THE EAST – WEST ENCOUNTER

Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the novelists of Indo-Anglian fiction who has shown the East-West encounter in his works. He spent a part of his early days in India, studied in London and obtained Ph.D. Degree from the University of London and later settled abroad. Thus he is one of the few Indian writers who have a close acquaintance with the life in the East and the West. The West appears in his novels some times as a character, sometimes as an attitude or a set of values. He wrote his novels during twilight of the freedom struggle. In the years following Independence, a number of novels have appeared where the conflict between the two cultures is on the personal level, whose theme may be called an individual’s search for identity in a changing India.

Bhattacharya has shown an unabating interest in the interaction of the two sets of values that exist side by side. He is more seriously and consistently involved with the East-West theme. He does not compromise to render his vision into a public language.

His education in London proved very significant in his career as a writer. Bhattacharya was influenced by the ideals of democracy as preached by British statesmen. He is made aware of his Indianness as well as of the difference in the two systems of values. The inter-cultural nature of his being has become the theme of profound interest. The confrontation of these two kinds of values has become one of the major concerns in his novels (Music for Mohini, Shadow from Ladakh, and A Dream In Hawai).

The proximity of the two opposing cultures is bound to give rise to a clash of two values. The encounter and the resultant clash find a natural reflection in his novels. There are some characters representing aspects of the Western Culture, and reacting differently to their encounter with the Indian culture. The conflict between the two modes of being appears on different
levels i.e., the individual level, the group level, the political level, the cultural level, and on industrial and agrarian levels. Bhattacharya advocates a compromise between two ways of life.

The first novel of Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers*, portrays the fortunes of the village of Baruni. It is the time of the freedom struggle in India. The novel is studied as a portrayal of the Indian society as the time of Quit India movement and of the corruption in personal and social life that set in during the British rule of India. It is also studied here as a portrayal of the breakdown of values in the Indian society during 1940s. The novel exposes the corrupt practices that established their roots in Indian society during British rule. It will be absurd if any one were to maintain that the corruption in personal and public life in India was wholly due to the British rule. It should be pointed out that how deterioration in the society was one of the negative results of the alien administrative system.

The British colonial policy, which was based on the exploitation of the resources of its colonies, was at the root of the destruction of Indian villages like Baruni in *So Many Hungers*, Behula in *Music for Mohini*, Sonamitti *Goddess NamedGold*, *He Who Rides a Tiger* etc. economically, and dealt a death blow to the artisan and the labourer, making the poor Indian poorer. The police, the courts, the legal system, all the sections of the government, the legacy from the British, become so corrupt that real justice was not meted out to the genuine sufferer. The mechanically and industrially finished goods from the West completely destroyed the rural economy. Craze for material wealth is so pervasive in Indian society that even religious heads succumb to it giving the go-by to their responsibility as guardians of the society and side with the British. They receive large gifts from the government by way of cash and kind to discourage participation of people in the struggle against the alien government.
So Many Hungers presents Indian rural life under the British rule and its emergence as a revolutionary village during the freedom struggle. It is in a corner of Bengal. This tranquil village is suddenly thrown into political turmoil, influenced by the impact of Gandhian movement. The important factor to be noted in this context is that during the British rule corruption steadily crept into the body-politics and placidity and peace one observes in the novel are but a deceptive facade. The presence of the West is felt not through mechanization and industrialization as in the novel, Shadow from Ladakh but through the oppression imposed by the departments of government like the police, the legal system and revenue system, all of which operate perversely and the corruption that is rampant in the rank and file of public servants.

Baruni is a small, traditional and cultural village. In to this traditional society is shown the seeds of revolution and change by the old man, Devesh Basu. The period described in Baruni is the time when the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi was at its height. The village is blessed with peace and prosperity as long as it does not interfere with the policies of the rulers.

Devesh Basu, an old man, and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi tries to make the people realize how they are exploited by the British. He preaches to them the principles of Mahatma Gandhi.

Fishermen who flourished earlier in their occupations, have now to turn to land, as they are unable to stand against merciless police of the rulers who forcefully damage their fishing boats in fear of war with Japan. Not only peasants, every section of people suffer the debilitating effects of the Western influence. The grain is carried to huge mills in the cities brought from the village. It in turn reaches the village through retail merchants. The villagers suffer to buy rice at much higher rate than what they used to pay previously. In consequence, an artificial or manmade famine occurs in the village people start
to migrate to the city to save their lives. In this manner, the country is exploited by the rulers.

Wings of government like the police which are expected to take care of the well being of people; become oppressive and prove a menace to society. The freedom movement under the Mahatma’s leadership is banned by the government. The police descend on Baruni because a mendicant one of the peasants of the village narrates revolutionary views to the people against the Western colonialism. The people of the village are familiar with corrupt practices of the police force and how it extracts cash and kind from the innocent villagers under numerous threats. So Devesh Basu alarms people against the Government by telling ‘Be strong. Be true. Be deathless.’

The legal system is also corrupt and never lives up to the concept of equality of all before law. The fishing boats of the villagers are smashed and Kanu and the other peasants arrested for their nationalist activities. The courts of law also add their weight in destroying the rural economy.

To oppose a strong government one must have moral and material resources. Of moral resources the Indians, under Mahatma’s leadership, had plenty –spinning, and boycotting the foreign goods were a step towards arresting the flow of national wealth towards the West. The weapons fashioned by the freedom fighters to oppose the British were not made of metal but moral fiber. They were Truth, Non-violence, Ahimsa, and Non-cooperation. In this unequal fight between the thoroughly mechanized and industrialized West and the totally agrarian and backward subcontinent, India, no other weapon would have been as powerful as that employed by Gandhi.

The National movement gathered momentum and force in an unexpected measure as 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
throw their conformity to winds and join hands in the mass upsurge. The movement revolutionizes the lives of even women.

The new system of education under the British also has had its share in shaping the public opinion and encouraging the freedom struggle. Rahoul, the elder son of Samarendra Basu, is educated in the city and abroad. Samarendra Basu is a selfish, money-minded business man. He wishes his son to become a great scientist. But the education Rahoul has received gives him an insight into the real malady that ails India under the British and so he joins the national movement without aspiring for a job in the government.

India is a country of innumerable castes, creeds, faiths and geographical and regional variations. The maintenance of differences, and levels in society helped the British to perpetuate their power over India. This was one reason why they did not indulge in large scale social and religious reform in the country. This, in addition to power, gave them the title of being fair and non-interfering in an occupied country. The administrative set-up established by the British with its hierarchy of officials became lax and loose in its operation owing to the vastness of the country and gave rise to corruption. At the same time of the freedom struggle corruption was high in every field of public life. During the peak period of the national struggle the men and women of Baruni are arrested.

‗So Many Hungers‘ portrays the repercussions of the East-West political encounter in so far as it affected the attitudes of the people and their values, the decadence that set in even in the rural society of India, and the perversity, inhumanity and exploitation that were practiced by the government police and selfish money minded tradesmen like Samarendra Basu and the consequent changes in the traditions and customs of the people and in their attitudes and values. One finds a steady decadence in society in all walks of life.
Rahoul’s stay in England makes him thoroughly westernized in dress and food habits. There are exclusive clubs for Indians and Europeans in the city. Rahoul has a habit of going to clubs and hotels. He also takes his wife to the hotels. He has the habit of drinking whisky and dancing in the clubs. Regarding habits of dress, there is a great leap towards modernization. Rahoul is modern in his dress as he wears a suit and needless to say his dress does add to his sense of self-esteem. He encourages his wife to wear sari more attractively than the routine style.

Western influences thus creep slowly into the habits and attitudes of the Indians and modernization in the external aspects of life inevitably sets in. These symbols of Westernization in society speak of the internal change in the attitudes and outlook of the people of India which clearly shows that the influence of the West is so strong that even a gentle man like Rahoul cannot escape from it. The external symbols of western culture add to the comfort and pleasure of the individual and the average Indian without strong roots in his tradition is easily carried away by them.

In his novel *So Many Hungers* the protagonist, Rahoul’s return after a period spent abroad forms an important incident. Rahoul’s awareness of two civilizations intensifies his concern with his own identity. The homecoming of the protagonist is not the central incident and it does not affect the protagonist personally, but it illustrates the interaction between two cultures.

The plot of the novel is woven out of one of the main strands the story of Rahoul, the young scientist. Rahoul is a son of a lawyer Samarendra Basu who is a selfish speculator having no sense for the fellow beings. Rahoul is unlike his father. Rahoul’s story is a representation in miniature of the struggle for freedom. He has a D.Sc. degree from Cambridge where he had carried on research under a distinguished scientist. Before going to Cambridge, like thousands of other young men, he contemplated joining the Independence
movement and seeking arrest, but his father had shrewdly managed to send him away to England.

After his return, he joins in a college in the city and continues his research on Cosmic Rays. He is happily married and a daughter is born to him. Rahoul is a mixture of the two cultures. He has many Western tastes. He loves to go to a hotel with his wife for dinner and dance. He is fond of the Western music and dance. He drinks Brandy and loves the good things in life. Sometimes he wonders at age old customs in India. He desires to see his wife in Western or modern clothes. He encourages her to adapt to the modern culture. But she is different from her husband and likes to be a traditional Indian woman. When Rahoul arrives at the peasant’s house in the company of Devata, Kajoli an innocent country girl receives him in a traditional manner, removing the shoes from his feet, pouring cold water on the feet and washing off the dust. Rahoul is embarrassed and tries to expostulate, but he is reminded that Kajoli is ‘a well-bred peasant girl’ with ‘a legacy of manners as old as India’.

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.

Rahoul is deeply touched by the sight of the sufferings of the destitute. He is more and more convinced that foreign government is incapable of solving the problems of the country and that freedom is an imperative need. When students in large numbers join in the Quit India movement, he feels that it is his duty to be with them. He seeks the advice of his grandfather who is a great
patriot and freedom fighter, and now is in prison in Dehra Dun and then takes the plunge.

Rahoul’s aim is to serve the poverty stricken, and diseased people of India. He wants to mitigate their suffering. He runs a Relief Centre where he has been feeding the destitute people daily. He is seen playing different roles. Firstly, he is foreign-educated, benignant doing his best for his backward country. He is a humble person and devoid of all vanity. He is a keen server of life in India and provides the novelist with an opportunity to project an image of the country as seen by a sympathetic man. Moreover, he is a patriot and a freedom fighter and fights for the nation’s sake. He represents the best of the Western education characters. The people’s reciprocal response to him is one of love and devotion, almost worship.

Although Rahoul has been living in England for a time, he is not separated at ‘The Soul of India’. His relation with the people is strong. He has affection for them. He helps them with food and shelter during the Bengal famine. He fights for their sake and goes to jail. He represents the class of foreign educated patriots.

The English system of education is the major outside influence that ushered India into modern age. The sections of population that were deeply affected by the new system were the Indian middle class, and upper middle class would not have come into existence, but for the new system of education. Indians of all castes and all classes were in favor of the new system of education as it seemed to open new employment opportunities to them. As a matter of fact, the early batches that received the new education were absorbed in government services lucratively, so that the new education came to be considered a sure way to a career. The new education removes young men farther and farther away from traditional moorings as is evident from
Bhattacharya’s first novel to the latest. It makes men less sentimental and more and more pragmatic, and sometimes self-centered.

Firstly, city life and its ways wean the individuals away from customary practices. They abhor the restrictions of caste, sect and sub-sect in Indian society. They look down on the dowry system and on the importance paid to the stars and horoscopes in arranging marriages. Their ideas of love and marriage are new. Their views on marriage, money and time are thoroughly the combination of both West and East. Their education not only makes them neglect the religiosity and age-old traditions but also gives them strength to mock them.

There is a degree of sophistication 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.

Bhattacharya’s second novel, *Music for Mohini* (1952) portrays the opposite characteristics of the Indian heritage and Western culture. He describes the consequences of post-Independence in India. 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. Dr. Syamala 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”
Bhattacharya shows how the family system ties traditional loyalties and relationships. The novel is a biography of the heroine, the only daughter of a professor, a widower. The motherless daughter is brought up in the city. She has every comfort at the parental shelter. The professor is man of Western concepts of reason. He does not support the defects of age-old culture. In spite of the protests of his mother against women’s education, he sends his daughter to an English convent and lets her learn music. Mohini enjoys her youth by spending her time playing and quarrelling with her brother Heeralal. We can see this in the following scene

“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!”²

This teenage girl is very enthusiastic to read romantic novels. She collects the novels from her friends and reads them secretly.

“Father fumbled for his glases with a knowing “Hoon!” and Prompted again by an uncanny sense, he leaned over her Desk. There lay the book she had hurriedly opened to pore a Bengali novel she had borrowed from Reba her school friend. “Ancient India, my studious girl?”
Beige ear lobes peeped from under wings of black hair. Thick Fingers took hold of an ear above its gold, bell-shaped pendant
and shook it gently. “The poisoned –er-so!”
And the other ear. “So!” Her mouth dropped open. She was startled, pale with Confusion”.

The Professor loves his children very much. Even after the death of his wife he does not marry another woman for the sake of his children. He is not only educated but a man of modern views. He does not accept the age old blind beliefs. He desires to bring up his children to a good position by providing them English education. He does not believe in orthodox views and horoscopes. He honors his old mother but does not support her as she is a staunch pillar of orthodox views. The old mother does not allow the granddaughter to go out from the house for her studies and to learn music and to sing songs. She believes that if women of traditional families go outside, it will be treated mean in the traditional Hindu society.

“Girls of the most respectable houses and ladies of the highest social status have put their songs on gramophone records. Why this fuss?”

When the professor ridicules her words, the old mother tries to melt the professor by black mailing with the words

“Send me away to the Holy city. Let me not take one more Mouthful of your food or even drink one sip of water in this House”.

With these like statements she always melts the Professor and brings him to her way. In spite of his wisdom of the well versed, he many times bends before his mother and follows her advice in the process of bringing up his children and housekeeping. Even she opposes English education to girls. The professor plans to send Mohini to an English convent but the old mother opposes his son to send his daughter to an English convent against the age old traditions. This is
a common and typical scene in any traditional family in India of post Independence. It is a friction between two generations of opposite poles. Dr. Syamala 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”.

Bhattacharya focuses light on the social evils which became common and deep rooted in Indian society. All those social evils are decried and attacked by Bhattacharya. He boldly rejects the practices of Sati, polygamy, child marriage, and marriages of minor girls. The girls have no right to go to school. The girls are married under age. One such example is that the old mother forces her son to search for a groom for Mohini as she has already crossed seventeen, when the professor calls her child.

“Old mother pressed her hand to her cheek in utter amazement.
Mohini, a child?
Mohini, a woman for four whole years, a child?
Seventeen!
And no horoscope made for her yet.”

The old mother forces the Professor to find a groom but the Professor is against the child marriage and maiden marriages under age. He questions his mother:

“Mohini fit for marriage?
Look, mother,
I pull my own ears in retribution.
Is that not enough?”
The Professor stands for Western concepts of liberty of thought, reason and innovation. Therefore he criticizes the prevalent social and religious practices of the Hindu society. It is a criticism and protest against the evils in the society of the time. It is a protest against the orthodox Hindus who have forgotten their true religion. Its place has been taken over by ritualism and blind faith. The society has been suffering from several serious evils. Bhattacharya takes up the cause of Hindu religion and society, attempts to reform them. The novelist thereby feels confident about the religion and society, makes the readers understand, and develops faith in them and inspire to remove their shortcomings.

The novelist shows how western educated people start to think in modern way. The educated ones deny accepting the old practices. They start to question the validity of age old practices. Bhattacharya exposes the new attitude of people on social institutions like marriage undergo a change. 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 is seen with family welfare and gains the upper hand.

Mohini is attracted to these new concepts of love and marriage. She desires to become a film star. She is praised for her beauty and sweet tone by Somir, a tall handsome boy who is one of her admirers. He further praises her that she has talent to become a film star. She has some other admirers Ananda, Arun etc. Mohini is attracted to the concept of love as a sweet memory in life. As she watches it in the case of Reba who always gets love letters from boyfriends. Even she watches a love affair between Bindu, their house maid and a snake charmer. So Mohini develops interest to have a boy friend as a lover to gets a chance to go to movie without the escort of her father and old mother. In the theatre Mohini feels very thrilled to watch a film in absence of her father and Old Mother.
The Old Mother restricts Mohini in so many ways. When a love scene appears on the screen Mohini has to close her eyes. But now she has no restrictions on her. She can enjoy all scenes in the film. Unexpectedly she finds Somir, her boyfriend in the theatre in the interval and she is invited to the box as his second reserved seat is vacant. She goes to box and sits beside Somir in the box. She is excited to sit by a boyfriend. They talk of the film and of other films till the lights go off. When lights go off, Mohini’s face flushes in the dark, staring ahead, twisting a tiny handkerchief with nervous fingers. Suddenly Somir takes her hand and presses it a little, tries to kiss her but she averts it smoothly. She feels anxiety and recollects the novel “The Poisoned Kiss” and is thrilled and shocked by this sudden incident.

Bhattacharya deals with the theme of cultural pollution. The novelist describes the results of a clash between cultures. The western influences and practices are shown as new tendencies in the lives of Indians. Going to films, travelling by cars and smoking cigarettes (Somir lights a cigarette in the theatre,) all these are Western influences. People start to think that falling in love is a great thing. But there another negative impact is shown by the novelist. Reba is free minded, girl she can manage more boys as her lovers and she gets daily love letters from them.

Reba says:

“I get a letter almost every day, don’t I?
Almost. There are so many of them;
Monu, Pankaj, Borun, Sukumar, Premendra.
It’s hard to keep count!”

Mohini admires Reba as she is lucky to have many boyfriends. This kind of attitude came into the minds of the Indians due to westernized culture.
The Old mother many times forces the Professor to find a groom for Mohini. The Professor starts to find a suitable groom to Mohini. The groom parties come one after the other to interview Mohini. The first one is old fashioned and they do not bring the groom. The elders in the party start to interview Mohini as:

“The horoscope is favorable,
Your stars are at peace with stars of our son.
Tell us, how many divine incarnations have descended on this earth of ours?
The names of the stars that make human destiny?
What is Yoga?
The dowry you offer, sir, isn’t enough.
We would take your offer if the maid were Well versed in our Ancient culture.
She isn’t in the present circumstances; Dowry must be the decisive factor.
Think it over.”

After a fortnight, the second party arrives to interview Mohini. The groom is now in the party, they survey the girl from foot to head. They make Mohini walk a few steps. They fumble with her prettily arranged hair and unloose it down her back to know its length. They rub her face with their thumbs to make sure the fair complexion is natural, and not of paint. The women stoop to pull up her sari to the knees to inspect the shape of her ankles and legs. Their behavior makes mohini gulp in shame. The professor rises angrily sends away the party. The party goes outside by telling:

“Ruffian! Mad man! We’ll see how you get a match for your daughter”.
Mohini feels sad about the condition of her father. She weeps and expresses her pity her father. Even a well educated man bends before meaningless customs and traditions to arrange marriage to his daughter. This scene reveals how the rigid customs play key role in the lives of Indians. Mohini questions her father as:

“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!”

Swayamvara meant a woman had the right to choose her husband. One auspicious day the wooers were all asked to the bride’s house. The bride, bejeweled, garland in hand, walked around and she stood a little while before each wooer, looking down at him and then moving on till she found her true choice. Bhattacharya reveals about the glorious past in which she was honored and given an equal position along with women. But now her condition is degraded. She is imposed many restrictions in her development.

Bhattacharya points out the hypocrisy in the age old traditions and malpractices under the customs. All of them are invented just to make women weak and slaves to men. These kinds of malpractices are questioned by the novelist through the dialogue of the character Mohini who stands as mouth piece of the novelist, a man of western democratic principles. The scene reveals the novelist’s struggle against of dowry system and blind faith in horoscopes. We can see the novelists attempt to reform the polluted society which was full of meaningless blind faiths. He also points out that the condition of women in the ancient days was better than in the contemporary times. In ancient days the woman had a right to choose her groom but now conditions are changed, the woman has to sit silently before the groom and has
to face mean tricks played by the grooms party. And she has to accept any man in the fair of marriage interviews. And she has to go to the groom’s house and has to spend her life obediently till the end. The intention of the novelist is to reveal that a woman is made voiceless in the Indian society.

Mohini gets two more matches, one is rejected by the Old Mother as she is annoyed with the party because they do not bring their elders and their behavior is too advanced and westernized. They are not so obedient and even they smoke before them without any respect and hesitation. The old mother accepts the fourth match because the horoscope of the groom suits with that of Mohini. The name of the new groom is Jaydev. Jaydev is a scholar and is doing research on Indian culture and civilization. He belongs to very rich family which is respected by the people of Baruni a small and remote village in Bengal. The Professor dislikes sending his daughter to the remote place as he thinks that his daughter has been brought up in the city and she may not exist in such small village. But there is no way for the Professor except to agree for sake of his mother as she forces him to accept the match because the horoscopes match with each other.

After her marriage, Mohini travels along with the groom to her in-law’s house which is very old fashioned and called the Big-house. She faces a quite opposite and new atmosphere. She was brought up in a city (Calcutta) atmosphere but now she has to live in this small village Baruni. She does not know even the customs of the village and of the Big-house. Previously she enjoyed full freedom at father’s shelter. She used to go outside freely to the school and music practice. Often she goes to films and used to read novels and magazines and played with brother and quarreled on silly points with her old mother. She talked freely, and shouted loudly. She wore fashionable dresses according to her taste. Moreover she used to sing joyously in a high pitch to her throat.
But now onwards there are many restrictions on her freedom under the name of traditions and customs. She must not laugh and speak loudly. She has to wear cotton saris only. She has to dress her hair traditionally and the provided traditional and old model ancestral ornaments to be worn. The daughter-in-law of the Big-house should not go outside on foot. If there is a reason to go outside the palanquin will be arranged. She has to attend to all house hold duties after lighting the lamp in the prayer room. Once she used to eat different tasty species of fish and other non-vegetable food cooked in mustered oil. But in the Big-house fish and any kind of non-vegetable items will not be served. Above all this passionate music lover must not sing in high pitch to her throat.

Mohini’s Mother-in-law is a staunch pillar of orthodoxy. Even she is tougher than the Professor’s mother. Every time she teaches to Mohini how to behave to save and protect the traditional name and customs of the Big-House. Always she cuts off the freedom of Mohini under the name of tradition and culture. Jaydev’s mother is very beautiful with a fair complexion, facial features and long hair. But she cuts her long hair into short and wears white sari only as per custom the widow must wear a white sari. When her husband died she became ready to sacrifice her life on the funeral pyre of her husband’s dead body but she altered her opinion to look after her son Jaydev. She eats with her left hand as she dedicated her right hand to lord Siva to save the life of Jaydev from a severe sickness. She strictly follows religious rituals and remains fasting on Ekadasidays. She does everything for the sake of her son and the reputation of the Big-house. She blindly follows astrology. She is not harmful but orthodox sometimes makes her behavior irritate others. This is because of a lack of education and reasonable thinking.

Once an astrologer told her that there is danger to the life of Jaydev in his twenty sixth year. He told the remedy that the danger would be avoided by her grandson born to Jaydev. So many times she forces Mohini to beget a son
early. Even she scolds Mohini as a childless woman. One day Jaydev is bit by a snake in the farm. His mother blindly believes it has happened as told by the astrologer. Of course the snake is poison less but her blind faith does not leave her mind. She has great faith in the village goddess and she blindly believes that the goddess blesses with the children any woman who sacrifices her blood from her bosom. So the Mother goes to the village shrine of goddess along with Mohini and forces her to shed blood from her bosom. Mohini does not believe in those kind of blind faiths but she starts to do it as she has no way except to do what her mother-in-law has said. When Jaydev comes there, he resists his mother and saves his wife from the barbarous act of blood sacrifice. Bhattacharya brings the quite opposite characters under the same roof. Mohini stands for the characteristics of Modern, advanced and western culture. Whereas Jaydev’s mother stands for orthodox, age old and barbarous.

When we peep into the marriage life of Mohini and Jaydev, Mohini is one of the Bhattacharya’s heroines full of Western qualities. She was provided full freedom and looked after well by the professor. She was brought up in the city under the atmosphere of Western culture. She has many modern habits of reading novels, watching films, travelling by car. She is a radio artist and she wants to become a film star. She desires to be praised and flattered by boyfriends, getting to be loved and moved together. She does not know the age old traditions, and the countryside culture and atmosphere. She never expects to go to a village in her life but unexpectedly the match comes from a village, the horoscopes suit with each other and the old mother forces to accept the alliance and just to satisfy her old mother she agrees to marry Jaydev. Of course she is attracted to Jaydev’s handsomeness. The professor tenderly inquires about her opinion and she says as:

“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.”

"14.1"
The professor says as:

“So, you are trying to please old mother? You don’t understand, girl. Space and emptiness could be more suffocating than din, dust and hustle unless you have a mental preparation. Even at my age, I would go mad in country! And then, consider: no more cinemas or theatres or concerts. No singing for A.I.R. (All India Radio) What about that? All your talent wasted”

The Professor finally asks her to think about her decision to go to the village but Mohini does not change her opinion. Her marriage is celebrated in a grand way. Mohini arrives to Behula with great expectations from her happy marriage life. Jaydev is an ambitious man. He is always busy with his research work and public service. He moves close with the public rather than Mohini. His aim is to develop his backward people. He spends the whole day in the public service and in the night time he is busy with his studies. He totally neglects Mohini. This unexpected behavior of her husband makes Mohini, a girl from city annoyed and pushes her into deep gloom. The conditions now seem that the professor’s fears come true. Bhattacharya takes us peep in to the mind of Mohini, how it is crushed by the encounter of the two cultures. All of her dreams and expectations go in vain. She is confused and feels sad which is shown as:

“And why must she surrender completely? Why must she bury her dreams? Love alone could make her pain worthwhile. Did he her husband, love her truly? And she touched his arm and lay listening to his low even breathing as though awaiting an answer.”
She expects his nearness but his aloofness makes her loneliness and gloomy. One day she puts on a blue Banaras silk sari, ornaments and comes to Jaydev and she suddenly bursts as:

“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?”

This silent friction between Mohini and Jaydev indicates an encounter between the cultures of the east and the west.

Jaydev is one the best heroes of Bhattacharya. He is well educated but not completely western minded. He loves his nation and prefers to live in the countryside and dedicate his life to develop the village. He loves age old traditions but fights against orthodoxy and works hard to eradicate the deep rooted evils in the society. If he is compared with Rahaul Basu of ‘So Many Hungers’, Rahaul is a foreign returned scholar in science thinks advanced and loves his wife, and shares feelings freely with her. He always supports her and encourages her to wear modern dresses and takes her to hotels and clubs along with him. Even he encourages her to dance along with him in the balls. He drinks and smokes. But Jaydev is not such a person. He is completely methodical and principled.

Rahoul is a foreign returned science scholar and he knows a little about Indian culture which is taught to him by Devesh Basu, his grandfather. But Jaydev is a scholar in Indian heritage and civilization. He is not a foreign returned one, he studies in Calcutta. He has great faith in ancient Indian culture and civilization. He believes it as oldest and superior among world civilizations. His aim is to bring it to light and make it popular in the world. At the same time he does not blindly deny western views. He is a supporter of
gender equality. He believes that women in the ancient times of India played equal role with male gender. He says that they worked along with men on intellectual grounds. He advises his wife Mohini to follow the ancestral women like Mytreyi and Gargi as role models. He stresses the importance of women’s education. He says that they must be attentive as men on intellectual grounds. He suggests to Mohini to learn Sanskrit to know something about the greatness of Indian heritage.

Jaydev stands for the East but not for orthodoxy. He is inspired by the western concepts of reason, equality and liberty. The western concepts inspire him to remove the defects of the nation’s culture. He feels that the Indian culture is great and it can grow and can face the challenges of western culture. Therefore, he tries to revive the glory of the Indian culture, reform the society and religion and bring about improvement in every field of life. He thinks about his village people and provokes them to find out the causes of their misery. He realizes the necessity of bringing about desirable improvement in Hindu religion. He is against the orthodox views and blind faiths and beliefs in horoscopes and astrology. He denies such things and even he dares to protest against his mother. His mother strongly believes astrology. She is told by an astrologer that Jaydev will die in his twenty sixth year if he does not beget a child. So his mother forces Mohini to beget a son soon. Mohini fears about the news and she expects that she may not beget a son and she advises Jaydev to marry another woman to beget a son.

Thus Jaydev says to his wife as:

“We’re fighting ignorance and superstition, aren’t we?
We’re fighting the false clay foot gods.
They’ve had their day and now they must quit,
or else the true gods will elude us.
I tell you, I’m not going to die soon,
Mohini, and I don’t need a child whose luck will save me

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–what a fantastic idea!
–from the malice of the stars.
Mother makes herself unhappy because of her crazy faith.¹⁷

He protests against his mother who takes Mohini secretly to the village shrine and forces her to sacrifice blood from her bosom to Virgin Goddess who blesses women to beget children when they sacrifice their blood from their bosoms. Jaydev learns of the secret and goes to the shrine to save his wife. Mother says as:

“‘I know your mind. Heresy holds you.
Old beliefs, old morals, old values mean nothing to you.’” ¹⁸
Jaydev answers as:

“‘Values, Mother? There are values beyond your grasp, since you’ll always try to reach them with your reason, never with your feelings. Life has punished you.
Blind belief shapes your thinking;
blind belief cannot make a sentiment’”¹⁹

He works to revive the past glory of Indian culture by his research and writings. He feels that his culture is in no way inferior to that of the west and it needs only revival to stand upon or even surpass the Western culture. He introduces women’s education which brings his people in close contact with the western ideas of liberty, equality and nationalism. He brings forth progress in different spheres of village life.

He does not lose confidence in his own culture and regards western culture as his ideal. He doesn’t blindly imitate western dress, manners, literature, thought and everything else which belong to the west. But western education provides him with the opportunity to think about himself and his people and provokes him to find out the causes of the misery of his people. So
he makes concerted efforts to rid the society of its evils as well. Many social evils are defended as religious practices so that common man did not dare to break them while none of these practices have anything to do with religion. So Jaydev leads a crusade against these social evils. He preaches against caste-system, child-marriage, practice of Sati, untouchability, marriage of minor girls etc. He says as:

“Our political freedom a worth little without social uplift”

He glorifies the ancient culture of India, helps in developing confidence among village people and thus participates indirectly in the resurgence of Indian nationalism.

He is a scholar of Sanskrit. Yet he accepts many good points of Western culture. He emphasizes equality of the female with the male. Most of the social evils are discarded by him. He dedicates his life to the cause of social reform, particularly to the upliftment of women. He protests against polygamy and child marriages. He encourages inter-caste marriages and inter-dining, arranged marriages of the widows. He does a lot for the education of females. He opens a school for adults and women and he runs it on his expense. He convinces Mohini to serve the village as teacher to play her role in village building. He says as:

“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 red and write. They need the first elements of knowledge.”

He also works for the welfare of the peasants. Jaydev brings his friend Harindra, a fresh house surgeon stepped out from university to improve the
health conditions of the village people. With the help of Harindra and other young men in the village, Jaydev fights against orthodox and blind faiths in the society. Under the leadership of Jaydev they improve sanitary conditions in the village by cleaning water tanks and streets. Even they fight against polygamy and child marriages and marriages of under aged girls. They stop domination of a capitalist a seventy year old money lender who gets ready to have the hand of an under aged girl. They even correct an old priest of the lord Siva temple in the village who is a staunch pillar of orthodox. Now Mohini understands Jaydev as he is not a passive person and countryside man but a man of manliness and a real hero. She admires him as follows:

“Mohini was gazing intently at her husband.
Yes, there was true fire in him, too, deep beneath his calm.”

Thus the iron curtain disappears between Mohini and Jaydev.

Finally a city bred and village wed Mohini unites with a village bred nationalist Jaydev.

Harindra is another important character who stands for the west. He is a fresh house surgeon stepped out from university. He comes to Behula on the request of Jaydev to serve the village. He has been brought up in his uncle’s home in Calcutta. He has studied in a western-style medical school and taken the degree on his father’s consent. His father Kabiraj is well aware of the material benefit of English medical training. Kabiraj desires his son to get into service in a city hospital and earn a high steady salary. But Kabiraj has no faith in English medical system because he is a doctor of Ayurved, the traditional Indian medical science. He feels proud to practice Ayurveda because once it had prevailed for a millennium, enriched by the genius of the great physicians, Charaka and Susruta. While Harindra stands for the west, his father Kabiraj stands for the east.
Against the wish of his father to get into service in a city hospital and earn a high steady salary, Harindra comes to the village and starts his practice for the people. This incident annoys his father. Kabiraj feels that investment on his son ends in vain. Further he fears about his existence in the village as the patients show much interest in Harindra’s English medical practice. Kabiraj has already crossed seventy two so Harindra advises his father to take rest by retiring from his service. But Kabiraj does not agree with the opinion of his son. He says that he is still healthy he does not wear spectacles and has not lost a single tooth while Harindra at twenty four needs a pair of glasses over his nose. He walks miles to answer calls. 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 as:

“A doctor trained in the western way!”

It reveals a country man’s little faith in western education. Harindra does not completely put aside the ayurvedic system. He accepts only a systematic medicine made in laboratories. He syas as:

“There are many good drugs in our yurveda system, we know them, we use them, not the home products but those made in modern laboratories. What’s wrong in using 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 drungs.”

But his father scorns him as:

“And the knife? The needle? Your best weapons, aren’t they?”
This is a friction shown well by Bhattacharya as an encounter between the East and the West. Harindra not only operates the health of the country people even he resolves to operate the society by leading a group people of his kind. He takes support from Jaydev, the master of Behula. Harindra and his group are out to destroy fever mosquitoes; they demand that ponds lane grounds be kept clean, that shallow pools of water be filled up, so that mosquitoes lose their main breeding areas. They even volunteer their services free to the owner of ponds. Even they extend their programme to operate the age old orthodox society to perfection. They stop polygamy system, marriages of under aged girls; they make sixteen as minimum age for girls to be married.

They resist the hypocrisy of a money lender who gets ready to marry an under aged girl whose father borrowed money from him. They teach a lesson to the old priest of lord Siva temple who stands opposite to the group who wants to clear the stagnant water in the pond and, provokes blind faiths among the village people by telling tales like crocodile in the pond of temple is a cursed Brahmin in its past life and it must not be removed from the pond, if it is removed from the pond it will be harm to the village. So Jaydev tells about Harindra as:

“A bold selfless youth. Harindra has true fire in him”.

Harindra is very bold and determined. He faces opposition both from his father and even from outside. One moonless night Harindra is returning from a call when a man rushes out of the dark and empties a bucket of stinking water the scene raises rage in Harindra, but Jaydev consoles him as they are common in the noble efforts. More trials come in Harindra’s way but he faces all boldly. We can see his important triumph over his father. Harindra’s old mother falls sick with pneumonia. The father treats him but her illness grows worse. Harindra requests his father him to give him chance to treat her. But the father does not allow him. Her disease is not cured by the medicines of
Kabiraj and her condition becomes worse. Kabiraj fears about her condition and finally he requests Harindra to save her and he says as:

“Take charge, Harindra. I am beaten. Do what you can. Harindra, save your mother. Don’t let her leave us, my son. Harindra, hurry, my son. There is no time to lose, not one moment.”

However 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.

Harindra is not only a social servant but also a reformist and he himself practises it in his life and becomes a role model to the others. This rational thinker boldly condemns the evils in society like caste system and meaningless faiths in astrology and horoscopes. He courageously comes forward to marry Sudha, a victim of orthodox society.

Sudha belongs to a Brahmin community, a higher caste in Indian society. She is an orphan and is brought up by her great uncle, an old man. He is simple, honest, pious, and free from self-seeking. He attends voluntarily to any house is festive or funeral. When a man falls ill, he sits by the sick bed night and day. But this gentle man blindly believes in stars, and horoscopes. He compares every happening in life with the influence of stars. Because of this blind belief he remains unmarried without any development in his life. He always argues with the other persons about stars and great influence of Saturn, a crucial planet which decides the destiny of man. So he is nicknamed as Saturn’s eyesore by the villagers.
Sudha, at fifteen, is about to be given to a young handsome groom in the jute business. But the old man sits and counts luck signs in the horoscope of Sudha and he declares to the arrived party as:

“Brothers, my Sudha is unfit to wed at present.
She is under the watch of Saturn’s evil eye.
Wait a while. Wait till Saturn goes his ways”

There is uproar and the party leaves in haste. The invited village elders become enraged. Mohini weeps but the old man feels happy and triumphant in a thought that he has saved the girl from Saturn’s eye sour. So Sudha also earns the nick name of Saturn’s eye sore. She becomes a creature of the darkest ill omen. No one will marry her. The other girls of her age are married and begetting children. But she remains a lonely girl. This abandoned girl gets a chance to make friendship with a youth of the neighbor village. Near the ponds and gardens she meets him silently. But she is caught by the village elders. They judge against the love affair of Sudha. They declare that inter-caste marriages are prohibited as per village traditions. They say that a girl of higher caste girl must not marry a boy from lower caste. So her rage is doubled against the society. She develops a negative attitude towards the society. Once when she is attacked by typhoid, Harindra treats her. Meanwhile both of them fall in love, now caste system becomes an iron curtain between them because Sudha belongs to the Brahmin community and Harindra belongs to the other caste but Harindra breaks the age old tradition of caste system and marries Sudha and becomes a trend setter in the village.

Heeralal is the brother of Mohini. He is brought up in the city. Mohini and Heeralal together enjoy the childhood by playing the silly games and quarrelling on silly topics. This young boy is against age-old meaningless traditions. He does not believe in blind faiths and once he refuses an amulet to be tied to his neck by his grandmother. He does not feel superiority that he
belongs to higher caste and he freely moves with anybody without any discrimination. He makes friendship with a snake charmer who belongs to lower caste. Sometimes he visits the house of snake charmer who lives along with an old beggar woman. He eats what they provide him. He does not believe in age old blind faiths like tronching of head in name of god.

Heeralal is very affectionate towards his sister Mohini. After Mohini’s marriage Heeralal also goes along with his sister. This city bred boy has a lot of curiosity to know about the mysteries behind the powers of yoga. He thinks perhaps he can draw out the secrets from Jaydev. In their train journey he presents many doubts to Jaydev who is thought to be great scholar. Heeralal has many doubts about age old Indian traditions. He thinks those are meaningless. Melted by the condition of his sister Mohini who is going to in-law’s house and suffering from home sickness he takes pity on her and questions in his mind about the age old tradition of sending girls to in-law’s house after marriage with moist eyes as:

“Why did she have to marry?  
Why did she have to go away?  
And live among strange folk?  

This is really a Western thought expressed by Bhattacharya. Bhattacharya has exclaimed and pitied on the condition of a bride who has to go along with the groom and has to live among strangers and has to bear all new burdens and adversity silently. And Bhattacharya points out that we cannot see this kind of tradition in the west. This main concept has been shown through the novel.

Heeralal wanders by the car at home. He does not know the village atmosphere and travelling means, he feels wonder when he travels by bullock cart and palanquin after reaching the village. He is thrilled very much; he enjoys the conversation with the cart man. He wonders at the knowledge of the cartman who reveals many tricks about cart driving. Heeralal finds in the
darkness two pairs of eyeballs arriving towards the cart. He fears that the eyes may be tiger’s but the cart’s man tells him that the eyes are not of tigers’ but the oxen of the opposite cart. Heeralal wonders at knowledge and chariot skills of the cartman. Heeralal enjoys the scenery the scenery of mustered fields; they appear as golden carpet which is not available in the cities. He runs along the narrow grass ridges between cultivated strips of land. After the cart journey Heeralal travels by a palanquin along with his sister. It is another new experience not only to Heeralal but also to Mohini. They have never expected about the journey in a palanquin which is blue in colour their favorite colour as their car is blue. After their meal he is taken by arm by Jaydev to see the village. Jaydev says about the village as:

“Come, see our village, Heeralal. We have no city sights, no museum, zoo; Palaces, towers, but you’ll see trees heavy with fruit, ponds full of fish. We must find you some playmates”

Heeralal mingles very fast with the village folks. He finds the village as very clever. The village boys are very eager about city wonders. He describes them radio, airplane, elevators, ships on the river with dramatic colour. He tells them about their mansion. He also speaks about tiger and lion in the zoo. The village boys listen to everything with a lot of curiosity. Heeralal wonders at the village scenes which are strange to him in the city. He is thrilled by the heavy browed man lathered with sweat, handling lumps of flaming metal with ease. He holds his breath as a peasant lad climbs to the bushy top of a palm tree, the fearless lad slides down the great height with a pitcher of palm juice slung to his back. In turn he describes skyscraper, underground railway, submarine, x-ray, television. The village boys listen with mouth agape.
Heeralal wonders at the swimming skills of the village boys. They swim like fish. They can swim from one side to the opposite side of the pond. Even they can go and touch the bottom where it is deepest, five men height. Even they held their breath under water a good long while. They ask Heeralal whether he knows swimming. But he doesn’t know swimming and such ponds are not available in the city. He feels ashamed, but the village friends encourage him and teach him how to swim. Heeralal is moved by the affection of the village boys. His heart is melted by their hospitality and he feels a choke in his throat. He remembers that if it is the city, he will be laughed at by his friends. Bhattacharya comparatively shows the difference between the natures of village people who are careful and affectionate toward friends and guests and city people who do not have this quality of affection and support. He also compares the scenery of village in which the nature contains beauties with unpolluted atmosphere. Heeralal is cheered by the thought:

“Didi will have great fun in Behula village.”

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 seen her friends with western culture which is totally opposite to the village culture. Her city friends are polluted with western culture in their dress and behavior. One of the examples is Reba who has a number of boyfriends and daily she receives love letters from them. Mohini feels wonder to watch her. She also wishes to have at least one boy friend by which she wants her charm to be praised. This is a common crazy thing in Mohini and in her kind of girls.

After her marriage, she comes to see quite the opposite culture in the village. Renu, Meera, Maloti become her friends in the village. They are totally traditional girls and blind to the age-old customs. They do not know polished language and speak freely and frankly. They are not as sophisticated
as city girls. They are very eager to speak with Mohini and curious to see her saris and clothes from the trunk box brought by her. The girls hold their breath when she opens her trunk box. They are surprised to see different coloured varieties of saris imported from Banaras, Mysore etc. Mohini is thrilled by their unpolished language. They are curious to see the clothes, like knickers and pants among her dresses. They inquire whether she wears knickers and pants before Jaydev. One of the girls Maloti says as:

“Don’t let your husband see you with pants on, He won’t know what to do with them!” 29

Another girl says as:

“Jaydev 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.” 30

It is a clever and comparative description between the cultures of the West and the East by the novelist. In fact Mohini does not know completely about Jaydev. She has not been allowed to see and talk with Jaydev before marriage. She has seen only the photograph of Jaydev. Yet she has been attracted to his handsome figure. But she doesn’t know his nature and behavior till now. Now she learns about him from the girls. One of the girls, Meera says as:

“You have married a book warm, city fairy. He seems to have no use for our kind. I’d give anything to see how pass the night with him in the flower-bed!” 31
Now Mohini has doubts in her mind about her husband, if he is book worm, whether he is active or passive towards the romantic matters with his wife in privacy. This city girl expects her husband would be active with his wife.

In the room of the flower-bed-night Jaydev thinks about his wife as:

“Did she know the true value of marriage?  
The deeper meaning of their new relationship?  
Did she know herself, know the Maitreyi in her?”

He feels that it is his foremost duty to make her aware of herself. He has been telling himself for several hours, to tell it to her. He speaks as:

“Bonds interminable hold us in sacred relation, more sacred than any on earth, a common synonym for the wife is partner in faith: She shares her husband’s thoughts and ideas just as he shares hers. They have one spiritual income between them.”

She is astonished by the unexpected event which takes place in the flower-bed-room and whispers as:

“Was this the moment for such stiff talk?”

It is an encounter between the couple one who belongs to city of the western culture and the other who belongs to the East and it is also an encounter between two passions one belongs to the body and the other belongs to the mind. Bhattacharya shows us the age old traditional Indian marriage system which binds two persons who belong to two different cultures of the East and the West. Mohini binds herself to the customs and hides her passions. She is one of the examples of a typical woman. The novelist brings the reader to watch the factual condition of an Indian woman who does not have a right to choose their life partner and silently they bear burdens before and after
marriage. Rooplekha, sister of Jaydev is one of such women. She is brought-up in the village and married to a city doctor. Her condition is quite similar to that of Mohini. She has no awareness about city life till her marriage but after her marriage she alters her life style according to city culture. She understands the present condition of Mohini and consoles her as:

“I must tell you my story, sister, that you may learn from my experience. You are city-bred, village-wed. I am village-bred, city wed. We share one common lot: we have been pulled up by the root. A city has as little mercy for an alien as the country, no more, no less. Years it was before I could fit in, Mohini, hard years.”

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 as:

“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”
It reveals the feeling of the novelist that Indian culture was great and it could grow and could face the challenge of the Western culture. It reveals the Novelist’s idea to bring about desirable improvement in the nation. The Novelist feels that the country’s culture is no way inferior to that of the west and it needs only revival to stand upon or even surpass the Western culture. And he wishes the cooperation of a woman in the task of nation’s development. He doesn’t say either culture is inferior but he points out that there are disadvantages with the both cultures. The novelist condemns that orthodox views are hurdles in the way of development. Rooplekha doesn’t support her mother on grounds of her religiosity but she appreciates her as a woman of sentiment. She says about her as:

“My mother is the usual orthodox Hindu woman, only she is more intense than others, and all her faith is pinned to family tradition. No deviation for her, not one inch. Stern willed, though tender at heart, she is a simple soul, with singleness of purpose, a one eyed-mind. She exits for the Big House: She would not have it changed the least way.” 37

She appreciates her brother as man of modern views and that he condemns orthodoxy both at home and outside. She tells about him as:

“And Jaydev? He has no heart for such worship; he has no liking for ritual of any kind, but, out of his love for mother, he bends to her eccentric will.” 38

Jaydev is attracted to the western thought but does not lose confidence in his own culture. He regards Western culture as his ideal. He is inspired by the western thought. 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. She says about him as:
“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”.

The main characters and heroes of Bhattacharya are individualists. In his ‘Music for Mohini’, the hero, Jaydev and his friend Harindra are indomitable in spirit. Both of them are rationalists. They rebel against the existing conditions in the society. They have faith in the possibility of controlling nature for reformers and visionaries who believe in the prospect of improvement.

Jaydev is a subtle scholar in the philosophies of the East and the West. He is harmony of cultures for India. He works on the culture patterns of East and West. His work has a message of deep significance for the Indians in their search for a true way of life. He attempts to revive the values and trends of Hindu life. He is enthusiastic to combine the political and social independence that will cultivate spiritual power among people. He knows that illiteracy which is a great hurdle in the growth of the nation must be driven out. He thinks and works for the people. He is always ready to sacrifice his wealth for the happiness of people.

Jaydev refuses to pay heed to astrology. He is not intimidated by the prediction of his death at the age of twenty-eight and he asks his wife not to be afraid of it. He is against the beliefs in horoscopes. He boldly faces his orthodox mother, and says her not to be a slave to absurd beliefs. He works to abolish child marriages in the village and fixes the age limit for a girl to be married at fourteen.

Harindra is another young visionary and rebel of Bhattacharya. He has studied Medicine in the city. He is invited by Jaydev to Behula to serve the country people. He is the son of Kabiraj, an Ayurvedic practitioner in the
village. There is a clear contrast between father and son. Harindra stands for the west and Kabiraj stands for the East. There is a conflict between Ayurveda and Modern Medicine. Harindra argues the advantages of English medicine over Indian Ayurveda while Kabiraj is mocking at Western Medicine. But Harindra wins over his father in the end in the treatment of his mother who is caught by severe sickness of pneumonia. Kabiraj admits his inability to save his wife and praises his son and his talent.

Harindra leads a group of young men in the village, who are dissatisfied with the existing order, decide to act against the conservatives. They prevent a marriage of an elderly money lender who lost his third wife and plans to marry a very young girl whose father is heavily indebted to him.

He is not ready to accept age old blind beliefs in the society. He mocks at the myth of the devout crocodile and tells the scandalized priest that the place where the crocodile would be most comfortable is the zoo in the city. He is realist, reformist, and humanist. He pities Sudha, a higher caste girls, victim of stars, forbidden for marriage known as Saturn eye sore and marries her by breaking barriers of age old caste system. In this way Bhattacharya creates Harindra as a representative of the forces of modernity. The novelist indicates that the old order is challenged.

Even the gentle professor mocks at the practice of consulting horoscopes in the age of science and refuses to pay heed to astrology. He does not agree with his old mother who forbids education for women. He joins his daughter in an English School against his mother’s wish. Even his son, Heeralal refuses to wear an amulet round his neck as recommended by the old mother.

Belief in man’s power to master nature through a rational thinking becomes the main object in the novel. While the traditional people sit mourning their fate, speaking nostalgically of the good old days and the
debased state of affairs at present, Bhattacharya’s educated wise men hope for the progressive world.

In his third novel “He Who Rides a Tiger”, Bhattacharya declares crusade on caste system which has become a deep rooted problem in India. Bhattacharya reflects the atmosphere of the late twenties and the early thirties, the air was filled with the dust of politics and infected with the fumes of man’s inhumanity to man. He advocates the down trodden and the underprivileged. He is preoccupied mainly with the problems of oppression and exploitation of the lowest classes by the upper caste of lower castes of the Hindu society; and the ignorance and superstition of the people caused by illiteracy and orthodoxy that are hurdles to the progress of the society. He depicts the problems of the poor and backward classes, suggesting the magnitude of the harm it has done by impeding the harmonious and development of society as a whole while violating the sense of humanity in the most brutal manner. The oppression and tyranny of high-caste Hindus are vividly shown here –their ruthlessness, their cruelty, their hypocrisy and their love for mastery and dominance over the low castes. Again this is shown the sad and passive suffering of the low castes with all their agony and pain.

*He who rides a Tiger* is story of a poor black smith, Kalo who belongs to a lower cast. He is an illiterate but competent in his trade. His wife died in childbirth. For the sake of his daughter who is to be looked after well he doesn’t think about his second marriage. Of course Kalo is an illiterate but he is not an orthodox man. He has the modern views. Kalo feels inferior for his illiteracy. He believes that literacy makes man perfect and so he determines to send his daughter to school. He boldly joins his daughter in a mission school against the age old customs according to which the children of lower caste must not be sent to school for education. If they are joined in school they will be insulted. However Kalo joins his daughter in a mission school, but he hides himself from the public sight in fear of insult from the upper caste people.
He daily sends his daughter off near to school gate but does not go inside the school. Even if Lekha requests him to go inside the school he doesn’t go in fear of the gate man who may recognize him as black smith. Bhattacharya describes his agony as:

“How could he tell her that he did not want the gateman to see him with her? Even though he wore his clothes, the gate man probably knew who he was.

“How! A kamar’s daughter comes to school!” He would think”.

Bhattacharya points out the evil in the orthodox Hindu society which is full of discriminations. The upper class people do not want to allow the lower class people even in to their schools. If any person joins in their school he or she will be insulted in name of cast. Kalo belongs to a lower caste and he fears about his daughter who may be discriminated when people discover her caste. Bhattacharya not only points out the defects in the caste based society, he also stresses the need to eradicate such evils in the society.

Chandralekah faces insult from the girls of the upper castes. It is described as:

“Smith man’s daughter, what’s your fee to mend a leaking bucket? Smith girl, tell your father not to cheat his customers. He mended one of our buckets and it was leaking again in two months”.

Lekha who has firm faith in her father’ goodness and will not let him be slandered, slaps the girls. The girls fling themselves on her in a fury, tear clothes, and dishevel her hair. Yet she doesn’t reveal the scene to her father. By bearing these kinds of insults she pays concentration on studies. She proves
herself distinct not only in school level but also in state level. She wins gold medal in the level of the Bengal state for skills in studies. She is the first girl in the state to win it. Her victory makes Kalo happy. But his happiness disappears soon after arrival of famine in the state. Kalo is a competent black smith in the village. He gets sufficient income to reach all of his needs his daughter’s school fees and her books. But the unexpected Bengal famine of 1943 disturbs the peace in his life. Kalo is only an example to the victims of the Bengal famine but there are lotof peasants and caste based self employees and employees of traditional home industries who lose their power of earning due this calamity. To protect their lives from hunger people migrate to city in search of food and job. Kalo has to migrate to city for the sake of his daughter who is to be looked after well. Bhattacharya says about the famine which is not natural but man-made. The impact of western industrialization and the economical policies the British rulers affect the standard traditional Indian economy.

Bhattacharya tries to reflect the contemporary situations of India under British rule. He wants to expose the worst feature of the British rule in India which was its economic exploitation in the interest of British capitalists and financiers and its worst result was the extreme impoverishment of the Indian people. The policies of the British, on the one hand, disrupted the traditional economy of India and, on the other, failed to develop a modern economic structure. The Indian economy, therefore, remained neither traditional nor modern, and thus, India lost the advantages of both. The consequent result could not be anything except complete impoverishment of its people.

The peasants were the worst sufferers during the British rule. The revenue policy of the British was primarily responsible for it. The economic exploitation of the peasants began right from the very beginning of the British rule when the company received the right of Diwani for provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The government gave lands to the highest bidders who, in
turn, collected maximum revenue from the cultivators to earn maximum profits for themselves.

The permanent settlement in Bengal failed to bring about any improvement because it provided no protection to cultivators from their greedy landlords. Besides, because of the heavy demand of revenue fixed up by the government, the old landlords who were close to the cultivators and sometimes treated them sympathetically were ruined and a new class of landlords, rather retirees, grew up who mostly belonged to the cities, had earned surplus wealth from business or otherwise and kept no direct contact with the land and consequently no sympathy for the cultivators.

The British provided protection to this new class of landlords both for their political and economic advantages. Therefore, while the landlords gradually continued to prosper, the condition of the cultivators worsened. The landlords compelled the cultivators to pay maximum revenue, illegal dues and also to perform work without remuneration, i.e., beggar. The condition of the cultivators in the Ryotwari and Mahalwari areas was no better. In these areas, the government was the landlord and in no way less oppressive than the Zamindars. It charged maximum revenue from the cultivators. Initially the revenue was fixed from one-third to one-third to one-half of the produce and gradually it was increased further.

After some time, it was reduced. But by that time the population pressure on the land had increased so much that it failed to lessen the burden of the peasants. Besides, the government insisted that the revenue be paid by a fixed date. In case of failure, the cultivators were dispossessed of their lands which were sold off. These severe measures of the government brought in the system of landlordism in Rytwari and Mahalwari areas also. The cultivators, because of the heavy and time bound demand of revenue by the government, were mostly forced to take loans from local merchants and money lenders.
The moneylenders exploited the cultivators not only by charging high rate of interest but by certain deceitful measures such as false accounting, forged signatures etc. The government protected the moneylenders either because of the failure of cultivators to pay their debts or by deceitful means of the moneylenders. The process was repeated in the Zamindari areas as well. Thus, gradually the land in India passed into the hands of big landlords, or rich merchants of the cities and the cultivators became only tenants or hired labour on the land.

The growing commercialization of agriculture was also exploited by the local merchants and rich merchants vis-à-vis the cultivators. The cultivators were forced to sell their produce just after the harvest because they had to pay the revenue either to their landlords or to the government and debts to moneylenders. This placed them at the mercy of the grain merchants who paid them much less than the market price of their produce.

The fragmentation of land was yet another problem which the cultivators had to face. It was not only because of the growth of population and the Hindu law of succession that the property and the land was divided amongst all male children after the father’s death but also because of economic factors. The one was that the British policies destroyed the handicrafts and cottage industries of India. Therefore, the urban labour also shifted to villages. It helped in fragmentation of land.

Another feature of village economy which evolved gradually and resulted in the exploitation of peasants was the growth of intermediaries. Most of the landlords became absentee landlords. As the rent of land went on increasing because the peasants were left unprotected by the government, the landlords could afford to sublet their lands. In turn, the subtenants gave the land on rent to other and the process continued. The result was that between the peasants and the landlord or between the peasants and the government a
large number of intermediaries sprang up who enjoyed profits only by renting or sub renting the land. The final burden of it all fell on the shoulders of the poor cultivators. In Bengal, in some cases, the number of intermediaries had sprung up to fifty.

Thus, the cultivators were the victims of the oppression of the government, the landlords, the moneylenders, the grain merchants and the intermediaries. All of them, in turn, sucked their blood and made their life miserable. The cultivators suffered further in case of droughts and famines, with no adequate help from any quarter. The impoverishment of the cultivators ultimately resulted in deterioration of India agriculture.

The policies of the British destroyed the handicrafts and cottage industries of India which were the primary sources of its foreign trade and wealth. It all started from Bengal. Bengal was famous for its cotton textiles and silk. The servants of the company, after assuming political influence in Bengal, exploited the craftsmen in Bengal mercilessly. They gave them raw products on high prices, asked them to manufacture fixed quantity and quality of goods and paid them arbitrarily so that weaving profession no more remained profitable. Therefore, thousands of craftsmen gave up their ancestral profession. Gradually, the exploitation of India in trade increased. In 1813, the monopoly of trade with India of the East India Company was abolished. All trading companies of Britain, therefore, were left free to trade with India. The British also pursued the policy of protective tariffs in Britain as well as in India much against the trading interest of India. While in Britain, heavy duties were charged on Indian goods entering Britain, the English goods entering India were charged only nominal duties. This trade discrimination went on increasing.
When Industrial revolution took place in England, Britain needed raw materials from India and a wide market for its machine-made goods in India. Therefore, in 1833, Indian government virtually accepted the policy of free trade with a view to providing cheap raw materials to Britain and cheap manufactured goods in the Indian market. Thus, the policies of the government, on the one hand handicapped Indian trade and thereby, its manufactures; on the other, provided good market to British manufactures in India. The construction of the railways in India further helped in this process. The British goods reached even the rural market of India.

It all resulted in the ruination of the Indian handicrafts and cottage industries which were the bases of its foreign trade and thereby its prosperity. Particularly, the foreign trade in cotton textiles which enjoyed a world market was destroyed. Besides, the cultivators were deprived of their additional income which they used to have by handicrafts like spinning and weaving. It again adversely affected their economy which was already below poverty line. In fact, India became an agricultural colony of industrialized Britain. Its primary function remained to supply raw material to Britain and to accept its manufactured goods. It resulted in enormous drain of wealth from India.

India would have been saved from its economic exploitation to a certain extent if the Indian government would have attempted the industrialization of India or even protected the nascent Indian industries which developed through private enterprise in the latter half of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the government discouraged the growth of industries in India and failed to provide protection to machine-based industries till it was found necessary to invest the surplus British capital in India where labour was cheaply available in abundance. That is why the industrialization of India was started by the British capitalists, the profits of which were again drawn by the British and delivered to the home country. The Indian capitalists were first shy of entering the field and when they entered they faced heavy odds. Therefore, the industrial
progress of India was very slow. It failed to compensate the displacement of Indian handicrafts and cottage industries which alone would have minimized the sufferings of the Indian industries which alone would have minimized the sufferings of the Indian people.

Besides, the industrial development of India was extremely lopsided regionally. Indian industries were concentrated in a few regions and cities. It resulted in unequal economic development of different regions. It resulted in creating economic distinctions among the people of different regions in India which made the task of a unified Indian nation difficult.

Thus, agriculture and cottage industries of India were ruined during the British rule and industrial growth failed to provide substantial good to the people. The net result was extreme impoverishment of the Indian people. The Indian masses, therefore, were not left even with the bare necessaries of life. Occasional occurrences of famines during the British rule in which lakhs of lives were always lost prove that poverty and starvation has taken deep roots in India. Therefore, Bhattacharya conceded that the worst feature of the British rule in India was its economic exploitation. 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 Japanese army stood poised at the cistern front, facing a wall of resistance. But no barricades had been put up against the enemy within the borders: no rationing of food grains, no price control, no checking of the giant sharks who played the concerning game on a stupendous scale. Barns were empty—the peasants had been induced to sell off their grain. Markets were empty—the grain was hidden away. 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."

The traditional Indian economy is completely polluted and blasted by the Western economic policies. People lose work, earning, starve and think to go to city for food and work. Kalo doesn’t get any customer to his shop. He watches people are going to the capital city to seek a living. The strangers come from city and they are encashing the people’s weakness of hunger and they are tempting them to sell their gold and silver ornaments to the cheapest prices. Chandra Lekha sells her ornaments secretly to a stranger for money, to help her father in household. Some hypocrites drag the young girls in to prostitution. Sometimes people depend on roots and berries. Many people die of starvation. Kalo has no way to earn money except to go to the city. He leaves his daughter behind in the old woman’s charge and starts to go to city for work. He plans, later after getting a job, room in the city that he may bring his daughter to the city. But against his proposals he is arrested for three months as punishment under charge of stealing. Kalo starts to city by train in general compartment which is very crowded to be seated. He travels on footboard by hanging to the door. As he loses his carriage of food, in a severe hungriness, he steals some bananas from a passenger of the next compartment. But unexpectedly he is caught by the police man submitted in the court. The merciless judge asked him as:

“Why did you do it? 
Why did you have to live?”
And he punished him three months imprisonment for three bananas. Kalo is called P14 in the prison. He works hard and becomes an ideal prisoner but always thinks about Lekha, his daughter who is alone and helpless at Jharna.

B10 is another convict in the prison becomes friend to Kalo. He is a man of Western views. He is against orthodox and opposite to evils in the society. He belongs to Brahmin community and his original name is Bikash Mukherji. He never reveals his name which indicates caste to which he belongs, as he doesn’t want to disclose his caste and creed. Bikas Mukherji is well educated. He always protests against the age old, orthodox, blind faiths in the Hindu society. The death of his affectionate sister Poornima makes him bitter. Poornima is a typical Indian girl she bears many restrictions from her orthodox parents. She falls in love with Biswas, a foreman in steel company who belongs to the other caste. Her orthodox parents come to know her love matter with the boy of lower caste and horridly they search a groom who is a widower with children and grand children to whom they give her in marriage. But after a few days she dies by committing suicide.

B10 is moved very much by the death of his sister. Basav becomes crazy with grief. He asks B10 as:

"Now that you Brahmins have committed a murder, are you satisfied? Are you happy?"^{44}

B10 used to perform the Brahmin ritual of prayer as a matter of iron routine, without zeal but also without questioning. He never opened his mouth against his revered parents. But today he takes his sacred thread in his fists and breaks it in pieces and flings the thread to a corner of the room and says as:

"Basav dada, I am a Brahmin no longer. I am one of you. Do you still hate me?"^{45}
He leaves home and orthodox parents and joins in an automobile company for his earning. He is man of democratic feelings. He fights for equality against the hypocrisy of the rulers. Wherever he sees the suppression of downtrodden, he fights for their sake. One day he was arrested for his protest against a policeman who struck an old man who was destitute looking eagerly at food items arranged neatly in the showcase at a restaurant. He has studied the society deeply and says the truth about it philosophically to Kalo as:

“Two great hungers had struck the land of Bengal in the wake of war: The hunger of the masses of people uprooted from their old earth and turned in to beggars, and the hunger of the all-owing few for pleasure and more pleasure, a raging fever of the times. Uprooted women with their own kind of hunger had to soothe the other hunger, had to cool the raging pleasure-fever with their bodies.”

Kalo is attracted to his wisdom. He always asks about the world knowledge and clarifies his doubts from him. Thus B10 becomes guide and mentor to Kalo and seeds the revolutionary ideas in him as:

We are the scum of the earth. The boss people scorn us because they fear us. They hit us where it hurts badly-in the pit of the belly. We’ve got to hit back.”

Kalo first doubts at the theory of B10 but after his release from the jail he watches the truth in the philosophy of B10. B10 is a man of revolutionary views. He stands for the west. His radicalism is not bookish but it has grasp of the realities of Indian life. He makes concerted efforts to rid the society of its evils as well. Among the Hindus, many social evils are defended as religious practices so that common man did not dare to break them while none of these practices have anything to do with religion. B10 leads a crusade against these
social evils. He becomes Kalo’s mentor and guide and preaches against the evils in the society.

After his punishment period Kalo is released from the jail. Kalo travels to the city by train. He watches miles of Bengal, fields are heavy with yellowing rice. There will be a big harvest but the peasants have mortgaged their paddy crops months before they are grown, and with the money they have bought rice from the dealers at five times the old rate. There has been spent, the rice eaten, and hungry peasants have starved while their fields bear the harvest. They do not own and cannot touch. Kalo pities the Bengal peasants and feels harvest as mockery.

Bhattacharya says that the Indian peasants were the worst sufferers under British rule. He expresses that the worst result of the British rule in India was extreme poverty of the Indian people and among them the worst sufferers were the Indian peasants. Indebtedness, fragmentation of holdings, increase in the number of agricultural labour, destruction of handicrafts, and low production of food grains, etc. were the different problems which concerned the peasants directly. Besides the government, the landlords, intermediaries etc, exploited them to the maximum. The peasants were scattered and being culturally backward depended more on their fate than their self-efforts. Thus Bhattacharya describes well the poor condition of the peasants of the time of famine in Bengal.

Kalo reaches destination. His first task is to get work. He goes to a rickshaw hirer but he is asked to deposit some money. Kalo wanders till the afternoon luckily he gets work in a municipal van for picking up corpses of the destitute. When he finds bitter truth that a doctor who exports the skeletons of the corpses for high prices and he is shocked. The next day Kalo loses the job where he finds high competition from the other destitute people who come even for half wages. He has no choice except to go to Rajani Bose who runs a
charlotte house. He is appointed under a brothel lady. Kalo has to wear a Gandhi cap for good appearance and he has to bring customers to her. The brothels in the charlottes’ house are doing the work necessarily for their livelihood they are described as living dead bodies and are compared by the novelist as:

“He, Kalo, was helping them sell their living bodies, bodies no less dead than those he had given the doctor for the skeleton!”

Kalo recollects B10’s statement of Irony on the present condition of India as:

“The great hungers had struck the land of Bengal in the wake of war the hunger of the masses of people uprooted from their old earth and turned into beggars, and the hunger of the all-owning few for pleasure and more pleasure, a raging fever of the times. Uprooted women with their own kind of hunger had to soothe the other hunger, had to cool the raging pleasure-fever with their bodies. ….One day, the pleasure fever will kill the great city.”

Bhattacharya describes the negative results of war. War is manufactured by the rulers but the sufferers are the people. It makes the poor in to the poorer and the rich in to the richer. Basically India is a peaceful country, but this disturbance is due to encounter of the West. The British rulers damaged not only the economic slystem in India, but also the system of highly valuable age old traditional customs.

Kalo works unwillingly in the brothel house. One day he hears screaming of a girl from the room next. When he goes to see her, to his horror she is none other than his daughter Lekha who has been brought to there by luring. Immediately he saves her and escapes from the spot along with her.
Kalo is hurt very much by this incident and becomes rage against the society and he remembers B10’s words.…

“We are the scum of the earth. They hit us where it hurts badly in the belly. We’ve got to hit back”  

When he is in need no one helps him when he travels in right path, he is punished and deceived. Now he decides to retaliate on the world which has done harm to him and to his daughter. He starts to deceive the world in a disguise of Brahmin. He installs a fake image of Lord Shiva and deceives people by telling a tale of fantasy about his false dream in which Lord Shiva wishes to emerge in the place where he sits which is one of the crowded areas in the city. In the presence of crowds he sprinkles little amounts of water on the soil with the assistance of his daughter by chanting Om Namo Shiva. In the presence of number of crowds an image of lord Shiva emerges from the soil of ground. People witness the emergence of image of Lord Shiva and they believe it as true. But they don’t know the secret of the trick played by Kalo who already has kept gram seeds under image; they sprout and push the image when he sprinkles water with equal intervals of time. After this incident crowds of people gather to see the miracle. The black-marketeers, speculators donate money and valuables to erect a temple. It is for them is an atonement for all sins committed and a guarantee of success in future undertakings.

A magnificent temple is built and it attracts large numbers of worshippers. Kalo adapts a Brahmin name –Mangal Adhikari. He appoints a Pujari to worship god in the temple as he knows little about the ritual worship. He pretends as busy person with more important matters. A Board of trustees is constituted to manage the financial and administrative work of the temple. The revenues swell, important men like the rich merchant, Motichand, and Sir Abalabandhu, become associated with the management. Among the worshippers who come to the temple and touch Mangal Adhikari’s feet is the magistrate who had sentenced Kalo to hard labour for stealing bananas.
Bhattacharya satirizes the many weaknesses and meaningless customs in the Hindu religion. People believe easily the strangers and cheats. The novelist also points out the orthodoxy with which people forget even the basic principles of humanity and compassion in the Hindu religion. The orthodox people forget mercy sympathy and helping the people. People invest much amounts of money to get redeem from god for their committed sins. Even a well educated magistrate follows the rituals blindly without any reason and thinking. There is another example for their blind faith.

One day Motichand, a rich merchant in stock market comes to the temple and looks at Kalo and Lekha who sit close by legs crossed, heads bowed with calculating eyes, as the two people whom Shiva had blessed. Lekha resembles him as Gauri, the great God’s spouse in heaven. He puts a rupee on the altar and touches his forehead to the ground in the set way, and then, strangely, turns and speaks to Lekha as:

“My business is buying and selling shares. Today I am at my wits’ end because of the condition of the market. Tell me, should I buy or sell?”  

In confusion what to tell, she answers as:

“Buy…sell…buy…sell.”

Motichand makes his pronam with folded palms and walks back to his car and murmurs to himself as: Buy…sell…buy…sell,” Motichand repeats the magic words and he follows the formula of Lekha blindly in his share business. He buys steel shares which are in down trend and it seems to others as crazy thing. But unexpectedly at the day’s end steels are back to the opening rate. Motichand unloads his holdings at near-peak prices. His accounts show a six-
figure profit to his credit. It is only an accidental incident but there is no miracle behind Lekha’s statement. Bhattacharya intends to show how the orthodox people blindly follow the cheats and deceptive people under disguise of religion. It is only an example to indicate foolish of people who blindly believe and follow the babas and sadhus to fulfill their greediness. It reveals us the novelist’s declaration of crusade against the deep rooted age old meaningless traditions in the Hindu religion.

Bhattacharya’s fight is not with an individual, but with the system. He criticizes defects in the Indian traditions culture but also the Indian life style. He focuses light over a curious contradiction of the times. While men die of hunger, wealth grows; and while kindliness dries up, religion is more in demand. He thinks it is only the outward form of religion, the shell of ritual, empty within. The deceivers like Kalo utilize the weaknesses in the society. The temple becomes popular and Kalo becomes a rich man with all comforts. The novelist points out that people fear about their committed sins so they spend money and participate in the rituals mechanically with less interest and dedication toward god. Bhattacharya shows how men of wealth with no time or heart for prayer and penance give willingly for ritual, the easier way for them to gain merit.

A dealer in precious metals replaces the five-flamed brass lamp for the aroti ceremony with one gold, and he gives the wooden handle of the Yak’s tail fan a bright casing of silver. A Raja donates a richly carved sandalwood cot for the god to occupy at night. A panel of rice merchants, friends of the trustees, pledge themselves to supply the bhoga, the food offering to the deity, for months ahead. The novelist criticizes that the god is invested with human needs and people forget humanity.
Kalo introduces various kinds of rituals in the temple. The Yagna ceremony is performed on certain sacred days, when clarified butter is poured into a great sacrificial fire with the chanting of the prescribed hymns. Kalo, with tact arranges the bowlfuls of required ghee be given by all who ask for the privilege, so merit will be widely distributed, and business like, he makes a full schedule of names and dates. In the list of names are the city’s men of renown. He has a schedule, too, for Shiva’s milk baths, a novelty in the great city.

Kalo copies the practice from Benares with some variation. It catches the fancy of merit-seekers, so that the milk bath schedules are soon full with donors’ names for months to come. Milk is expensive and in short supply. But the rich donors are ready to use their resources and their cash. An old man whose condition is serious expresses his final desire that he wishes to donate milk for the ceremony of milk bath before his death for his redemption from his committed sins in his life. But the schedule has no place to enter a new name. The people in serial order are not willing to give chance to the old man. People refuse to forego their claims of priority. They do not care what happens to the dying man. They say as:

“He should have thought of it before.
Why any of us may die any moment.” 53

One of them quotes a line from an old Sanskrit poem,

“Life is as transient as dewdrop on a lotus.” 54

The old man passes away with his wish unfulfilled. Kalo is unhappy. If only he could have whispered into the old man’s ear,

“There is no god in my temple. Milk is poured on a false image I fashioned with my own hands.” 55
Bhattacharya criticizes both the orthodox customs of the Hindu traditions and the selfish behavior of the people. The image and its erection is not original but they trust it as real and believe the lies told by Kalo. Kalo blames their blindness in the matter of religious faith. He scolds the people who forget the original Hindu faith service to man is service to god. They forget to help the poor. The city has many destitute people who come from the surrounding villages as they have lost the crops and they are dying due to lack of food. But here in the temple they are wasting milk by pouring on a stone idol in the name of religion and they do not prefer to help the starving ones.

Three large bucketfuls are poured over the deity, the milk flowing in to a reservoir beyond the shrine’s outer wall. The reservoir is emptied every day, its sacred contents being taken to the Ganga river, a mile eastward, to be dumped with prescribed ritual. The pujari entrusted with the routine duties at the temple notices one day that no milk has collected in the reservoir. He looks at the reservoir next day and again there is no milk. So the pujari keeps watch. He stands until late at night. He rises before dawn and crouches behind and finds an old man, Viswanath whom Kalo has employed in the temple garden collects milk from the temple. The Pujari curses Viswanth. But the old man gently says milk has been used for the bath. It has served its purpose. It is served to destitute babies instead of throwing into river and wasting.

The pujari stutters in anger. He says that ritual demands that milk be cast into the holy river. A man of low origin touching it with the hand of pollution and he says that giving milk to the mother of rivers is not wasting but holiness. He says as:

“You are discharged. This is no place for down-and-outs. Kindness to folks of your sort is all wrong. Don’t ever show your blackened face anywhere near the temple”.
He shouts the place awake. The master of the temple appears on the scene. The pujari, gleeful, tells his story as:

“I had my doubts about the destitute man from the very first moment. There are so many like him, filthy flies infesting our fair city. But he will not dare set foot near the temple again. I have caught him in time. He started with the bath milk, but he would have grown bolder and put his hand on something else. I know his kind by the look in the face.” 57

Bhattacharya points out the blindness of the man who fails to discover the divinity in the world. He reveals the ignorance of the man who always gives priority to the worship of idols, stone images and to follow the meaningless rituals and fails to know true Hinduism which always says that the only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Man ignores the gist of worship- to be pure and to do good others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. Bhattacharya reminds the true religion which tells us that we must be pure and help anyone who comes to us, as much as lies in our power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this the heart becomes pure and then Shiva who is residing in every one will become manifest. But men of ignorance forget the real spirit of the religion and become blind, selfish, orthodox and cruel. The delicate corners in them are dried up by their ignorance and they become orthodox.

Bhattacharya expresses his desire that if people come out from the dark chambers of their hearts differences among people disappear. It is expressed through the dialogues of Viswanath. When Viswanath is found guilty in the temple for stealing milk, Kalo doesn’t lose faith in Viswanath and asks him to prove his honesty. So Viswanath takes Kalo to the spot where he distributes milk to the destitute babies. Kalo does this only to satisfy the Pujari and
members of the committee. But Kalo becomes dull with this incident and he deeply thinks to manage issue before the committee. Viswanth catches his mind and asks him to excuse him but Kalo says that he doesn’t care such matters. When Viswanth appreciates him as:

“So long as they have men like you, they are quite safe. So long as there are true hearted Brahmins like you, people cannot lose faith in this social order”. 58

Of course Kalo is not a real Brahmin but he has sympathy by his heart. His mind is without fear. He may deceive the people in disguise but he doesn’t harm anyone. He helps the poor, and challenges and stands against the age old traditions which are meaningless. Besides pointing out the age old traditions, Bhattacharya also criticizes the superior complex of the higher caste people. The pujari scolds Viswanath. He calls him filthy names as fly and insect.

Bhattacharya shows us the conditions of lower caste people who are treated as mean as an insect. They have not been treated equally. So Bhattacharya resembles us as Mulkraj Anand in his views of the west. Viswanath also belongs to Kalo’s caste of black smiths. Kalo is respected for his outer appearance as he wears sacred thread and ash on his forehead and his new name, Mangal Adhikari which belongs to Brahmin community whereas Viswanth is scolded for his rustic appearance. He is called as thief and insect but is respected for his deed of serving milk to the destitute babies. It is because of the exited caste system which divides people into five castes because of these differences some people are harassed by the upper castes for generations.

Bhattacharya is moved very much by their condition and he wishes to bring their problems in to light. Like Mulk Raj Anand in his ‘untouchable’ he focuses light on the problems of the lower caste people who have been always
treated ill. His hero Bhakha is hurt by the treatment of the upper caste people. Anand succeeded to bring light on the problems of an untouchable. Here in the novel ‘He who rides a Tiger’ Bhattacharya makes the hero Kalo into rebel. He understands the society which does not give support him to live in it. So in a frustration and rage he decides to retaliate on it. He desires to prove many rituals followed by the Hindus are meaningless and no use with them.

Thus Kalo stands for thought of the west. After erection of the temple he seems to deviate from his aim to mock the orthodox rituals but never deviates from his aim. Even after alteration of his appearance, name and the erection of the temple and getting fame as a Brahmin, he always thinks about his background, his profession in which he was born. He doesn’t neglect his craft of blacksmith. He works secretly with his instruments of smiths. When Viswanath appears first time in the novel he accidently touches him but Kalo cries on him because to keep secret of his caste from the public sight. After this incident Kalo makes him an employee in the garden of the temple. Even after getting fame in the city, he doesn’t feel ashamed to meet B10 who has guided him how to live in the orthodox society. Kalo expresses his gratitude towards B10 by bringing him and hosting him at his house. He reveals him how did he erect the temple in the centre of the city. He is in favour of B10 and he is interested to give his daughter to him.

He is not against the higher caste but he fights against the orthodox in the Hinduism. When people do not agree to give chance to the old man who wishes to donate milk to the temple before his death in the ritual of milk bath Kalo feels sad as the people lack of sympathy toward the old man who may be dead at any moment. He scolds on their ignorance as:

“Scoundrels all, it’s better far to be in hell than share heaven with such selfish people”  59
The old man passes away with his wish unfulfilled. Kalo becomes unhappy, and he feels to whisper in to the old man’s ear as:

“There is no god in my temple.
Milk is poured on a false image
I fashioned with my own hands”. 60

Kalo mocks the dark corners of the Hinduism. He satirizes the age old meaningless traditions and the people who follow them blindly. Kalo is not an idle man. He doesn’t worship the idol in the temple but he worships his work. He is industrious. He genuinely earns money. He doesn’t cheat anybody for his food. Even after installation of the image of god he is not attracted to the treasures that swell from the public for the erection and development of the temple. He earns money by doing his own job black smithy. He never takes a single paisa from the temple funds. It indicates the western idea of dignity of labour. Bhattacharya highlights this western idea of dignity of labour not only in the character Kalo but also in the characters of Viswanath and B10.

Kalo always feels inconvenient to manage himself as a Brahmin as he does not like to continue to be an idle man. He feels burdensome to bear the Brahmin character and deceive the people. He commits to be continued because he wishes to prove that many traditions followed in the Hinduism are meaningless. The orthodoxy in the religion is compared with a tiger. It is killing rationality in the people. Thus people become ignorant. Kalo ascends the tiger of evil of the society and takes charge to ride on it. It is a hard task but he determines to bend it. Kalo doesn’t sleep many nights with the feeling of guilty that he is deceiving people. But in the climax of the novel he successfully descends after a ride from the dangerous thing which is symbol for evil and orthodoxy in the society.
Kalo discloses the secret of his caste. He uncovers the cloth on body which has no sacred thread. He says that he belongs to a caste of Black smiths, an untouchable caste. He also discloses how he played the trick of grams to make emerge the artificial image of Lord Shiva. The orthodox Brahmins do not digest the truth and they start to scold names Kalo. But the destitute people shout hail Kalo, their brother’s victory.

“Victory to our brother” 61

Chandra Lekha feels the exultation within her too overwhelming to bear and says:

“Baba, the people cry victory to you!
Baba, a hundred temples are worth to us than this moment!
Baba, after this, whatever happens to us, wherever we go, we can never again be unhappy or defeated. 62

Yes! This is not victory of Kalo. It is victory of his class of people who have been crushed by the age old traditions for so many generations. It is victory of an untouchable who is not allowed in to a temple to pray to god. So the novel reveals not only western thought of the novelist but also his social consciousness of the time. The novel can be recognized as satirical irony. Here Kalo stands for the modern western thoughts of liberty and equality.

Viswanath is another character of western idea. He is also a black smith like Kalo. The Bengal famine of 1943 lays its hand on his family consequently he loses his own people. Their death influences his heart very much. He always remembers them and he helps such hunger people wherever he sees. He gets work in the temple with recommendation of Kalo. This old man is against the orthodoxy in the society. He believes that every being has spark of divinity. He follows the principle service to man is service to god. So he helps the destitute babies by serving the milk of milk ceremony. He steals milk form the reservoir the temple and he distributes it to the road side destitute babies.
When he is caught by the Pujari he boldly submits his mistake and reveals that it is better to supply milk to the poor rather than pouring milk into river.

B10 stands for the west. He protests against the meaningless traditions. In the beginning he follows the Hindu rituals only for sake of his revered parents who are orthodox. When his sister dies of orthodox traditions, he protests against his parents who do not agree her love affair with a boy, Basav of low caste and forcefully give her to an old man in marriage and cause for her death. Disturbed by her death B10 breaks his sacred thread from his body and from the day onwards he never reveals his original name Bikas Mukherji which indicates his Brahmin caste. Disgusted by the society which is tied by the irons of blind faiths, he criticizes it and works against it.

He believes men are equal by their birth but they are divided by their caste. He fights for sake of the downtrodden and goes to jail where he is given the name B10. Whenever he is asked his name and caste he never discloses. Impressed by the innocence of Kalo B10 suggests some tricks to be followed in the society for a successful life. So Kalo after his punishment period follows advice given by B10 and succeeds to retaliate on the society. B10 loves Lkha and wishes to marry her but when Kalo asks him to wear sacred thread to satisfy public, B10 rejects the condition to wear it again on his body because he loves to live as an ordinary non-Brahmin as he wants to live away from the barriers of the orthodox religion.

Bhattacharya not only fights with orthodoxy in the society but also hypocrisy in it. He criticizes patriarchy and polygamy. Poornima becomes a victim to the male dominated society. Her father selfishly thinks only for his reputation in the society but he does not think for career of a young girl. He foolishly arranges her marriage with an old man who has children and grand children. It is a very evil tradition in India. The old men become ready to have a young girl without any rational thinking. Poor Poornima becomes a victim to
the evil traditions and she commits suicide. Bhattacharya harshly criticizes the barbarism in the Hindu marital system which does not understand dreams of a maid and encourages marriage for an old man but denies to woman in her widow marriage. Motichand is another character for polygamy. He has already married four women and again wishes to marry the young girl Lekha daughter of Kalo.

The novel sets forth the existence of superstitions in the age of science and technology, the role of tradition and religion, the unconquerable state of one’s conscience, the sociological obsessions and psychological clashes of individuals, the trading of the flesh of the poor and the helpless. The novel deals with the contemporary Indian life rooted in the degrading political and economic system in the caste-ridden society. It also portrays the evil system, the Brahminic ways of life, the smug hypocrisy of the local rich, the human cruelty, and the emotional disfigurement under the degraded economy of the land.

Bhattacharya focuses on several other social maladies like the institution of prostitution which does not appear outside from the society of ancient traditions. He also focuses the men who cheat people under disguise of Brahmins by wearing saffron loin cloth, smearing the body with ashes and marking a red-paste trident of Shiva on their forehead to make a living by begging in the streets. Some men can hoodwink even the rich people to accept them as yogis with great spiritual power. The hollowness of Indian people’s belief in the scriptural customs and rites is also revealed. There is description of the excommunication of the untouchables. The novelist ridicules the superiority of the Brahmins and the Hindu law that do not permit divorce. The novel reveals the author’s modern western views along with his hopeful vision of a democratic India.
Bhattacharya believes in the intrinsic merit of each individual quite apart from his caste and profession. He always propagates universal brotherhood through his novels. There is much importance to human relations in his novels. He opposes the caste system. He writes mostly of Indian villages where life is strictly compartmentalized, where a man is labeled from birth. His hero, Kalo of ‘He Who Rides A Tiger’ invariably rebels against the social mechanism.

Bhattacharya is a rational humanist, in western tradition, believing in progress and in the equality of all men. He protests against an established social order which labels men as superior and inferior by virtue of the accident of their birth.

He protests against the tyranny of caste Bhattacharya opines that caste system has become deep rooted evil in the Indian society, beyond to be eradicated. It is shown in his He Who Ride A Tiger. When Chandra Lekha daughter of Kalo, a blacksmith goes to school, she meets with criticism from the high caste people.

Biten (Bikash Mukherjee) is another character with the Western features of Bhattacharya. Biten is Brahmin by birth but he renounces his Brahminhood forthwith, breaks and throws away his sacred thread and takes a vow never more to speak about his caste as he has seen the death of his innocent sister, Poornima. Poor Poornima is a victim of caste in the novel. She is hastily given away in marriage to an elderly widower when the parents discover that a young man Basav, of a lower caste is in love with her. Her unhappy married life leads her to commit suicide.

Bhattacharya juxtaposes the two different characters, Kalo and Biten. Biten is a born Brahmin who renounces his Brahminhood. Kalo, who belongs to lower caste of blacksmith, denounces the Brahminism in the way of
deception. Both of them protest against the evils in the society. According to Dr. K.R. Chandrasekharan—

“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.”

Bhattacharya seems to simplify the conflict between tradition and modernity by creating clearly distinguishable sets of characters, withholding his sympathy from some, while deluging others with compassion. His characters fall neatly into three types the sufferers, the oppressors and the good men. Usually the protagonist is the sufferer-in-chief. All money-lenders, priests, and landlords i.e., people with a vested interest in resisting change or progress come under the second category. Evil appears under different shapes of Seths, speculators and tradesmen. The good men appear in an assortment of social workers, leaders, and idealistic doctors, advocate the benefits of the machine and the need for progress and equality.

Bhattacharya’s fourth novel, “Goddess Named Gold” presents an interesting account of the East-West encounter. Atmaram in the novel combines spiritual faith with the modern outlook. He combines in him the past as well as the present simultaneously. Atmaram is Meera’s grandfather. He is a wandering minstrel who visits his family and village occasionally and his activities are little known. He is regular visitor at all important fairs and travels extensively earning his livelihood by entertaining passengers with his art of story-telling and by singing songs. There is something mysterious about him. Everyone in the village, except his wife, believes in the stories about him. His wife alone takes his stories with a pinch of salt, even though she is greatly attached to him. The minstrel is an extraordinarily typical character who plays a vital role in this novel which deals with India’s freedom. He is a singer who sings to amuse folks and thus keeps the folklore alive to them. It is noticed that
the past is brought into focus even in the present, through this character. The Minstrel is also aware of the existing social conditions and the malpractices of the rich people who exploit the common masses for their self-aggrandizement.

The superstitions oppress the villagers much like the casteism. The people are obsessed by the fear of apparitions visible at certain places in the night. Ojhas exorcists become popular locally because people need their services when supposedly possessed evil spirits. The Seth while walking in a meadow in pitch-darkness is awestruck and frightened on his presumption that he is being followed by evil spirits.

The minstrel is a Gandhian idealist who wants better working conditions for the common people in the country. He also wants to take change in his people who have lot of to take change in his people who have lot of evils in them like beliefs in devils, spirits horoscopes and miracles said in epics and folktales. Thus the minstrel invents the touchstone fable. The invention of the touchstone fable and the fact of giving the amulet to Meera show the minstrel’s practical wisdom. Through it, he is not only able to save his own family, but the entire village from the deadly clutches of Seth.

The Minstrel’s arrival is the starting point for significant developments in the village Sonamitti. Meera wishes to use him to counter the attraction of the cinema show, so that Seth’s designs are foiled, but the old man does not approve of such spiteful action. However he promises her to conduct a story telling session after the cinema show. Before the session, the minstrel promises to give the Seth a taveez or amulet to be worn around his arm so as to enable him to realize all his desires. Therefore the gathering at the story telling is amazed when the Minstrel gives the taveez to Meera instead of the Seth.
Meera wears a copper ring on one of her fingers. Lakshmi as a token of her gratitude to Meera offers a gold ring to her for saving her son Nago but Meera refuses the gift of a gold ring. As advised by the Minstrel, Lakshmi replaces the copper ring on Meera’s finger with a gold one when she is asleep. Meera knows nothing about it. When Meera is at the shop of the Seth, she discovers that the ring on her finger is made of gold and both she and Seth are convinced of the amulet’s power.

The Seth with his wicked designs conspires to exploit Meera’s possession of the amulet to his advantage. He fervently persuades her to accept his proposal for making gold out of copper. He tries to convince her that this can be achieved only with his help. Otherwise, she will not be able to find enough copper for transmuting it into gold. He offers himself to be a partner in her business and share the profits equally among them. However Meera does not accept this proposal as she doesn’t want to amass gold for herself. All the gold that could be made is to be used for the benefit of the people of the village. She is very firm that the power of the amulet must be used for altruistic purposes.

Bhattacharya points out the ignorance of the Indians who believe blindly in the non-scientific and unreasonable things like miracles or wonders or supernatural things in the 20th century. The novelist also points out that they are exploited by the people outside of the country who encash their weaknesses and make them as slaves in their own country. The Seth, Meera and people have absolute faith in the amulet’s virtuous powers, though it has failed in its purpose. They then feel that some other kind of act might meet the requirements and make the magic work. Another act of kindness devised by the Seth is the caricaturing of the incident in which Seth’s son is saved by Meera. Seth tempts the poor boy Buddu, to fly kites near the well. Meanwhile he summons Meera to his shop and engages his cunning assistant, Bulaki Rao, to continue, with his evil plan.
While Meera and the Seth are engaged in conversation in the shop, Bulaki Rao comes and announces that Bhuddu had fallen into the well. The Seth tries his best to encourage Meera to descend into the well for saving the boy in right earnest and feeling required for making the amulet work. She is favorably inclined to do so. But in the meanwhile sohanlal, the Seth’s driver and Meera’s lover arrives on the scene and doesn’t allow Meera to go down into the well to save the boy. He tries to desenced into the well instead of Meera.

The Seth gets angry because his plan failed to take of the corrupt practice of bribery and other unfair deals of the contractors, so rampant in the Indian Society, are some among the main causes for the slow progress of the nation. In the final attempt to make the amulet work, the Seth persuades two of the most notorious persons of the village, a drunkard and a prostitute, to get married in the presence of Meera. But the supposed marriage ends in utter failure as the drunkard and his friends demand money from the Seth while the bride continues her business till the scheduled hour of the marriage. Now Meera opens her eyes to reality. She strips herself of the copper ornaments and throws them in a heap on the floor, and disappears from the place.

Bhattacharya illustrates two opposite Western views in the characters of the Seth and Meera. The Seth stands for the narrow minded conventional and undemocratic and wolfish exploiters of the poor and the profiteers making money at the cost of poverty stricken people. Whereas Meera stands for the Western mind who thinks of dignity of labour and liberty. And the novelist is apprehensive of the bright future and his ray of hope in the ultimate triumph of the democratic values are embodied in the vision of Meera as advocated by the Minstrel in a midnight stroll, just before the magical amulet is thrown away by the girl.
Atmaram in the novel combines spiritual faith with the modern western outlook. He combines in him the past as well as the present simultaneously. The Minstrel tells fellow villagers empathetically that:

“Remember, Friends, all this cannot be cheaply won. The miracle will not drop upon us. It is we who have to create it with love and with sweat. Freedom is the means to that end”

The villagers decide to use their newly won freedom in the right way by electing the minstrel to the District Board. The Minstrel has a reasonable chance of winning the election. Here Bhattacharya focuses light on the priority of western thought of democracy against the conventional Indian Monarchy. The novelist warns every one that freedom creates congenial atmosphere for physical and spiritual development of man.

Along with this view Bhattacharya also condemns the deep rooted evils in the society which became a hurdle in the way of development. He satires evils of caste differences and deeply rooted superstitions prevailing in the Indian rural society. The examples from the novel are, The Halwai (confectioner), a middle aged man of the village Sonamitti craves for marrying young Meera, but the caste and tribal system come in his way. The Halwai knows that they belong to different castes and hence the villagers do not give constant for their wedding.

The novelist artistically depicts the evils of the dowry and bribery deeply rooted in the system. It is dowry which causes difficulty and distress to girls and their parents. The parents do not get suitable grooms without payment of dowry. It is also one of the causes for poverty in the country. In the novel, Bhattacharya shows how people suffer from the worst custom of dowry system. There is an example story of an old woman who suffers abominably because she is unable to manage to pay dowry for her daughter.
“Adowry for a maid, well past her marriage age; she had no good
looks, but a match could be arranged for eighty rupees…” 65

The novelist also points out the blind beliefs like miracles and spiritual
experiences. He show us that the illiterate and the ignorant villagers believe in
superstitions and are very curious to see the queer functioning of Meera’s
magical amulet. They want the miracles to happen, regardless of its
consequences:

“Awe-struck eyes saw that vision and tongues dried up as the
unexpected menace took clear shape, but after a long minute a
whispered comment came; we hunger for the miracle, whatever
else may follow good or bad.” 66

Thus the novel exposes the people’s misplaced faith in the ancient epics,
astrology, ghosts, and devils, amulets, marvellous legend of the talking goat,
the evils of dowry, bribery and corruption, the ostentations of spending money
at the time of marriage and other ceremonies, the cruelty of money lenders.

His fifth novel, Shadow from Ladakh deals in detail with conflict and
compromise between two distinct modes of life represented by Gandhigram
and Steeltown. In the beginning, the towns of two poles seem to be incapable
of meeting each other. Gandhigram represents a model of rural India as
envisaged by the father of the nation. Satyajit has been selected by the founder
to guide the destinies of this ideal village and to regulate its life so that it may
become an example and a source of inspiration to the rest of the country.
Educated in Cambridge, he has seen service as a teacher at Shantiniketan and at
one level he shows the impress of Tagore’s educational ideals and his
philosophy of life. Characteristically, it is Shantiniketan that he first meets his
future wife, Suruchi, a woman of great vitality, adorned with beauty and gift of
song.
They have a daughter, Sumita, who is carefully trained by her father and who increasingly comes under his influence until at last she comes to be recognized as the best embodiment of his attitude to life-Satyajitism as it is called in the novel. The growth of Satyajit till almost the end of the novel is a growth in the direction of asceticism and Gandhian idealism. He brings-up his daughter in his way. For all appearances he is a disciplined Gandhian applying the principles of Gandhian economics and ethics in the regulation of the life of Gandhigram and the conduct of his own life. A testing time comes with the launching of Chinese aggression against India. One point of view in the country is that strength can be met only with strength, but Satyajit represents the opposite point of view, namely that physical force.

Satyajit is a staunch believer in non-violence. He formulates a plan of organizing a peace march to Ladakh in the hope of touching the hearts of the Chinese and making them give up their aggressive intentions. K.R.Chandrasekharasn in his work “Bhabani Bhattacharya” points out that

“Satyajitism represents three things mainly in the novel_decentralized small-scale industry on the economic plane, austerity and repression of natural instincts on the plane of personal life and non-violence on the plane of international relations”.67

K.R.Chandraseharn says that “at all three levels Satyajitism is pitted against antagonistic forces. Gandhian economics is threatened by the new cry of industrialization.

The steel production unit established in the vicinity of Gandhigram and called steel town in the novel is the embodiment of the new approach. Bhaskar, the young Chief Engineer of the factory, with his American training and highly Westernized outlook, K.R.Chandrasekharn points out that he

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represents a three dimensional opposition to Styajit and Satyajitism. Bhaskar believes that steel, standing for mass production, is the only solution to India’s growing population Bhaskar’s fight with Gandhigram is the fight of modern industrialism and a campaign for new way of life. He doesn’t believe in any kind of repression. Hi doesn’t regard what is called ‘vice’ with dread and abhorrence. He thinks that the presence of vice makes virtue all the more desirable steeltown becomes a threat and challenge to Gandhigram.

Bhaskar with his fanatical zeal prepares a plan for the expansion of the factory involving the annexation and liquidation of Gandhigram. He knows that the plan for the destruction of the model village is not based on technical considerations because for mere physical expansion of Steeltown could very well grow in some other direction and leave Gandhigram alone. Bhaskar is interested in striking at the village because it is a symbol of conservative reaction and it stands for values which he desires to destroy. His sincerity and missionary zeal are so great that the Board of Directors of the unit finally approve his scheme of expansion although they are reluctant to ask for trouble by touching Gandhigram. The Chinese invasion justifies Bhaskar’s standpoint and gives added urgency to the execution of his plan. The Chinese invasion justifies Bhaskar’s standpoint and gives added urgency to the execution of his plan. The Central Government at Delhi also comes round to his point and is about to acquire Gandhigram making use of its special powers.

Bhaskar knows that the real obstacle to his plan is the presence in Gandhigram of its guiding spirit, Satyajit, whose soul-force is a match for whatever political or legal pressure may be applied on him. Bhaskar is intelligent and imaginative enough to understand that he may not succeed through mere force. In fact Bhaskar has no personal rancor against Satyajit and he has reverence for him. Bhaskar orders the construction of a building called Meadow House which is to encourage cultural activities and to provide recreation. It is to be a meeting place for steeltown and Gandhigram.
Gandhigram is to be won over gradually to the new way symbolized by steeltown. For instance Gandhigram discourages the free mixing of the sexes, but Meadow House is to provide for western dancing that will encourage men and women to come together and to shed their inhibitions.

Bhattacharya deals with conflict and compromise between two distinct modes of life represented by Steeltown and Gandhigram. Steeltown stands for the modern Western industrial civilization, while Gandhigram represents the old Eastern values of life. While Satyajit follows and preaches the ideal of selfless service and self-help, Bhaskar Roy emphasizes the importance of steel for India by asserting that it means economic progress, machine tools, and is therefore the only means to fight poverty and hunger and defend the country’s freedom. One believes in change one believes in tradition and heritage. One believes in philosophy and the other believes in dynamism of technological progress. One stands for the East, the other stands for the West. Along with the conflict ideas, the novelist shows the compromise between the East and the West.

Satyajit stands for the East but not orthodox. He is wise and experienced. He is a man of objective views. He believes in a harmonious blending of the old and the new. He believes that for a healthy and happy mode of life, there must be an adjustment between the old and the new. Bhaskar is also not a narrow minded man. The success of his plan is indicated by the fact that many of the people of Gandhigram including Sumita, the austere girl, begin to take interest in the activities of Meadow House. This Western educated man is attracted by her simplicity and falls in love with her. Their marriage reveals the compromise and reconciliation between the East and the West, of materialist and spiritual values.
Bhaskar and Sumita embody two contrary ways of life. Bhaskar is educated in the West. He has travelled widely in Europe and seen cabarets and night clubs. He understands only the body and mind, and not the soul and high morals. Apparently, he has a typically westernized outlook on life. On the other hand, Sumita is typically Indian in her views. She respects asceticism and spiritual values. She belongs to the India of the epic age. A true follower of her father, she is an out-and-and Gandhian. When she happens to come in contact with Bhaskar, the two opposites irresistibly attract each other. All are surprised to see them coming nearer to each other. When she is invited and pressed to attend a function of Lohapur Club, people are struck by her Gandhi-like simplicity.

Even when Bhaskar and Sumita draw near to each other, and love springs between them, people believe that they will never marry, since a wide, almost unbridgeable, gulf exists between their ways of life. However, people are of the view that she will be a nice, suitable wife for the chief engineer, as she has a thinking mind; she will not be a decorative piece of Lohapur club, but will truly be her husband’s intellectual companion. In the end, there is perfect understanding between them, for Bhaskar fully agrees with her. Dr. K.K.Sharma rightly says as

“Their marriage is, in fact, the integration of body, mind and soul, of western materialism and Indian spiritualism.”

In spite of his taking education in America, he has Indian spirit in him. So his westernization is genuine. Thus he is integration of the East and the West.

In his fifth novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, Bhattacharya mainly concerns with the integration of the traditional and modern values. His concern stresses the conflicts that arise due to the industrialization of an Indian Village (Gandhi Gram). The East-West encounter can be studied through the disintegrating
impact of Western Science and Technology on the Indian rural community. Bhattacharya deals with two distinct models of life represented by Steel town and Gandhigram. Steeltown stands for modern western civilization while the second represents the old Eastern values of life.

Industrialization brings havoc in the traditional way of life. The novel becomes the study of a rural community in the agony of transition from the traditional agrarian mode of life to the modern industrial way. This encounter does not entail a simple conflict between the East and the West. The East in the present study is associated with simple rural living while the West is associated with industrialization and modernity. Thus we find a dramatic effect of this encounter on social, economical and political life at the place.

Satyajit and Bhaskar stand for the East and the West. Satyajit is a strong man deeply rooted in tradition. From the beginning he is dead against to the construction of Steeltown. Therefore, he himself presents before us a graphic account of the sordidness of industrialization. Gandhigram stands for a traditional Indian Village. It follows the ideal of selfless service and self help and thus it is called Sevagram which mainly trains people through action alone.

Bhattacharya’s next novel *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978) is an absorbing encounter of the East and the West, two sets of values, cultures and life styles. They, suffering from the deep maladies of materialism and excessive stress on the body, need a way out where it may get the peace which has been eluding it despite all development. The novel treats the theme of integration of values more fully. The locale of the novel presents a blending of the old and new values of the east and the west. It examines the clash of values between the East and the West. Bhattacharya synthesizes the spiritual values of India with those of the permissive society in the United States.
The novel presents an interesting account of the East-West encounter with special emphasis on the impact of oriental culture on America and other countries of the west. The novelist mainly focuses on the growing sense of disillusionment of the people with materialistic values and culture and their desperate search for inner peace. Kh. Kunjo assessed the novel as:

“A Dream In Hawaii” deals with the Bourgeois value system, sex, Yoga, the Guru theme, mysticism and Materialism”

The novelist analyses the cultural ethos of the two countries – India and the Island of Hawaii. He exhorts the importance and relevance of amalgamating these two cultures for enjoying the benefits of both the cultures rather than wavering between them. The novelist exhorts the necessity for blending the old and the new values, the spiritualism of the East and the materialism of the west, for attaining fulfillment. In between birth and death as man oscillates between materialism and mysticism, myth and reality, mortality and immortality, desire and disillusionment, in life. Bhattacharya deals with the two opposing poles of physical desire and spiritual bliss.

The plot of the novel revolves around two main events- one is Yogananda’s quest for spiritual realization in the materialistic west and the other is his passionate infatuation for Devjani’s beauty and the consequent sublimation of his passion. The novel deals with the theme of permissiveness in the western society. The novelist establishes the important impact of the Eastern philosophy and thought on the materialistic and spiritually sterile west. He discusses the clash of cultural values of the East and the West. He amplifies the relationship between religion and art. Yogananda’s view of relationship between art and religion and Stella Gregson an American tourist’s musings over Swami Yogananda’s religious quest have wide and strong implications in the context of the novel’s underlying themes. Throughout the
novel, Yogananda emphasizes upon the need for reconciliation between the East and the West which constitutes the main fabric of the novel.

Neeloy Mukherjee, the professor of Indian philosophy, is metamorphosed into Swami Yogananda by the cumulative effect of his own spiritual hunger and the need and desire of his student, Devjani. Stella Gregson, on visit to India, meets Yogananda and becomes his disciple. She persuades him to undertake a visit to Hawaii. Thus he is taken from his retreat Sadhana in Himalayan foot hills by Rishikesh to the beautiful island of Hawaii to teach the relevance of Vedanta to the soul-tormented people of America.

Neeloy Mukherji, presently transformed into Swami Yogananda, earlier was a professor of Indian philosophy at Indian universities for six year, prior to his renouncement of the world. With his own spiritual hunger and his infatuation for his student Devjani, he has grown into a renowned spiritual leader of India at the age of thirty. During his sojourn in the U.S.A. he goes to Honolulu for giving several lectures on the Bhagavadgita. He gains wisdom through his mystical experience and preaching of Swami Vivekananda. He interprets Vedanta as a path to acquire self knowledge that fills the void between man and the infinite. He emphasizes the need for Yoga and Yogic techniques for cultivating soul culture.

Yogananda’s very presence in America helps him to see his own sickness. America is also in a position to see its sicakness. Though the Swami attains realization, he still remembers his paramour, Devjani. Devjani again arrives on the scene and the Swami is able to meet her. Devjani had approached the swami in order to be initiated in to his ashram but he refused her entry. Now in Hawaii he initiates her without her even approaching him. Thus the character has two faces. One explains Yogananda’s external life which tells his contact with the West. The other face concerns the Swami’s inner life dealing with the struggle to overcome his desire for Devjani. Swami
Yogananda along with the other people benefits a great deal from his experience in Hawaii. There is spiritual awakening amongst the Americans who are materialistic by nature. The swami returns to India as a transformed swami. In this sense Swami Yogananda is able to fulfill his real self by coming in contact with the West.

The characters of Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer bring out the malady of the Western society. Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Alfred and Naomi consider Kamasutra as the best gospel for America. Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer wish to change the “The World Centre for Yogic Disciplines” into a profit-oriented big business. They import from India a Hatha Yogi, an astrologer and an exorcist. They do this of course against the wishes of the swami. Swami Yogananda points to the signs as an indication that western society is endangered by its self-induced venom called progress. On assessing the causes of the crisis, Swami Yogananda emphasizes the importance of the Bhagvad Gita. He urges the people to live a life with purpose and strive hard for the consciousness of God.

Bhattacharya dexterously comments on the American life style, as he finds large scale spiritual degeneration and sterility in a highly complex competitive world and concludes that material success can, in no way, fulfill the needs of the soul that is disenchanted and long for something better. The finer values of life are replaced by perversions violence and use of drugs and intoxicants. Stella Gregson’s life is a standing example for such things her marriage to Walt Gregson is an utter failure. Walt Gregson, a teacher of literature is also a disillusioned person. His determination to write a book on the sexual habits of American women creates aversion in Stella who finds it impossible to cope up with his method of thinking. She tells Walt Gregson that:
“The bed, he believed was a key symbol for the new American, the American of the century’s seventh decade”. 70

Walt Gregson represents the modern American man, having faith only in the materialistic prosperity and values. Walt has become a staunch votary of sexual permissiveness as he has no faith in moral values of life and firmly believes in the dictum: “Suck the juice and throw the peel away!” He fervently advocates free sex and as such, gets involved in several love affairs, posing as a liberated human being and advising his students also to adopt his so called philosophy. In spite of his deep involvement in physical pleasures he is not a satisfied man within. His inner self craves for something more, other than mere physical gratification or worldly pleasures. In course of time, he comes to realize that this is not only his problem, but also that of the society around him.

The other important character, Dr. Vincent Swift, being a romantic realist and a down-to-earth visionary, pleads for a compromise between these divergent values of life. He believes in the give-and-take theory. In his opinion, to stick to one’s own ideas is not always justified. One must have a pragmatic view and adjust himself to the values of life.

The novel which is set against the scene and mesmerizing scenic beauty of the American Island, Hawaii, draws attention to the spiritual sterility that is apparent in the American society and cites several examples to show how the Westerns have turned to the East for spiritual succor.

Stella Gregson is the Ph.D. student in Hinduism of the East-West University in Hawaii. On her visit to India, she deciphers “a new meaning and purpose of Vedanta from lectures of Yogananda. She determines to persuade him to accompany her to Hawaii where he could deliver more such lectures. She apparently gets transported to Hawaii in her dream. She feels that she is
indebted to swami Yogananda for setting right, her inner life. She realizes that myriad numbers of Americans are also in dire need of such assistance. She thinks that this is an opportunity for her for being useful to others. R. Poli Reddy says as:

“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”  

Stella Gregson, the American Fulbright scholar is very impressed by the discourses given by the Swami. She visualizes some ray of hope for the transformation of the soul-dead materialism of the American life. On her persuasion, swami goes to Hawaii where his lectures draw big crowds of young disillusioned Americans. The Swami does not make tall claims of having miraculous powers but simply explains the vedantic philosophy to the foreigners emphasizing the need for searching for the camouflaged truth. He, at the same time, advises them not to reject life for the sake of enlightenment as it could be equally hazardous. Swami Yogananda after sometime suddenly decides to return to India on discovering that Dr.Vincent, the director of the East-West centre at Hawaii, was trying to use him as a tool for garnering wealth.

Bhattacharya consciously traces the evolution of Swami, to show that he is just an ordinary human being with weakness for worldly pleasures, who had abandoned his academic pursuits in search of spiritual truth. He was able to keep away his worldly temptations for successfully overcoming his infatuation for Devjani at Hawaii.
The novelist depicts two methods of living that are poles apart. He writes about Americans who hope to derive some kind of satisfaction through sex but fail in their attempts and become disillusioned, like Walt Gregson and his counterpart, Naomi who are considered symbols of the sex-obsessed youth of America by Bhattacharya. On reading Kamasutra Naomi experiments with various sexual postures cited there for experiencing the thrills of sex.

Jennifer is another character, who makes a visit to India on being separated from her husband, and meets Madhu, a young boy who is able to gratify her sexual urge to some extent. Jennifer cuts short her visit to India on receiving a message that her estranged husband died in a car accident, though her ‘inner void’ continues to plague her. Subsequently she visits the East-West Centre and gets momentary relief in the company of Swami Yogananda, though Dr. Swift and Frieda prevent Jennifer from coming out of her emptiness completely. Frieda is unable to live without sex, as she considers it as heaven’s ambrosia’. Even Walt Gregson very soon is disenchanted with the idea of sex. Just as Dr. Swift stands for lust, for money and power, so also, Walt Gregson stands for physical pleasure.

Bhattacharya illustrates the need for self-introspection for bringing about a positive change through the character of Swami Yogananda. The Swami had once been Neeloy Mukherji, a professor of Eastern philosophy and an expert in the Vedanta at Benares Hindu University. He has been in love with his student Devjani who worships him and even invests in him a spiritual feeling. Succumbing to an inner urge, he renounces the world, becomes a ascetic and establishes his Ashram, named Sadhana at Rishikesh. Devjani, who is thoroughly impressed by Yogananda’s lectures on Vedanta, visits him at Rishikesh Ashrams for getting Deeksha from him but Yogananda refuses to oblige her as he develops tender feelings towards her and thinks that he would surely be forced to deviate from the chosen path in her presence.
In the beginning it becomes difficult for Swami Yogananda to give up his desire of his earlier “Old Self”. Time and again he dreams of making love to Devjani. When Frieda, an American girl comes to him for fulfillment of her sexual desires he successfully dissuades her. He is unable to resist his rising sexual desire for Devjani, when she calls on him at Hawaii. More or less it is the same when Sylvia comes to him. However, Swami Yogananda unperturbedly continues his discourses drawing audience from both his native land as well the West.

Devjani, who is a typical Indian girl, has deep faith in the moral values of the East. Purity, modesty and simplicity are at the core of her heart, and she is terribly shocked on learning about her mother’s adultery. Her sense of respect for her mother is lost in the stream of her hatred. At that point of time, she is unable to understand her mother’s remark, “constant self denial is not my idea of life”. So she becomes disgusted and leaves her home for Benares to continue her studies.

A tremendous emptiness is noticed in Devjani, after the shocking revelation of her mother’s adultery. She sees an Oriental Guru in Neeloy Mukerji who she thinks is capable of helping her in her spiritual crisis. She exhorts him to renounce the world for leading a spiritual life and for preaching Vedanta the humanity. Devjani herself seeks solace in his spiritual values, to fulfill her inner vacuum. She discovers that:

“Within her was a hunger for the spiritual life”  

So she denies the opportunity given to her and leaves for America to join the East-West centre, Honolulu, for her research work.
The contemporary American society which is in hopeless turmoil, in spite of being a superior technological society that is externally glamorous internally stinking:

“A dead rat lies somewhere under its brightly carpeted floor, rotting away, the stench rising, filling our nostrils. The vomit comes to our throat.” 73

The novel presents a vivid picture of the problems of India. India which is considered to be a land of high spiritual attainment is mired in injustice, indignity and poverty. Indian philosophy emphasizes on the importance of deeds that are free from desire and reward.

Bhattacharya refers to important philosophers like Goutam Buddha, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi who practiced noble ideals of Indian culture in their lives and continued its rich tradition. The interest shown by Vivekananda in contemporary man was as deep as his obsorption in abstract thoughts of Vedanta. But India, which could boast of producing great leaders, also produced great imposters and phony Gurus who exploit gullible village-folks and make money, cashing in on their blind belief and faith.

The West is ready to accept all that the East represents. The disenchanted American youth is attracted towards the ways of the East in their desperate search for peace of mind. The American’s interest in temples, caves and handicrafts is motivated by the ill effects of physical gratification.

“Yellow-robed men from the East held out the bright promise of inner adjustment and peace”. 74
Ethical values that are given a ‘go by’ in India have attracted the people of the West.

This has led to the growth and popularity of a number of spiritual movements in the American society. Swami Yogananda’s experiences in Hawaii show how the two different ideals could be balanced for bringing about a change for the better in the society. Not specifically supporting any one of these two ideals, Hawaii has become the best meeting ground for the orient and the occident. To get over the difficult situation, swami Yogananda contemplates on the exigency of Vedanta that could make human life better. Spiritual knowledge acts as a beacon light for guiding humanity to the state of absolute peace.

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.” 75

Swami Yogananda, as a teacher of philosophy, adopts some of the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, and believes that mere philosophical abstractions are meaningless and that religion is not for empty bellies. He constantly preaches about freeing oneself from selfish possessions. Swami’s messages are helpful in attaining the much sought after inner peace. Swami Vivekananda mission
was to lay the foundation for a new universal religious order for achieving salvation well versed in both the oriental as well as the occidental philosophies employed them for evolving his own unique spiritual democracy rather than adhering to any one of them.

Swami Yogananda was also like Swami Vivekananda, in recognizing and propagating India’s significant role as a spiritual guide to the world. He aspires for a proper interaction between the nations on the basis of equality without feeling the enigma of political slavery, abject poverty or technological insufficiency. One should always aspire to cultivate a strong personality. There are myriad numbers of ways for strengthening one’s personality, education being one such. He has advocated the youth to imbibe in themselves the ‘life giving’ ‘Character building’ ideas and further insisted like Vivekananda, that women must be educated and that education should not be delinked from religious or spiritual values which are essential components of life in India.

In the novel Bhattacharya also advocates the ideas of Swami Vivekananda through his portrayal of the characters of Devjani and Nishi. Devjani is well educated, and goes to Harvard on an academic exploration, and is very impressed by Yogananda’s discourse of Vedanta and its applicability to practical life. Nishi too becomes Americanized in many ways without giving up the Indian philosophical ideologies. On the other hand, Bhattacharya portrays the plight of Sujatha, an eighteen-year old widow who is forced to lead a life of seclusion in Varanasi. She is uneducated and so, in the absence of a purposeful and meaningful active life, elopes with Anomi. But Devjani and Nishi are able to enjoy more freedom to develop their personalities because of their education. Sujata suffers for want of education. Hence a blend of these two cultures has become necessary for the all round development of a sound and good personality.
Swamy Yogananda shares the perspectives of his philosophical guide in talking about the cultural synthesis in the novel. Dr. Vincent Swift recalls the speeches of Vivekananda for assimilating these cultures:

“Hindu or Bhuddhist or Christian, let each assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. Let this be inscribed in the banner of every religion. Assimilation, not destruction. Harmony and peace, not dissension.”

At the new centre in Hawaii, the primary objective was to bring about a social change through assimilation.

Yogananda’s world centre of Yogic disciplines is another place that helps the west to look towards East for getting away from the futilities of life:

“World centre for Yogic disciplines… Anyhow, the world centre would stress the therapeutic value of release from both mental and physical.”

Walt Gregson uses Sylvia Koo as a weapon in order to break the Swami’s detachment. It is revealed that he loves Devjani. After this he goes in for strict penance and is thus sanctified. The novel ends with Yogananda coming back to India. He was disenchanted with life in Hawaii and this makes him return to India. He realizes that he either has to be Neeloy or Yogananda.

Mildred, Benjamin and Carol are influenced by Yogananda who believe that purpose, belief and hope are the real values of future. He succeeds in arousing a desire for a deepening spiritual quest among the American youth. He suddenly leaves Hawaii, thus giving a setback to the selfish designs of
Jennifer and Vincent. Yogananda’s spiritualism wins in its conflict with American materialism.

Bhattacharya shows the inter relationship between materialism and spiritualism; they stand for the East and West. Without one the other cannot exist. Relation is very essential if one wish to establish inter personal relationship. Bhattacharya’s observation regarding religion is that it is now days being reduced to mere rituals. However, it does a lot of good to man in every respect. Walter Gregson, who was the prophet of permissiveness, considered the bed as the key symbol for the new American. Sylvia is his latest mistress. He urges her to seduce Yogananda. Walter’s latest poem on a “Dead Rat”- a dead rat stinking under the nylon rug is in fact very symbolic of the theme and colour of the novel. The admirers of Yogananda wish to establish a universal religion which in the long run will solve the inner tensions and anxieties including the driving of evil spirits. It must be mentioned here that the novel in which religion plays a big role.

Religion in this novel forms an integral part. It reveals the novelist’s views on the spiritual aspects of life, that they are equally important in order to lead a complete life here and now. Materialism has certainly failed to tell man the purpose of existence. The novel concerns both materialism and spiritualism in equal ratio. It concerns with the depiction of the abundance of sex as a symptom of the sick society. It also deals with the true nature of spiritualism and salvation which is reached through self-fulfillment. The swami’s voyage to America turns out finally to be not so much a discovery of America as Yogananda’s own self-discovery that the Neeloy within him as invincible as Devjani who constitutes an inseparable part of his twin identities as a professor and a Yogi. Yogananda remains an intensely human figure in his realization that sex and spirituality are two sides of the same coin, in spite of the fact that all sorts of perversions are committed in their name.
All the characters in the novel are involved in the common quest of finding the true meaning of their very existence and to experience their self-fulfillment. The novelist tries to bring home the fact that man doesn’t live by bread alone; he also requires food for soul as well. The principal character, Swami Yogananda, preaches the spiritualism of the east and yet fully understands the values of the West. To his the spiritual wisdom of the East and materialistic knowledge of the west are complementary. He feels that the real success can be attained by a synthesis of values. He intends to establish a world centre for Yogic disciplines where Vedantic spiritualism will be preached to the Americans but does not altogether ignore the prospect of material benefit from the centre.

The development of the characters of Yogananda and Devjani and their attitude towards each other also emphasize the value of the synthesis. In the beginning of the novel, Devjani is presented as a typical Indian girl who contains purity, modesty and simplicity as the core of her life and who is shocked by her mother,s illicit love-affair. She desires to have a fusion of the physical and spiritual attributes within her. She pleads with Yoganand for having a broad-minded approach to the western way of life.

Yogananda is taken there by Stella on a lecture tour to spread the message that Indian spiritualism is an answer to American problems. But his stay in Hawaii grows into a beautiful conflict between two modes of life and thinking. Prof. Walt Gregson, the husband of Stella, represents the typical American mode of life. He comes into conflict with the Swami and succeeds in defiling him through Sylvia Koo and the Yogi has to flee from there to reassess his own elevation.

Swami Yoganada also fights with himself when a conflict emerges inside his own self. The Neeloy in him, whom he claims to have buried, resurfaces, and he is not able to forget Devjani, his former disciple who was
instrumental in his elevation into Yogananda. He feels the need of her and the she remains ingrained deep in his consciousness. He confesses his weakness for Devjani before Devjani herself, but she assures him saying

“There is no Neeloy… There is only Swami Yogananda”. 78

The conflict between two modes of life surfaces when Dr. Vincent Swift tries to develop the centre in America on purely commercial lives whereas Swami Yogananda has the Indian experience and tradition uppermost in his mind. The novelist asserts his firm faith in the essential goodness of human soul Howsoever bad and evil intentioned a person may be, there is always a possibility of his seeing the light of reason and the surfacing of good in him. It is true because good and evil always remain locked in the eternal conflict and with it the hope that good will ultimately succeeds. This very true in the case of Walt who after defeating Yogananda fails to enjoy his success and feels the need of meeting Yogananda for his own sake. He moves out to meet the swami there by gives a new dimension to the struggle of man, especially the American, to gain happiness in the midst of all vulgarity and abnormality.

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.
There are references to the Indian heritage and culture, and contrasts between India and America on grounds of their cultures and civilizations. There is also a reference to “Kamasutra”, the ancient classic of India. The Americans consider it to be the best gospel for them. The existence of a religion ashram with a guru doing his Sadhana (Meditation in it is vividly described. Many people are shown coming there to learn Yogic disciplines in their quest for the ultimate reality. There is also a mention of the popularity of Indian occult lore and rustic exorcism. Ultimately The East-West encounter turns out to be the contradictory inscriptions in the novel.

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.
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