CHAPTER - I

BHABANI BHATTACHARYA:
THE MAN AND THE WRITER
I. BHABANI BHATTACHARYA - THE MAN AND THE WRITER

Bhabani Bhattacharya gives valuable insights into the pathos of economic impoverishment, maldistribution of wealth and human degradation caused by political upheavals.

The novelist cannot turn his hand directly to the regeneration of society, but he can describe man, especially the poor, with due respect for his origin and destiny. Christian thinkers and Marxists alike emphasize the importance of the role the poor are to play in the future. They have suffered for a long time at the hands of a materialistic society indifferent to all human values, except those that served its immediate purpose, and given over to merciless competition. Not all individuals grow through suffering, but some kind of compensation can be looked for among the ranks of the disinherited. It is on the spiritual energy stored by the poor that the future must depend. This means a rich field for the novelist to explore, not through aesthetic slumming or with condescension and brutality, but with all the psychological and spiritual resources at his command.

Bhattacharya, one of the older generations of Indian writers writing in English, has written Novels and Short Stories, a book on Gandhi as a Writer, Popular accounts of episodes from Indian history and also
translated and edited some of Tagore’s writings. Bhattacharya’s Novels dealing with epoch-making events constitute a valuable social document.

**Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Life Sketch**

Born on 10th November 1906 in Bhagalpur, Bihar, Bhattacharya was a precocious child and his talents were discovered by his mother and fostered by his grandfather. When he was twelve years old, his first article appeared in a Bengali Magazine “Mouchack”. His father, a District and Sessions Judge, very much wanted Bhabani to prepare himself for Government service; he could not appreciate Bhabani’s flair for writings. Educated at Patna University Bhabani took his B.A., (Hons.) Degree in the year 1927 and had his advanced studies in the University of London (1929-1934) and got B.A., (Hons.) from the London University. For his work on Historical research he was awarded Ph.D. in 1934. In 1935 he was married to Salila Mukherji; he had three children, a son and two daughters.

Bhattacharya worked as Press Attaché to the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. from 1950 to 1952; he worked as assistant editor in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. In 1959-60 he was the Secretary, Tagore Commemorative Society, New Delhi. He was made a Consultant in the Ministry of Education, New Delhi, in 1961 and worked there till 1967. He won the Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *Shadow from*
Ladakh in 1967. He was given a Ford Foundation Grant in 1968-69 to write the prestigious work *Gandhi the Writer--The Image As It Grew* – to commemorate the birth centenary of the “Father of the Nation”. He was also a member on the Advisory Board of the Sahitya Academy. He joined the East-West Center, Honolulu as Senior Specialist during 1969 and since then he has been a visiting Professor in the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

He has travelled extensively. In 1951 he visited the Soviet Union as a member of the First Indian Cultural Delegation of Writers and Scientists led by Dr. Baliga. Later he participated in the International Conference of Writers at Stockholm. In response to the invitation from Harvard University he attended the Harvard International Seminar held at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1959; in 1960 he participated in a similar Seminar held at Tokyo. Later he gave guest lectures in New Zealand and Australia in 1962 and West Germany in 1963. During the Festival of Arts, one of Australia’s biggest cultural events he attended a Writers’ Conference in Adelaid. He received New Zealand’s prestigious award given by its Four Universities.

With his varied experience, he has risen like a meteor in the literary firmament. He recollects with a sense of gratefulness the highest amount of respect, extended to the Writers, in New Zealand and Australia and he was highly pleased at the special treatment given to him as an Asian
Writer. He and his wife were invited to dinner by the Minister of External Affairs, New Zealand.

Bhattacharya, an outstanding Indo-Anglian Novelist, has earned world-wide distinction and his books have been translated in twenty six languages, of which sixteen are European. He is the fourth writer to receive the award for a work in English, the other three being R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Verrier Elwin.

THEORY OF ART

Writing is his first love and career. All his novels present a true picture of India and its millions of people surging with life and substance. He does not believe in the theory of ‘Art for Art’s sake’. He has made the most important observation that creative writing ought to be spontaneous:

I have not believed in writing for the sake of writing. I seldom planned a story structure. Each story grew in my subconscious mind as it were. When it had grown enough, I had to give it physical form. The characters, even when I had decided how they were going to behave moved by their own volition, often defeating my purpose. (Quoted in K.R. Chandrasekaran, Bhabani Bhattacharya - p.2)

Bhattacharya is of the view that for writing a social novel with a definite purpose, it is essential that the novelist should carefully look around him and catch the world of the people he happens to live with. His
disciplines must be based on his personal experiences of life. Upholding the concept of ‘Art for Life’s Sake’, Bhattacharya rejects the dictum of ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ and calls it a muffled cry because it is as absurd as a demand like ‘Science for the sake of Science’. He emphasizes that art must have purposiveness and the novel must have a social purpose:

...I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view. Art is not necessarily for art’s sake. Purposeless art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me a sound judgement. (“An Evening with Bhabani”, Sudhakar Joshi, The Sunday Standard - April 27, 1969)

Bhattacharya asserts that an artist should inevitably be concerned with truth and reality. It is the Writer’s concern with truth that leads him to deal with ethical values. The ethical values ought not to interfere with the pure spirit of his creative activity. His preaching should be closely related to, and should be an exploration and revelation of, the basic truths of life in an artistic manner. An inartistic delineation of morals certainly damages irreparably the meaning and form of art:

Art must teach, and unobtrusively, by its vivid interpretation of life. Art must preach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. If that is propaganda, there is no need to eschew the word. (“Literature and Social Reality” The Aryan Path, Vol. XXVI, No. 9 - September 1955)
Bhattacharya conceives the novels as an “Idiom of Compassion” which is designed to have a “curative social effect”. The subject matter and themes of his novels derive from modern Indian history and the problems of contemporary Indian society and they embody the programmes of reform as well as stinging social criticism. This method, initiated in modern Indo-Anglian fiction by the early novels and short stories of Anand, is a feature of the majority of post independent Indo-Anglian novels.

SO MANY HUNGERS

Bhattacharya’s first book, So Many Hungers, was published in October, 1947. It is a socio-political novel; an authentic record of the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the Quit-India Movement of 1942, it has its central theme--man’s hunger for food and political freedom. The book is made of two plots: the story of Samarendra Basu’s family with young Rahoul as the central figure; and the story of a peasant family with a young girl Kajoli as the principal character. The first one deals with India’s struggle for freedom in the early 40’s and the second, the pathetic fate of millions suffering from a famine. The sad tale of Kajoli is a pathetic record of what happened to more than two million men and women who became victims of a famine which was brought out by the selfishness of profiteers and the indifference of an alien government.
Deva Basu is the joining link between two plots; he is a source of inspiration to the main characters. Bhattacharya uses the word ‘hunger’ as a refrain at many places in his novels. One such reference in *So Many Hungers* is to “the people’s hunger for food or freedom”. (*So Many Hungers*, p.108) “*So Many Hungers* is no doubt an impeachment of man’s inhumanity to man but it is also a dramatic study of a set of human beings trapped in a unique predicament”. (K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English*, p.414) The novel is much more than this; it is an “artistic embodiment of Bhattacharya’s affirmative vision of life”. (K.K.Sharma, *Bhabani Bhattacharya: His Vision and Themes* - p.26)

**MUSIC FOR MOHINI**

*Music for Mohini*, Bhattacharya’s second novel was published in 1952. The Indo-Anglian novels produced immediately after independence reveal a new consciousness of Indianness and the Indian heritage, as contrasted with Western culture and traditions. There is an increasing concern about the steps to be taken in order to ensure India’s greatness and stability. In *Music for Mohini*, Bhattacharya deals with certain sociological aspects of Indian life and points out a direction of move, if our political freedom is to give us its full benefits. The novel is the story of the intellectual and the emotional development of Mohini, the heroine, from carefree position of a wife and the mistress of a rich and influential house with great traditions.
Thus, it is a study in psychology without the complexities of a psychological novel. Mohini, a girl of seventeen studying at school, is given complete freedom in her home. The motherless girl is brought up by her father “the Professor” and her grandmother called “Old Mother”.

Towards the end of the novel she has been married for two or three years and as an expectant mother and lady of the Big House of Behula, is coming back to her parents’ home for first holiday. The process of her growth and maturation is one of the main themes in the novel.

Bhattacharya’s main concern in the novel is the need for a change for social outlook and reorientation of social values in India. Indian society, with all the beliefs and practices, glimpses of orthodoxy, vows and offerings is presented to the reader. Bhattacharya does not want to demolish everything old for giving way to the new. He shows respect for many of our traditional values. This novel presents a picture of microcosm governed by conventions but it also proclaims the simmering of discontent below the placid surface. The voice of protest is heard and one gets the feeling that it will increase in volume and intensity till it is listened to. Major social reforms like widow remarriage are mentioned in the novel.
Elimination of untouchability and removal of caste barriers are other major steps mentioned in the novel:

Do not bow down to such insult. You are the new India. The old orthodox ways have been our yoke, have enslaved us. Let us be free. (Music for Mohini, p.166)

The novelist gives vent to his trust in the fullness and goodness of life.

Life was music--a note of song for the Old Mother was in her, a note for Jayadev and his rebel gods, a note for the Big House and Behula village, torn and at cross-purposes for a while. Her life was music the true quest of every woman, her deepest need. (Ibid., p.188)

**HE WHO RIDES A TIGER**

_He Who Rides a Tiger_. Bhattacharya’s third novel, was published in 1956. The title of the novel is based on the ancient saying that ‘he who rides a tiger cannot dismount’. There is much in common between _So Many Hungers_ and _He Who Rides a Tiger_. The latter is more concerned with the history of one mind or at the most of two or three minds. The Quit-India movement mentioned in the novel lies in the background but the spectre of the famine looms large on the horizon. The hero, Kalo, has the courage and drive to dismount from the tiger in crisis. Unlike Raju in R.K.Narayan’s _The Guide_, Kalo has the courage and wisdom to face the situation and get back to his original position in order
to identify himself with the society from which he has sprung up. The reader is made to understand the truth that any individual who rebels against society cannot adjust himself and so has to reconcile himself to it.

The crux of the novel is that Kalo raises his banner of revolt against the society that disowns him, hurts him and ignores him even.

The whole story centres upon two characters -- Kalo a dark skinned blacksmith and Chandra Lekha, his daughter -- more particularly which of Kalo who jets his resentment and anger against the society which has disregarded him most callously; the story revolves on the two hinges of caste and of cash. Kalo successfully takes vengeance upon society by performing the fake miracle and posing himself as a Brahmin priest. Towards the end of the novel, he frankly admits his true self; he becomes an object of ridicule and curses of the rich and high--caste persons. But the common people hail him as the emancipator and champion of class freedom: “Victory to our brother”. (He Who Rides a Tiger, p.243) Biten congratulates him and tells him: “Your story will be a legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken”. (Ibid., p.246)

Bhattacharya’s delineation of the ordeals of the destitutes in He Who Rides a Tiger varies in emphasis from that in So Many Hungers.
The accent visibly shifts from mute, passive suffering to protest and rebellion.

**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 an established social order which labels men as superior and inferior by virtue of the accident of their birth. (K.R. Chandrasekharan, *Bhabani Bhattacharya*, p.68)

**A GODDESS NAMED GOLD**

In **A Goddess Named Gold**, the fourth novel published in 1960, the fantastic events in a village named Sonamitti, a little before Independence Day, artistically reflect the novelist’s resplendent vision of life. Gold, which generally symbolizes material wealth, is here presented as a symbol of the richness of spirit and mind. Likewise, freedom does not stand for opportunity to get prosperity; it is something very wonderful which stimulates man to think and act nobly and thus create happiness for all through some of the basic human values, such as real acts of kindness, self-sacrifice, freedom, friendship, goodness, purity, dignity, fight for the needy against the tyranny of the rich etc.

The plot is centred upon a touchstone given to Meera by her noble grandfather who is a wandering minstrel. It is believed that the amulet
will enable Meera to turn copper into gold, provided she does an act of real kindness as a natural and spontaneous expression of herself. Thus an unusual emphasis is laid on one of the fundamental human values, viz. selfless and spontaneous kindness emanating from the spirit of compassion:

Wearing it on your passion you will do an act of kindness. Real kindness. Then all copper on your body will turn to gold.

........Parted from your arm, the touchstone will be dead, a worthless pebble. (A Goddess Named Gold, p.85)

Towards the close of the story the minstrel points out that true freedom and miracles are not possible without love and hard work:

Without acts of faith, freedom is a dead pebble tied to the arm with a bit of string, fit only to be cast into the river. It is upto us to attain miracles, he went on, “Miracles to make us strong, to make us worthy, to make us full grown people”. (Ibid., p.277)

**SHADOW FROM LADAKH**

Published in 1966, Bhattacharya’s fifth novel *Shadow from Ladakh* set against the background of the Chinese aggression upon India in 1962, expresses, as eloquently as any other novel, his affirmative vision of life. It stresses the need for the synthesis of divergent sets of
values for an all-round progress of the nation. Large-scale industrialization and modernism are to be harmonised with the best of ancient India--decentralised small scale industry, asceticism and non-violence.

Bhattacharya tells an extremely gripping story of unsurpassed drama, on a broad and revealing canvas. The novel portrays two modes of life represented by Gandhigram and Steeltown. Gandhigram is modelled after the ways and views of the scholar Satyajit, a true follower of Gandhi and Tagore, while Steeltown is dominated by Bhaskar, the young America-trained Chief Engineer with a highly westernized outlook.

Both Satyajit and Bhaskar are replete with missionary zeal and idealism in their own ways. Since the two are poles apart in their ideas and attitudes, there ensures a fierce conflict between them. Steeltown threatens to destroy Gandhigram and Satyajit has to resort to fast-unto-death. But gradually the clash grows weaker and weaker, and at last it disappears as the two modes of life spontaneously intermingle.

It is not without significance that Bhaskar and Sumita, the ascetic daughter of Satyajit, fall in love with each other. This denotes the understanding between, and the synthesis of, the two opposite modes of life.
The novelist clearly brings out his conviction that a joyful and hopeful life is possible only with the fusion of the conflicting values and modes of life.

That was Tagore’s firm belief. Integration— that was the poet’s lifelong quest; integration of the simple and the sophisticated: the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West. (Shadow from Ladakh, p.215)

In Shadow from Ladakh Bhattacharya suggests that the Indianness within an Indian, very much influenced by his heritage, cannot be obliterated even by prolonged and close contact with the West. The half-caste Rupa observes that Bhaskar cannot give up his deep rooted Indianism though he has absorbed the life of the West. This novel, according to Bhattacharya, is his greatest achievement. Bhattacharya himself makes the following comment:

My latest novel, Shadow from Ladakh, is not a favourite for reviewers, but that is the one I enjoyed most. The men and women in this story held me obsessed all through the writing. (Quoted in K.R. Chandrasekaran, Bhabani Bhattacharya, p.126)

A DREAM IN HAWAII

A Dream in Hawaii, Bhattacharya’s last novel, was written in America whereas all his earlier novels were written during his stay in
India. This novel was written in the declining years of his life, with periodical illness. The subject of the novel is the recurrence of the ‘Guru theme’ and it deals with the tensions and pretensions of the ultra-modern world with its sick hurry and divided aims. Bhattacharya deals with the true poles of life – Kama (physical desire) and Moksha (spiritual bliss or salvation). The novel highlights the two aspects -- Tamas (darkness referring to the bodily pleasures) and Jnana (light enlightenment referring to the realization of the ultimate reality). It is perhaps with this view that the novelist concludes the novel with the statement “The glimmer of the Jal aircraft faded into the night”. (A Dream in Hawaii, p.223) Symbolically ‘glimmer’ refers to the light and ‘night’ refers to darkness.

The novel centres on three characters--Swami Yogananda, Dr. Vincent Smith and Devjani. Bhattacharya has in mind the clash of values between the East and the West – India and America. He is disillusioned with the American way of life and he brings into the fore their ways of life--the Transcendental Meditation, permissiveness, hippie culture, the use of tranquillisers, the Krishna consciousness and Hare Ram, Hare Krishna Cult. Whole pages are devoted to ‘sex’ and ‘Kama sutra’, on one hand and ‘Yogas’ and ‘Meditation’ on the other hand.

The world centre of Yogic Disciplines in Honolulu promises to provide the seekers of charming Hawaii (suitable meeting ground of East and West) disenchanted with the western values of life--not only plenty
of Indian Yoga, scope for research into the ancient occult lore, but also the benefit of an illiterate rustic exorcist, Hanuman Ojha. For most of the people Swami Yogananda, a powerful orator and a magnetic personality is the symbol of a new dream of youth.

Bhattacharya makes a satiric hit at the inexplicable permissiveness or the Americans which leads them nowhere.

THE GOLDEN BOAT

The Golden Boat, a collection of Tagore’s stories, allegories and other short pieces translated into English by Bhattacharya, was first published in London by Allen and Unwin in 1932. A second and revised edition was brought out by Jaico in India in 1956. In the translation, some pieces have been dropped and others added in the Indian edition. The range and variety of the selections for translation are noteworthy.

A wisp of fantasy; a dip in history; a philosophical motif; an emotion; a sharp observation – such is the varied range of creativity in the stories. (The Golden Boat, p.5)

INDIAN CAVALCADE

Indian Cavalcade, a collection of several articles in an ordered sequence, deals with episodes from Indian history published earlier in
periodicals and Newspapers. It is a reminder of Bhattacharya’s scholarly interest in Indian History.

STEEL HAWK AND OTHER STORIES

Steel Hawk and Other Stories is an anthology of fifteen short stories written by Bhabani Bhattacharya. The stories display considerable variety of theme and tone ranging from light-hearted comedy to sombre tragedy, from flights of sheer fancy to the keenest observation of facts and from a study of a monkey’s mind to the exploration of the depths of the human soul.

The touching story ‘A Moment of Eternity’ brings out Bhattacharya’s spirit of compassion which finds more elaborate expression in So Many Hungers and He Who Rides a Tiger. His short stories reveal his seriousness of purpose as a writer even as the novels do. They provide “a glimpse of his personality, his awareness of the human predicament, his interest in what goes on in the inner chamber of the human mind and his philosophy of moderation and compromise”. (K.R. Chandrasekaran, Bhabani Bhattacharya, p.138)

Bhattacharya edited a book Contemporary Short Stories, second series for the Sahitya Akademi and none of the editor’s stories is included in the volume.
TOWARDS UNIVERSAL MAN

Towards Universal Man, a collection of eighteen essays or articles by Tagore translated into English, was brought out in 1961, the centenary year of Tagore’s birth on the initiative and with the support of the Ford Foundation. Bhattacharya the Editor-cum-Chief Translator of the volume in the “Preface” mentions that the title was chosen ‘in order to indicate the goal towards which Tagore was moving throughout his life’. (“Preface” in Towards Universal Man, p.ix) This book is one of the many proofs of Bhattacharya’s great veneration for the poet Tagore.

SOME MEMORABLE YESTERDAYS/OR MEN, WOMEN AND EVENTS OF INDIAN HISTORY

Bhattacharya’s Some Memorable Yesterdays/or Men, Women and Events of Indian History published in 1941, is mainly a selection from a series of sketches which Bhattacharya had contributed to The Hindu of Madras as a Sunday feature under the general title, “This week in Indian History”.

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN HISTORY

SOCIO-POLITICAL CURRENTS IN BENGAL: A NINETEENTH CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

Socio-political Currents in Bengal: A Nineteenth Century Perspective, published in 1980 is a dissertation for the University of London’s Ph.D. Degree, written way back in the Thirties with the reference materials available at the British Museum and India Office Libraries. The volume comprises six chapters of which “The Indigo Revolt” had been published in the 1978 Annual of Sunday. That chapter had previously appeared in Russian translation in a symposium on peasant revolts published in Moscow St Louis, USA.

GANDHI THE WRITER

Bhattacharya’s Gandhi the Writer--The Image as It Grew was written to commemorate the birth centenary of 1969 and this is the only work of Bhabani Bhattacharya in which he attempts a survey and assessment of another writer. The chapters dealing with Thoreau, Tolstoy, Tagore, Romain Rolland, Martin Luther King and many other friends of Gandhi who interpreted him to the West make interesting reading.
PLACE OF BHATTACHARYA IN INDO-ANGLIAN FICTION

Though not a prolific writer, with abundant humanism and leftist leanings like Mulk Raj Anand, nor a comic genius with artistic detachment and commitment to human values like R.K. Narayanan, Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the major novelists of the older generation of Indo-Anglian novelists. He is endowed with a transparently positive vision of life explored and expressed artistically in all his novels.

Bhattacharya’s stories abound in social and historical realities, quite often bitter and gruesome, such as the Bengal famine of 1943, the Tragedies of the freedom struggle and the evils of poverty, corruption, ignorance, superstition, exploitation, greed, sexual perversion, etc. Even in the midst of ghastly and heart-rending scenes of human sufferings and torture in his novels, life asserts itself sparkling amid ashes. The recurrent artistic presentation of the affirmation of life in his works is something unique.

Most of the Indo-Anglian novelists have written their novels with the avowed purpose of bringing out a transformation in the attitudes and perspectives of Indians to problems and events. They have brought a social awareness and voiced forth the weal and woe and the varied problems faced by India and its millions of people.
Bhattacharya may not be considered one of the foremost Indo-Anglian writers like Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao, who form a separate trio by themselves, but he has an individual place of his own and certainly is a more sensitive artist than Kushwant Singh, Manohar Malgaonkar and other women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Saghal, Prawer Jhabvala and Anita Desai. (S.Syamala Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and His Works, p.144)

Thus he stands in between the leading Indo-Anglian writers and other writers whose literary achievement is slowly gaining place in the galaxy of the contemporary Indo-Anglian fiction. But Bhattacharya is the one novelist who has an avowed purpose in writing the novels with his manifesto and declaration that “Art must have a social purpose”. Not only did he believe in it, but he followed it implicitly in all his novels. In this respect he is like Shaw who says that if art is not didactic, it is useless.

THEME OF HUNGER

The Theme of hunger runs through the novels of Anand and Kamala Markandaya also. Anand’s novels, Coolie and Untouchable, deal with the human degradation caused by hunger and misery of the poor and their struggle for a better life. His later novels too are a variation on the same theme and drive home the plight of the unfortunate peasant whirled round by the wheel of superstition and conventions.
Kamala Markandaya’s novels **Nectar in a Sieve** and **A handful of Rice** are novels on the same theme of poverty and hunger. The attitude of rural people submitting themselves to the vagaries of natural catastrophes as also to the wishes of unscrupulous men is presented here. The novel **A Handful of Rice** has for its background and struggle of Ravi, a village boy with his trials, tribulations and despair. Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya are content with presenting a convincing picture of human existence, without allowing them to be propagandists.

Again a host of Indo-Anglian novels are imbued with the portrayal of life. K.S. Venkatramani’s, **Kandan the Patriot** and **Murugan, the tiller** are striking examples of this aspect and they also highlight the poverty-stricken villagers who are helpless victims in the hands of the money-lenders and land-lords. Anand’s novels **The Old Woman and the Cow** and **The Village** drive home the plight of the villagers who are slaves of superstition and convention.

All the novels of Bhattacharya are permeated by the rural setting and characters and **Music for Mohini** is concerned with the conflict between the city and rural life and confluence at the end. The principle of “simple living and high thinking” is highlighted in the depiction of the village “Gandhigram” in **Shadow from Ladakh**. But all these novelists present stereotyped characters of the money-lender and land-lord who are
inevitable in any village background. Nonetheless, the reader identifies himself with the characters, lives with them feels their impulses and his soul is touched with the chords of humanity.

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity is another aspect treated by Bhattacharya in Music for Mohini and Kamala Markandaya in A Silence of Desire. Mohini and Jayadev, Old Mother and the Mother of the Big House reconcile themselves to changing patterns and outlook. Kamala Markandaya brings it out through the husband Dandakar and his wife Sarojini and strikes a balance between science and superstition. Anand’s Untouchable has for its theme the deep longing for modernisation on the part of Bakha. Thus social reform presupposes modernisation.

STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Another major theme in Indo-Anglian fiction is India’s struggle for Independence. This aspect is deftly handled by K.S. Venkataramani in Kandan the Patriot and Raja Rao’s Kanthapura. Anand’s The Sword and the Sickle has for its inner core the theme of independence though at the surface level, it deals with the peasant movement.
The theme of the Indian Independence and partition has attracted the attention of many an Indo-Anglian writer. Ahmed Abbas in *Inquillab*, Kushwant Singh in his *Train to Pakistan* and *I shall not hear the Nightingale* and Malgaonkar in his trio *Distant Drum*, *The Princess* and *A Bend in the Ganges* have provided an insight into the events and incidents connected with Independence. Abbas and Kushwant Singh do not make an in-depth study of characterization but load the pages with scenes of horror, violence and sex.

Malgaonkar depicts the career of a young Hindu Army Officer in *Distant Drum* and relates the story in a series of “flash-backs”. The story in *The Princess* is told on the basis of relationship of love and a series of battle scenes. The third novel *A Bend in The Ganges* is based on pure coincidence.

Kamala Markandaya in *Some Inner Fury*, Santha Rama Rao in *Remember the House* and Bala Chandra Rajan in *The Dark Dancer* deal with the struggle for Independence and Post-Dependence though they are primarily concerned with the theme of East-West encounter. The theme of freedom movement is taken up by Nagarajan in his *Chronicles of Kedaram* and R.K. Narayan in his *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

The one novel that deals imaginatively with the theme of freedom is by Bhattacharya in *A Goddess Named Gold*. The synthesis of East
and West becomes the subject of Bhattacharya’s *Music for Mohini* and *Shadow from Ladakh* and Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and Rope*. Prawer Jhabvala brings out this East-West relationships in her *A Backward Place* and *Esmond in India* and the social life of Delhi is presented in her novels, *To Whom she will* and *The Nature of Passion*.

Bhattacharya’s chief merit lies in his masterly treatment of human emotions. This is true with the characters--Kajoli in *So Many Hungers*, Mohini in *Music for Mohini*, Lekha in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Meera in *A Goddess Named Gold* and Suruchi in *Shadow from Ladakh*. Equally this impact is seen in all its vehemence in the situation of famine, the hocus-pocus of the “Shiva’s Coming”, the freedom movement and the involvement of Meera and other members of the Cow-house Five.

Bhattacharya deals with the life and tensions of the poor and middle class people. The sweet romantic tale of Sumita and Bhaskar in *Shadow from Ladakh* and the romantic longing of Mohini in diverting the attentions of Jayadev in *Music for Mohini* are drawn with breadth of imagination and pragmatic approach of the ethos of human values. Such subdued tones of the subtle music are not to be found either in Mulk Raj Anand or Kushwant Singh.

Moreover his themes revolve round day-to-day incidents and matters concerning the safety and security of the country. He does not
deal with fairy-land figures or strange events or fantastic tales. In these aspects he achieves supreme excellence. His novels do not present the intellectual and metaphysical genius of Raja Rao or the overall comic imagination of Narayan, but in his limited arena, Bhattacharya is a consummate artist.

While Kushwant Singh indulges in obscene descriptions, Bhattacharya appeals to our senses through his highly interesting and pleasing sketches.

The characters presented by Bhattacharya are a cross-section of the rural and urban setting. He has a keen eye for situations ad characters and he takes up varied aspects and themes. He is not just satisfied with presenting a superficial view of life, but he goes into the depths of the stark realities of life and it is this realism that lends a special significance to the political and the social background of his novels. He is mainly concerned with the history of not one man but with the destiny of the society as a whole and man’s relation to other individuals in the society and the sense of adjustments and reconciliation.

All his novels signify a note of triumph that there is a bright future for man and that man should make efforts at all levels to bring out a change in the pattern and structure of the society for the benefit of the entire humanity itself.
SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Bhabani Bhattacharya has written six novels, short stories, a book on Gandhi, episodes form Indian history and has translated some of Tagore’s writings. The scope of the thesis is limited to the study of the six novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya that deal with epoch-making events constituting a valuable social document. Since Bhattacharya is not a living writer, interview with the writer was not possible. Therefore, the thesis is restricted to the study of Bhattacharya’s major novels in relation to his theory of art, themes and the artistic rendering of the themes.