Chapter 5

Conclusion
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Post-Independence Indian English fiction retains the momentum the novel had gained during the Gandhian age. The tradition of social realism established earlier on a sound footing by Mulk Raj Anand is continued by novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya. Bhabani Bhattacharya was strongly influenced by Tagore and Gandhi. Both his fictional theory and practice show his affinity with these social and political personalities. Bhattacharya believes that Art must teach, but unobtrusively by its vivid interpretations of life. Art must preach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. If that is propaganda, there is no need to eschew the word. He is convinced that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view. While each of Bhattacharya’s novels has an unmistakable social purpose, only occasionally does he succeed in achieving a vivid interpretation of life, his chief weakness being a tendency to rest content with presenting too neat and machine-made contrasts and to settle for easy romantic solutions.

Bhattachary’s first novel *So Many Hungers!* is set against the background of the Quit India movement and the Bengal famine of the early forties. The novel deals with the theme of exploitation – political, economic and social. The ‘so many hungers’ of the title are those for political freedom, for imperial expansion, for money, for
food, for sex, for human dignity and self-respect, and the hunger as a
spiritual weapon employed by the freedom-fighters who go on a
hunger strike in jail. Of these several hungers, the novelist has
succeeded best in dealing with the hunger for food, and the scenes
depicting the havoc wrought by the famine among the rural poor in
Bengal constitute some of the finest examples of social realism in
Indian English fiction. However, Bhattacharya is tempted to indulge
in gratuitous authorial comment; and the final solution to Kajoli’s
problem appears to be totally unrealistic. She decides to earn her
living, not by battering her body but by selling newspapers. The other
major characters in the novel Samarendra, the capitalist; his father,
Devata, a Gandhian figure; and young Rahoul, the patriotic scientist –
remain consistently one-dimensional figures, thus reducing the total
effect of the depiction of the other hungers.

In *Music for Mohini*, Mohini’s husband, Jayadev is sought to be
presented as a happy combination of the best of the Indian tradition
and western thought, but remains a shadow figure. The vivid realism
of the scenes depicting the Hindu marriage at its various stages
beginning with the bride-showing is characteristic of the author, but
the music of the title ultimately turns out to be the commonplace
strains of an organ-grinder.

In *He Who Rides a Tiger*, many serious questions are posed
through an absorbing narrative of ironic reversal. The novel tells the
story of Kalo, a poor blacksmith, who, jailed for stealing a bunch of
bananas, vows revenge on society. He poses as a holy Brahmin, who has been vouchsafed the miraculous vision of a Siva idol, and thrives on the fraud, until he discovers the age-old truth that he cannot dismount the tiger of his own creation without ruining himself; but he must dismount, in the interest of mental peace. There is an intricate criss-cross of themes here, such as appearance and reality, the have and the have-nots, and religious hypocrisy. Bhattacharya allows himself a romantic touch in the final scene of the exposure, where the crowd spontaneously supports Kalo. He is also tempted to make Kalo his mouthpiece at times, but the narrative moving at a tiger’s pace, glosses over many such flaws.

Some of Bhattacharya’s characters are embodiments of his social ideas, since he had in his mind a social purpose. Meera in *A Goddess Named Gold* represents the revolutionary spirit to transform the village. It is Meera who occupies the centre stage in *A Goddess Named Gold*. She is full of nobility, humanity and compassion. Her character is presented as a foil to that of the set because she had no self-interest and wanted to make Sonamitti better. She symbolizes the Mother India who is full of promises and possibilities of producing gold of both the kinds—the symbolic gold of virtues and the real gold as wealth.

*Shadow from Ladakh* is set against the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962. It contrasts the Gandhism of Satyajit Sen of Gandhigram with the scientism of Bhashkar, Chief Engineer of
Steeltown. Sumita and Rupa are compared to the spinning wheel and the turbine respectively. The narrative end, with a dubious compromise, can hardly be stated to have done justice to its avowed theme.

*A Dream in Hawaii* depicts the theme of East-West encounter. The encounter is abortive, because while the East with all its spirituality has not yet completely mastered the flesh, the West continues to remain commercialized and confused. Swami Yogananda discovers in the end that he has not still risen above his love for Devjani represents the East. Dr. Swift, the organizational man, wants to use Yogananda as a tool in the founding of flourishing spiritual center. Dr. Gregson is intended to reveal two facets of modern American culture. It is certainly heartening to find Bhattacharya resisting the temptation to accept a ready-made solution at the end, though the Americans in the novel appear to be uniformly flat characters.

Bhabani Bhattacharya has explored a world of humanity, social sense, a positive view of life and expressed artistically in his novels. Since he believes that the novel should have a social purpose, his stories abound in social and historical realities, quite often bitter and gruesome, such as the Bengal Famine of 1943, the tragedies of the freedom struggle and the partition, and the evils of poverty, corruption, ignorance, superstition, exploitation, greed, sexual perversion etc. But beneath them, there is almost always present, the
novelist’s unflinching faith in life and its invincibility, indestructibility and worthiness. Even in the midst of ghastly and heart-rending scenes of human sufferings and tortures, life asserts itself sparking amid ashes. From his assertion of ethical values and synthesis of the old and the new and of opposite extremes emanates Bhabani Bhattacharya’s final vision of the affirmation of life. In an age when the world appears to be a wasteland and life is steeped in despair, injustice and alienation, and when writers are seen grouping and questing for values and happiness, it is a great treat for the reader to discover the assertion of deathless life triumphant over every other thing in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya.

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s affirmative vision of life is glaringly, but not undramatically and inartistically, reflected in his belief in the bright side of human existence with which his novels conclude, in his faith in the unfathomable richness and sacredness of man’s spirit which cannot be crushed by adversity and humiliation, and in his conviction that the evil forces in man and social treachery and corruption only test and underline the sterling qualities and the resplendent spirit of man.

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s characters are related with the personalities in colonial Indian situations. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, and other political and national leaders show their glimpses through Bhattacharya’s characters.
Words and snatches from Gandhiji’s or Nehru’s speeches – recapitulations of recent Indian and world history – help to evoke the appropriate historical background; the main characters in the novels tend to merge with the figures of history; and types, symbols, myths and individuals mingle and fuse to throw us off our guard.

If the whole action of the novel *Shadow from Ladakh* is something of a shadow-play cast by the Chinese peril, many of the characters are shadows too – shadows chasing shadows. Satyajit in Shadow from Ladakh is Gandhi’s shadow, and Bhasker, the Chief Engineer of Steeltown is almost a Nehruistic symbol or shadow, Satyajit’s Gandhigram is distantly patterned after Gandhiji’s Sevagram, and Bhasker’s Steeltown could likewise be one of the dream-edifices of Nehru, one of the new temples in the secular India of Nehru’s imagination.

As for the characters in his novel, though they rise from common society to a personality, they present their typical identity as Indian. They take inspiration from Gandhian thoughts and work in society forgetting self. They become a part and parcel of the complex issues in and around their society. Bhattacharya seems to express full confidence in the practicability of Gandhian Ram Rajya with some modifications. But credit must go to him for delineating this Indian Dream throughout his writings. In *A Goddess Named Gold* the quest for righteous actions, which a free nation must perform in order to fulfill its destiny, continues. In *Shadow from Ladakh* the quest for
Gandhian Ram Rajya may be seen in full operation in Gandhigram with its social, economic, political, religious and moral ramifications. But the marriage of Bhashkar and Sumita, symbolizing the compromise between Steeltown and Gandhigram shows that Bhattacharya offers a modification of Gandhian Ram Rajya. He clearly rejects the Gandhian ascetic stress in favour of Tagore’s aesthetic stress at personal as well as social levels. This comprehensive treatment of the Indian Dream has not been attempted by other Indo-Anglian writers except Anand. However, when the question of realizing this dream in art form arises, Bhattacharya scores over because, as has already been mentioned, he does not resort to direct statement as does Anand through his protagonists.

A moral approach or a commitment to faith in the wider sense of a way of life has been an essential part of the Indian tradition, and though it has its own limitations, its continued survival over the decades indicates a hard core of strength. The modern Indian writers have often tried to reach this fountain-head of strength through the use of myth and legend. Most of Bhattacharya’s heroes reveal in blasphemy and his humanism seems to have no place for organized religion. His upbringing and intellectual development led him on the whole to place greater emphasis on the need to revolt against the decayed aspects of the Indian tradition than on the acceptance and upholding of the finer elements in it. Religion is not only an affair of ritual and blind belief, but is the source of moral values for most people. There is definite vindication of specific Indian values, in such
a way that Bhattacharya aligns himself more with Narayan than with Anand. Bhattacharya satirizes the blind faith of the masses in *A Goddess Named Gold* but in the same novel he upholds the moral teachings of the minstrel and we find in this novel the good always triumphs over evil. All noble characters pass a Gandhian test of courage and love and stick to rational and moral values. His sobriety and high seriousness in an age of moral and spiritual apathy mark him as a worthy descendant of Gandhi and Tagore. Hope and faith in the human spirit make him confident that man can change for the better, provided he imbibes the basic moral values of life. Once man becomes sensitive to the wrongs in society, he can change them.

The analysis of Bhatttacharya’s novels shows Bhattacharya’s achievement. He has depicted contemporary social, political, economic and religious realities of India before and after Independence. By delineating imaginative scenes as real and actual happenings, by using themes of hunger and political freedom, and by reflecting the rustic world, he wrote *So Many Hungers*. Harmonisation of the contrastive aspects of human life in the Hindu society is the theme of *Music for Mohini*. *He who Rides a Tiger* records political, social, religious and economic aspects. *A Goddess Named Gold* deals with the themes of freedom, hunger, synthesis and affirmation, while *Shadow from Ladakh* is based on the theme of synthesis of Gandhism with Nehruism or Gandhian asceticism with Tagorean aestheticism. Clash of values of the East and the West, the relationship between art
and religion and the synthesis of the old and the new are presented as the themes of *A Dream in Hawaii*.

Characters are the heart of any fiction. While using the fictional characters in his fiction, Bhabani Bhattacharya turns them into personalities which are related to real life situations in pre and post-Independent India. We find among them the thoughts of Gandhi, Nehru and other historical and political personalities and try to find those manners, those ways of life, those living styles of the real personalities as known in history or in society in Indian culture.

India is the land of Sadhus, monks, priests, and at the same time of warriors and political leaders. Bhattacharya’s characters, most of the time, work as the scavengers of society to bring the situation on the right path and to make India in its original way, named as typical India culture.

Bhattacharya’s characters, either male or female, grow from one stage to another. In the beginning, the readers experience them, as they, according to the need of change, change into personalities, and change their manners accordingly. Bhabani Bhattacharya through these characters presents the ideas and ways of life of Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.

Bhattacharya’s characters are so varied that there is no easy way to list or categorize them. They involve in giving time to others or get involved in their problems – even the projected concerns of future generation, such as the steady acts of the environmentalists or
medical research. Gift of a personality might be one’s application of energy and effort to a vacation, in a way, which allows natural talents and aptitudes to be shared with others. One’s gift might be the development of patience or learning to live in harmony with others, with nature or with demands of an occupation, organization or career. There are gifts of time, money or one’s own personality, so that the strength in the deepest part of the psyche becomes a source of inspiration or support to others.

There are many ways to discover these personalities. Here, personality becomes an abstract concept. Through the study of the personalities like Gandhi, Nehru or Tagore, these characters develop their own personality at sub-conscious level. They even don’t understand that such a personality is developed in their inner mind. But this personality is exhibited through the characters’ manners and acts in society.

Sometimes they involve into the problems of others and have an encounter with their own power and weakness. It means the development, or coming out of personality. There is much strength within them but is hidden very deep in their psyche. It is a source of their inspiration.