Chapter V

Summing up

(He visualises the emergence of an ideal man, an ideal society, an ideal country, and above all, an ideal world leading a life of serenity and joy. (Boparai 203)

The thesis so far has analysed in detail, the various dimensions of Bhattacharya and his writings particularly from a post-colonial perspective. At present, the term post-colonialism has become globally popular. As Harish Trivedi asserts in "India and Post-colonial Discourse",

Of all the terms of academic discourse which have risen to ascendancy successively over the last two or three decades, perhaps none has done so more quickly and completely, more glibly and globally, than post-colonialism. (231)

Even though post-colonialism has various implications, in general, it implies the period after colonialism. It is not about the West where it has originated, but about the colonized "Other". Post-colonial plays, poetry and novels are the expressions of resistance to colonialism.
They stress the need for recognising identities, voices and situations that were not granted by the colonial power. The twentieth century has witnessed the people of the world taking power and control back for themselves.

Post-colonial writing discusses the experience of various kinds like migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, problems of gender, place and decolonisation. The post-independent Indian English novelists discuss the impact of colonialism on India. The impact of colonialism is still visible both in people's life and also in the literary aspects. Writers of the early times and the modernists reveal this invasion in their writings. Bhattacharya's novels carry this foreign invasion abundantly. The characters either stand by it or fully appear with this mask.

Writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya portray the contemporary Indian society in their novels. As a committed writer, Bhattacharya has exposed the contemporary ills of Indian society. What is important is his artistic excellence and social commitment blend so naturally that he has created art with a social purpose. Any socially
committed writer runs the risk of becoming a propagandist. Similarly any writer with a declared political ideology is often forced to be biased. Interestingly, Bhattacharya escapes from all these pitfalls and proves himself to be an artist. With the microcosmic observation and an unbiased attitude, he keeps afresh the problems of India, not sparring anything. In all his novels, art and social purpose coalesce. His novels are basically social satires exposing the corruption, disorder, chaos and indiscipline at all levels. He exposes the sufferings and humiliations that are inflicted on the have-nots of the society. He works for the amelioration of man's unending miseries and humiliations and strives to create a better and happier world. His novels signify a note of triumph that there is a bright future for man and that man should make efforts at all levels to bring out a change in the pattern and structure of society.

Bhattacharya's novel, *Hunger* is not only based on an historical background but it also highlights the hidden fact that after all, the famine is man-made. Taking the Indian family as a symbol of India, he has highlighted the poverty of the common man, the arrogance and the atrocities of the authorities and the inevitable pathetic condition of the ordinary Indian. With his artistic techniques, Bhattacharya highlights the
various kinds of hunger prevalent simultaneously in the then India and how the famine—both the natural and man-made helps the oppressor to swindle the marginalised. What is ironic is, for all these atrocities, the freedom struggle is the backdrop. While *Hunger* has exposed the dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots, *Music* throws light on the conflict between tradition and modernity and a reconciliation is suggested which may be taken as a form of adjustment. Even though Bhattacharya is a male writer, he shows his anger against male chauvinism which is revealed through the character of Mohini’s mother-in-law. The basic theme is social renaissance, though it throws light on other problems like false faith, superstitious belief etc. as seen in Hindu religion.

*Tiger* has another dimension as its focus. Though poverty is a common factor, Bhattacharya presents it differently. Becoming jobless, and hence homeless, the blacksmith Kalo becomes rootless. He goes away, looking for a job. With an attitude of an existentialist, he avenges a society which punishes him, by becoming a fraudulent priest. Under the spell of B-10’s influence, he shakes off his passivity, ceases to be a silent
onlooker of man's callousness and inhumanity and becomes an active rebel to "hit back". What is ironical is, he is applauded by the high caste people when he is a fraud and he is condemned when he repents. They feel their caste being polluted. *Tiger* is an attack on both who profited on people's misery during the famine and those who exploited them as caste-tyrants. It realistically mirrors the naked horror of the famine, the ruthlessness of society, the hollowness of religion and casteism. The institution of prostitution prevalent in the then Indian society is thoroughly exposed.

*Gold* ridicules man's lust for gold. It gives a poignant picture of the exploitation through the character of the money-lender, Seth Samsundar. His deed and thoughts symbolize the blind principle of capitalism which is at the root of all exploitation. His various plans of charity and compassion prove to be sheer mockeries of real act of kindness. His attitude to enjoy at the expense of others is in sharp contrast with Gandhi's dictum to wipe tears from every eye. The novel is also an explication of the right way of using political freedom. Bhattacharya presents the meaning of freedom, hard work and realization
of the duties of the citizens. He states that all the people must earn freedom by their own efforts. He also expresses his views of creating a new free India.

**Ladakh** brings out the dramatic conflict between Gandhian asceticism and modern technological advancement. It shows the value and power of winning the opponents by Gandhian non-violent agitation and demonstrations. Besides, it reveals the modern necessity of steel as the only means of defence against the external aggression. The Hegelian dialectical dictum of "Thesis and antithesis resulting in synthesis" is not only imaginatively illustrated but also offered as the most sensible attitude towards the problems of national reconstruction. The balanced approach has been summed up through Suruchi's consciousness: "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" (**Ladakh** 273).

Bhattacharya's last novel **Hawaii** deals with the East-West encounter by juxtaposing Indian spiritualism with Western materialism and uses both India and the Island of Hawaii for its setting. It emphasizes
the need for the fulfillment of the claims of the body and the mind. Bhattacharya shows that mere material prosperity, political security, economic stability and welfare etc. would not suffice for a man to lead a full life. Spiritual aspects should also be taken into consideration. The binary opposition of the sensual and the spiritual determines character and action. Bhattacharya brings out the binary opposition not only in the East-West encounter but also within the East and within the West. He seems to be striving towards the realization of a vision of life based upon a synthesis of both the worlds, the East and the West.

Bhattacharya's foreign experience enables him to have an unbiased, objective attitude towards life. His diasporic objectivity makes his novels significant and relevant. He has got international recognition both because of the sociologically significant themes and his equally significant techniques which are both Indian and universal. A note on his technique will throw light on the genius in Bhattacharya and how his technique goes a long way in establishing him as a diasporic and transcultural artist.

Bhattacharya's creative power finds expression in his portrayal of themes, plot construction, characterization, method of
narration, his use of language and various other techniques. By means of irony, humour, symbol and allegory, he fuses into a work of art, meaning and relevance which otherwise would appear idealistic or didactic on surface. As G. Rai explains in *Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Study of His Novels*,

Bhattacharya's creative power finds expression in his neat plot construction, impressive method of narration, use of flash-back, time-shift, comic treatment of the themes with touches of humour, irony, fun, farce and melodrama, and in his masterly characterization. [...] The chronological progress of the story, the use of parallelism and contrast, the portrayal of complex and individual characters, the use of humour and irony, of crisp and facile language full of colloquialisms, are the remarkable feature of his art. (15)

Bhattacharya makes his plots compact, organic and economical. Though his plots appear to be tragic in the beginning, they finally end happily. Every problem is resolved at the end and there is an atmosphere of calmness and serenity. The sub-plots in his novels have a dramatic
structure. All the major characters are introduced in the opening pages of his novels. The action moves smoothly until it reaches the climax. At the end of the novel, there is a note of reconciliation and happiness.

The omniscient third person narrative is Bhattacharya's favourite method of telling a story. The narrative moves in a straightforward, chronological order. The story moves forward, uninterrupted. The flashback is used occasionally just to provide additional information. The clash of opposing ideologies is central to the narrative of most of his novels. In Hunger, the national spirit is contrasted with the bureaucratic attitude. Music presents the contrasting old and new values in sharp conflict. In Tiger, the caste conflict shapes the events of the story. Gold is less concerned with the clash of values. In Ladakh, he presents the conflict between the Gandhian philosophy and the scientific, materialistic outlook. Hawaii presents the conflict between Eastern spiritualism and Western materialism.

A proper handling of time increases the effectiveness of Bhattacharya's narrative technique. Every narrative arises from one or the other kind of time-scheme. He either slows down or speeds up the
pace so as to achieve the desired results. Bhattacharya also employs myth as a part of his narrative technique. In **Ladakh**, Suruchi and Satyajit represent Sita and Gandhi respectively. His use of myth is neither for digressional purpose nor as a structural device. He takes up his mythical parallels simply to interpret certain situations or characters.

The element of surprise or mystery is also present in Bhattacharya's novels. Occasionally causing a shock, but generally giving an exciting turn to the course of events, it not only keeps the reader's interest intact in the story, but also, being crucial to the development of the plot, leads to its final denouement. In **Hunger**, Kajoli's decision to sell herself is a surprise, as well as a shock to the reader who has known her as a brave and spirited girl so far. This momentary decision of the girl leading her to the betel-woman, and then, surprisingly enough, changing her mind and taking up the job of a newspaper vendor ultimately brings the story to a happy conclusion.

Similarly, Mohini's decision to offer blood to the Virgin Goddess in **Music** shocks the reader for a moment. But later on, the same incident forces Jayadev to come forward openly against his orthodox mother. A happy and perfect communion of Jayadev with Mohini is
possible only after this incident. Chandra Lekha's abrupt decision to marry Motichand is another example of the similar element of surprise or mystery in *Tiger*. Even though it bewilders Kalo, it prompts him to reveal his true identity and the temple myth before the people. The throwing of the amulet by Meera into the river in *Gold* also creates a sense of suspense in the novel. Later on, the same incident brings the novel to a convenient end.

In *Ladakh*, Sumita's wearing of glass bangles and a green bordered sari instead of the plain one after her return from the Meadow House show, and Bhaskar's sudden decision to lead the Steel town worker's procession towards Gandhigram are the incidents which cause surprise and suspense. In *Hawaii*, Yogananda's abrupt denial of Devjan's request for initiation against his inner wish, Walt's sending of Sylvia Koo to seduce Yogananda in order to lower his prestige, and then, his unexpected shock and sorrow at the success of his plot and Yogananda's sudden decision to return to India can be cited as instances for unexpected turn of events.

Characters generally reflect the mind of their creator. Bhattacharya creates characters to represent his ideas. In a way, his
characters are more or less types, denoting certain ideas or values. But they are not mere mouthpieces of the author. Within the sociological framework, they act, interact and hence they are psychologically convincing. His characters are drawn from the middle-class society or from the peasant and working community. His characters uphold a certain value pattern in the beginning of their careers but change and readjust themselves to the requirement of the new times. They shed their rigid adherence to the old ideas and practices to a great extent and also accommodate modern values as time passes.

The male characters in Bhattacharya's novels are often imperfectly delineated. Almost, all of them are flat and two-dimensional. They hardly move or develop. They simply represent a single idea or value to which they adhere almost rigidly. Even if some development takes place, it is near the end of their careers, and is rather insignificant and almost invisible. They are more of types than individuals. Contrary to this, his women characters are impressively drawn. They assume more significance than their counterpart male characters. They are susceptible to changes that take place in the society.
Bhattacharya's characters are complex individuals leading an independent life. Their doubts and dilemmas, their conflicts and short-comings, make them life-like. Kajoli's frailty, Kalo's inner conflict, Satyajit's moments of anguish and compromise, Meera's gullibility and Yogananda's moments of weakness make them all the more human. Since Bhattacharya is a novelist with a social purpose and presents it as part of his objective, some of his characters embody his social ideas. Rahoul and Devata in Hunger, Jayadev in Music, Meera in Gold, Satyajit and Bhaskar in Ladakh seek to bring about social reform. Meera embodies the revolutionary spirit and wishes to change the village. Satyajit and Bhaskar stand for spiritual and technological power respectively. Rahoul and Jayadev strive to root out certain evils and wicked practices from the lives of the people.

In characterization, Bhattacharya uses the device of paralleism and contrast also. The technique of contrast is successfully used by Bhattacharya in Music. The novel opens with Mohini playing a light-hearted game with her brother. When it comes to a close, one can find her changed beyond recognition. She becomes the responsible mistress of the Big house. The contrast between the city and the village...
life is developed throughout the novel. The stern mother of Jayadev is an obvious contrast to the fond and loving grandmother of Mohini.

In **Ladakh**, Satyajit is compared and contrasted with Bhaskar and Bireshwar and Sumita with Jhanak and Rupa. Satyajit believes in Gandhian ideals, Bhaskar in materialism. The former believes in simple, ascetic life, the latter in Western ways of living. Even Bireshwar is close to Bhaskar and is opposed to Satyajit's asceticism which is at the cost of his wife's happiness. Sumita, treading on the path of Satyajit, becomes ascetic and wants to dedicate her life for a cause, suppressing her instinctive drives. In contrast, Suruchi, while showing her regard to her husband's principles, knows a woman's needs and the fact that what she has suffered should not be continued by her daughter Sumita and hence encourages her advances towards Bhaskar. Jhanak, too can be contrasted with Sumita. While Sumita suppresses her natural self, Jhanak revolts against rural traditions and defies Gandhigram by going for a movie with a youth. Sumita and Rupa have contrasting natures. Bhattacharya writes, "Sumita and Rupa, the spinning wheel and the turbine. India of the epic age and India-to-be" (122).
Bhattacharya also uses the traditional devices like irony, humour, satire, symbols and allegory to produce various effects. As S.Balram Sorot comments, Bhattacharya is,

a master artist, constructing his plots artistically, creating his people realistically, narrating his stories interestingly and handling his prose dexterously. The use of symbolism and irony, an unfailing sense of humour and sincerity of purpose further enhance the appeal of his fiction which though dealing with the contemporary Indian life, has a wider and universal significance. (143)

Bhattacharya's transcultural experience enables him to use an alien language, English as a suitable medium to convey Indian sensibility. As Srivastava explains in Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya,

A part of the success of Bhattacharya's narrative technique probably lies in having an appropriate language. He shaped the English language as a suitable medium to convey Indian sensibility by giving it a flavour of the soil, a touch of the vernacular and by making it distinctly Indian, even if it has a foreign make.
He literally translates Indian words, phrases and proverbs into English, uses with or without English equivalents, distorts English words to give an Indian colouring, gives natural dialogues, and uses apt metaphors and similes, characteristic of rural people. (XIII)

Bhattacharya, in his novels, displays the social problems of his native country. Eventhough decades passed, the social problems, as he has seen earlier, are still prevalent. The fast growing population rate remains the reason for the existence of social chaos and confusions. To overcome these, as the characters in Bhattacharya's novels do, one has to either adopt or simply tolerate the religious or Western sentiments. Through his novels, he tries to create an awareness for the common man about his social, spiritual and physical commitments. Perhaps his view of an individual, a part of the common men, takes Bhattacharya to look at the global situation. With the individual, he also searches for the social evils which have been disturbing his existence even after achieving a deep relief from the colony rule. He treats untouchability and caste as serious evils in his novels and finds them as inevitable entities. In the
name of these two elements, the British Imperialists have suppressed the huge, innocent people. From the British Imperialists, the political leaders - the Indian Imperialists have taken the power in their hands to suppress the people further. Bhattacharya senses at this juncture that there is no possibility of liberation for the mass rather in the prevailing situation, only an extension of imperialism will emerge out. His concentration in his novels, is mostly circumscribed on the lower class social conditions. Bhattacharya, as a social reformer, expects a real transformation among these people who alone have been highly corrupted and exploited by the Indian Imperialists. Through his novels, he appeals to the conscience of the people that they should be away from the corruption and the superstitious beliefs. What is his ultimate aim through his novels is to create a new India. He appeals to the people to plan a new social structure for the national life.

Bhattacharya's novels also exhibit the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. As a committed writer, Bhattacharya interprets in artistic medium, the condition of the socially backward. He exposes the various social evils which are the tools employed by the
high-caste and the rich to suppress and harass the marginalised. He hopes to awaken the conscience of those who suppress the weak and at the same time arouse the oppressed to stand up for their rights. He advocates a rational attitude to combat old customs and ancient beliefs. He ridicules all superstitious beliefs. He is all for freedom from the tyrannical social shackles that hamper the progress of people and deprive them of happiness. He makes a conscious effort to grapple with contemporary problems in order to establish a society on a more just social order, free from casteism and creed, from poverty and ignorance, from outmoded customs and traditions.

Bhattacharya is a utopian, trying to create a better cultural atmosphere for the citizens of his country. His fiction records the aspirations and urges of the people heroically involved in the struggle to remake the world. Though suffering is involved in this struggle, the determination of the people to fight against all odds, in order to create a better world for themselves is laudable. The optimism of the common man, which Bhattacharya embodies in his fiction, encourages the reader to look forward to a bright future and to strive to set right the various ills of society. Bhattacharya has been able to achieve this by incorporating in
his fiction those political and social experiences which the people were actually undergoing in their lives. He has been able to enlighten them about the conditions as they actually are in their society, and the role they can play in order to quicken the process of political and social change.

Bhattacharya is very much concerned with women's problems also. Women's empowerment should not be ignored. They should be given equal importance and all privileges should be given to them. They should not be considered as inferior "other". If the conditions of a common man and woman are improved, his dreams of a changed social order will emerge in the future.

Bhattacharya is greatly influenced by Tagore and Gandhi. Some of Tagore's philosophical ideas such as the idea of the integration of diverse elements in human life and his aesthetic views have been discussed in his novels. Gandhian ideals of non-violence and passive resistance, rural upliftment, social reconstruction and economic development also find expression in his novels. Being an admirer of Tagore, Bhattacharya hopes for an integration of ideas and values. Tagore is a believer of an integrated life and Suruchi mentions this to
her daughter Sumita, "Integration - that was the poet's life long quest: integration of the simple and the sophisticated; the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West" (Ladakh 215). Bhattacharya thinks this amalgamation an essential factor in life. He expresses this view through Mrs. Mehra in Ladakh, "Life is all compromise. One yields a bit here and gets it back elsewhere" (115).

Bhattacharya is a multi-cultural person who mediates between several groups in a culturally diverse world. He suggests a synthesis of tradition and modernity with a view to fashioning a culture which will be conducive to the development and progress of both the individual and the society. The hybridization of Indian culture prevails even after the liquidation of empire. Apart from this, the people have to decide upon the best values from both the Eastern and Western Ideologies. Bhattacharya does not favour the removal of the old values and at the same time nor does he herald fully the new. He looks into both the values for a synthesis. One can view his novels as an invisible bridge that connects the contrary views. Once the people reach the synthesis of the two, there is a possibility of neglecting the ancestral customs.
traditions, habits, tendencies and so on. This negligence is very positive in city atmosphere whereas in countries, the people seem to be living with the same old traditional touch.

Bhattacharya in his novels, authentically presents the dual situation with the characters in two different places. With that in his mind, he creates a reconciliation by way of making his characters move from village to city. The immediate reaction is that they have to face the modern values which have taken shape immediately in cities. Within a family, Bhattacharya brings out the dual perspectives between a father and son. Devata's son, Samarendra Basu in *Hunger* pleases his British rulers but Devata is the opposite of his son. Basu thinks of doubling money during the war period whereas his father acts differently. Basu's loyalty to his rulers is abundant. In the case of Mohini, Bhattacharya exhibits a different situation - a culturally different Mohini moves to a village after marriage which is a strong base for tradition. Her mother-in-law asks Mohini to remove the modern mask and perform the traditional customs. Bhattacharya plans to carry out a reconciliation between Jayadev and Mohini, both representing tradition and modernity. Each having a strong faith in his or her custom, Mohini alone comes
forward to adopt a new situation. Though the element of male domination is portrayed by Bhattacharya, he also presents a fact that a merging of these two would bring a new change in Indian situation. Mohini’s loyalty to her husband is effectively highlighted. But in Ladakh, Suruchi’s loyalty to her husband is different. Her husband, Satyajit decides to take the vow of brahmacharya to which she is not ready to reconcile with. But she accepts his decisions. Bhattacharya, through these family situations, exhibits the clash between the contrary forces but shows a way to come out of the clash, allowing the women to give up their ideologies.

Bhattacharya feels that where there is great need of political, economic and social stability for our progress, one should not adhere to any one ideology but rather derive the best from all others and thus bringing about a healthy synthesis in our cultural life. Being a humanist, he strives in all possible ways to improve the predicament of man by trying to bring about a synthesis of the opposing ideologies. A compromise between the ancient traditions and culture of the East and the modern culture, science and technology of the West, is necessary, inevitable and valuable. An integration of spiritual and material values is
quite necessary in our life and Bhattacharya makes it clear in his novels.

As Dorothy Blair Shimer asserts, Bhattacharya is concerned with,

individual human worth and dignity, freedom and
national aspiration and the need for reconciliation of
differences, or achievement of equilibrium among
differing views and ways of life, especially between East
and West, the traditional and the new. (117-118)

Bhattacharya dreams of a Ram Rajya for the country in which
all social evils should be eradicated and an ideal society will emerge in
the future. As Chandrasekharan observes, the three aspects of
Bhattacharya's thinking manifest themselves on different occasions in his
novels.

Firstly, he has a clear vision of the future that he desires
for India. [...] Secondly, he launches a vigorous campaign
against what he considers to be anti-life tendencies and
forces in the traditional Indian way of life and pleads
like his master Tagore, for a full and joyous life. [...] Thirdly, he puts in a passionate plea for the synthesis or
integration of values and philosophies which alone can put an end to discord, bring about harmony and give us the strength and equipoise needed for a life of achievement. (160)

Bhattacharya's objectivity in fiction, with all his sociological purpose has enabled him to be an unbiased fictionalist. His optimism helps his novels to escape from being pessimistic, though they are often tragic, highlighting the India's predicament. Though the end of the novels are less pessimistic, the bitter fact that India still continues to suffer from all the ills highlighted by Bhattacharya makes both Bhattacharya and his fiction quite relevant even for the contemporary India.