only when it is based on the ‘broad spectrum of interchange.’ The Western mind’s inexorable need is relaxation which the Eastern man discovered centuries ago in meditative repose thereby providing self-knowledge and filling the void between man and the infinite.

Yogananda shows great faith in technology which no longer remains a challenge of the West alone. In fact, the whole human society is technology-based as this is necessary for the preservation of life. Yogananda also visualises a close affinity between science and nature propagating this concept as an essential cognizance of the East-West Centre at Hawaii.

* A Dream in Hawaii indicates a departure from the pattern of Bhabani Bhattacharya’s earlier novels. In this novel, the novelist does not limit himself to the cultural realm of India alone. His perspective becomes broader in his attempt to establish the utility of Eastern philosophy and though in the materialistic and spiritually sterile West.

Indian spiritual and ethical values attracted the people of the West. Swami Yogananda’s experiences in Hawaii indicate how the two divergent ideals could be assimilated to bring about a social change. Hawaii, not supporting any one of the ideals, became the best meeting
ground for the Orient and the Western. The novel ends with Yogananda coming back to India. He was disillusioned with life in Hawaii and this makes him return to India. He realizes that he either has to be Neeloy or Yogananda.

In the other angle, the novel is about the Indian life, social practices and their reactions, and the American social life of the present day. It demonstrates the Indian faith in spiritualism and in action free from desires for the fruit. Extra-sensory perception is shown to be the core of India’s strength. Doing one’s allotted work by leaving all its fruit to God is vividly delineated in the novel. It refers to the magnetic spiritual influence of the Indian Heritage. Vivekananda’s vedantic concept of mind and his interest in contemporary man are neatly discussed. The novel emphasizes the concept of transcendental meditation which originated in India but has swayed the lives of the Americans. The novel also refers importance of sex in the society. It compares attitudes of the Indians and Americans.

Thus, *A Dream in Hawaii* establishes a synthesis between the two different worlds. Swami Yogananda firmly believes that much can be achieved in realizing universal peace through a synthesis between the East and West, where one finds a conflict between the ancient and the modern, and science and spiritualism. Yogananda with his progressive views of life gives his first message to the people of Hawaii for accepting all faiths and for harmonizing all beliefs. In this sense, the East-West Centre at Hawaii becomes the veritable seat of cultural synthesis. Kunjo Singh rightly observes:
Bhattacharya is a man of interculturation. The East-West Centre helps in growing up this interculturation. The University of Hawaii with its motto ‘Above all nations is humanity’ influences in expanding his intercultural ideas. Bhattacharya is a multicultural person mediating between several groups in culturally diverse world. He is a mediating man bridging the East and the West and concerning with the synthesis of old and new [145].