PREFACE

Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the most outstanding novelists in India. And he is the winner of Sahitya Akademy Award in 1967 for his ‘Shadow from Ladakh’. He represents the period of great upheaval in political and social life in India. He emerges as the important novelist who presents the contemporary situations. His fiction presents men and women characters within the Indian socio-cultural milieu. He also highlights the experiences of Indians in search of identity.

Bhattacharya’s fiction is governed by his artistic impulses. He is deeply rooted in Indian tradition. His fiction portrays the characters against the backdrop of both the urban and the sub-urban and the classes of the poor, the middle and the rich. The Bengal society is the background of all his creative writings. He presents the archetypal conflict between tradition and modernity. He generates a unique change in his fiction in presenting the women in Indian society. Though his men and women are rooted in traditional customs and norms, they are able to move out of the confinement in search of identity.

The present topic ‘Thematic concerns in the Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya’ was suggested to me by my esteemed Research Director Prof. T.Narayana, Head of the Department of English, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. After going through the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, I was very inclined to examine the special themes of East-West Encounter, Gandhi and Nationalism, and Feminine Sensibility. I have made a modest attempt to highlight Bhattacharya’s concern for the mentioned themes in this thesis.

I have attempted to study the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya in general and the special themes in particular in different chapters. In the first chapter, Introduction, an attempt has been made to trace the evolutionary development of Indian English novel from its beginnings. The first chapter gives a brief
account of pre-independence and post Independence prominent Indian English novelists and their contributions have been discussed. I have tried to discuss the steady and constant development of fictional art in the growing cannon of Bhattacharya’s fiction. It also deals with Bhattacharya’s birth, parentage, schooling, higher education, marriage and his professional career as an educationist, novelist, and the themes which he dealt in his novels, his skills, style, and his narrative technique.

The second chapter focuses on the theme of East-West used by Bhattacharya in his novels. It deals with a comparative study with the other novelists in the Indian English fiction. It analyses all the novels of Bhattacharya from the first novel “So Many Hungers” (1947) to the latest novel “A Dream in Hawaii” (1973). It shows us Bhattacharya’s portrayal of the repercussions of the East-West political encounter in so far as it affected the attitudes of the people and their values. It also reveals how Bhattacharya shows us how the Western influences creep slowly in to the habits and attitudes of the Indians and modernization in the external aspects of life. This chapter shows us the symbols of westernization in society and speaks of the internal change in the attitudes and outlook of the people of India. It focuses on Bhattacharya’s criticism and time, besides his protest against the orthodox Hindus who have forgotten their true religion. It also deals with the writer’s views on cultural pollution, and the results of a clash between cultures. Finally we find his dealing in with conflict and compromise between two distinct modes of life, and his exhortation for the importance and relevance of amalgamation of the two cultures for enjoying the benefits of both the cultures rather than wavering between them, the necessity for blending the old and the new values, the spiritualism and the new values, the spiritualism of the East and the materialism of the West, for attaining fulfillment.
The third chapter “Nationalism and Gandhism” focuses on Bhattacharya’s analysis of freedom struggle in India. It reveals Bhattacharya’s emphasis on Gandhi who influenced the Indians during the movement. It shows us Bhattacharya’s intention to focus on Non-violence which is meant for Gandhi, a deep faith in love for all, whether friends or enemies, a complete dissociation from evil, and abstention from any brute reaction as retaliation.

The fourth chapter “Feminine Sensibility” reflects Bhattacharya’s favoring of social and economic justice to women. It focuses on his Indian sensibility and attitude through the women characters in his novels. It also focuses on the tragedy of unsuccessful maiden, marital life and of widowhood. It reveals the ways in which he advocates the freedom, liberty and emancipation of women in order to extricate them from servitude and inhuman torture to which they were subjected by male sex, and their own. It raises Bhattacharya’s voice for the need of emancipation of Indian women. It focuses on his works which sought to evoke pity and sympathy for the socially and sexually tortured woman who dare not raise their voice for deliverance from persecution. This chapter shows us Bhattacharya’s attempt to explore into the deeper chamber of the mind that reacts passively and timidly to various forms of oppression.

The fifth chapter “The Short Fiction of Bhattacharya” presents an analysis of Bhattacharya’s short fiction such as Steel Hawk and Other Stories, The Golden Boat, Indian Cavalcade, etc. The sixth chapter “Narrative Technique of Bhabani Bhattacharya” focuses on Bhattacharya’s powers of description, explanation, dramatization, creativity and characterization which are very vivid and realistic. And the Seventh chapter “Conclusion” briefly summarizes the arguments present in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya.

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