Bhattacharya's next novel *He Who Rides a Tiger* was published in 1955. It has a good deal in common with *So Many Hungers*. Like his first novel *So Many Hungers* he shows the contemporary problems of India in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. Now the question is why Bhattacharya has dealt with the same theme in this novel unlike *So Many Hungers*. Actually Bhattacharya believes that the novelist can find plenty of material in the happenings of the day. This is particularly true of our country which is passing through a momentous stage in her history. The feelings and aspirations of the people, their attempts to create a new order based on the foundations of the old, the dangers and difficulties that confront them in their task, all these could be profitably utilised by an observant novelist who may have the privilege of capturing a true image of the time for the benefit of the people living in other lands and posterity. He is aware of the existence of a point of view that a novelist should not use contemporary reality because he is too close to it to be able to view it dispassionately and understand its proper significance. This point is expressed in an article by Mr. Paul Verghese in which he says:

"An artist who terms recent events into fiction, cannot easily succeed: for the unconscious mind requires much time to perform
its wonder of transmuting incident into art." [The Problems of the Indian Novelists in England, 12]

The two contemporary problems of India Bhattacharya reflects in *He Who Rides a Tiger* are the Indian freedom struggle and the Bengal Famine of 1943. The misery and degradation produced by the famine make a more powerful impression on the reader's mind than the other theme because of the novelist's dramatic treatment of it in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. The Quit India Movement is mentioned and lies in the background, but the spectra of the famine looms large on the horizon. The two novels *So Many Hungers* and *He Who Rides a Tiger*, are in a way twins and owe their inspiration to the same sources. There is however, great difference between them with respect to the treatment of the theme and the final effect aimed at and produced. While the earlier novel focuses attention on the national movement and Bengal's travail and its cataclysmic effect on the teeming millions of people, the later novel is concerned with the history of one mind or at the most of two or three minds. The famine is the valley of the shadow of Death through which they have to pass before they attain their full stature as human beings. The hero, Kalo, in particular, chastened and purified by his experience and sufferings, learns the secret that to be true to one's own self is the greatest achievement of man. It is
when he liberates himself from the chains that enslave the spirit that his friend, Biten congratulates him and tells him:

"You have chosen, my friend. You have triumphed over those others - and over yourself. What you have done just now will Steal the spirit of hundreds and the thousands of us. Your story will be a legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken."

[He Who Rides a Tiger, 244-245]

Kalo is a dark-skinned blacksmith in the small town, Jharna, competent in his trade, industrious and ambitious. His pretty wife dies of child birth. The baby daughter is named Chandralekha, a name casually suggested by the priest when he came to the smithy for some work before the confinement. As the girl grows up under the tender care of the rough artisan, she displays unusual intelligence and she has inherited her mother's good looks. Kalo sends her to the local English convent school where her presence is frowned upon by the girls belonging to the higher castes. Kalo is criticized for his presumptuousness both by the 'high caste people and people at his level. As Chandralekha moves up from one class to another at school, her father is filled with pride and joy. He is at times conscious of his own mental backwardness and desires to improve himself by reading his daughter's books at night, when she is asleep. In her final year at her school, Chandralekha takes
part in an all-state essay writing-competition, and to the great joy of her father, her essay is adjudged the best and she gets a gold medal. Kalo takes it out of its casket everyday and spends sometime fondly looking at it. The features which are clearly brought out in the story at this stage are the low status occupied by father and daughter and their consciousness of it, the girl's unusual cleverness and attainments and the touching tenderness of their mutual affection.

Though hunger is the main theme of the novel *He Who Rides a Tiger*, the equal importance is given to the theme of freedom. The background of *He Who Rides a Tiger* is partly political and mainly economic and social. The Quit India Movement, people being imprisoned for the crime of loving their country, defiance of bans, hunger strikes in jails, are the reminders in the novel of the political situation in the country. The World War II and the threat of a Japanese invasion also form part of the background suggested by the presence of British Soldiers in the city. The casual attitude of the thoughtless British Soldiers to the spectacle of hunger and suffering and their enjoyment of boys fighting for crumbs of bread suggest the image of India they are forming and that they will carry with them when they leave the country. The Bengal Famine of 1943 which figures prominently in *So Many Hungers* is present
here also and forms the springboard for the main action of the story. The government is blamed for its inept handling of the situation. Adequate measures have not been taken for the defence of the country against Japanese. There is lack of food grains and no attempt at price control or checking of cornering. Boats have been destroyed as a precautionary measure. The helplessness of the people of the countryside is revealed by their frantic attempts to reach Calcutta. They attempt to travel on the foot boards of trains and are often beaten up and driven away by policemen. Kalo's own experience shows the nature of the ordeal endured by the thousands. Some who travel on foot boards fall by the wayside like the stranger whom Kalo sees struck down by the girder of a bridge and falling into the river.

Bhattacharya brings to bear all the resources of this and when he gives us a view of the plight of the destitute in the city many of the pictures given are reminiscent of those in the earlier novel but there is no actual repetition. We see hungry men beaten up by the police for presuming to stand before a food shop and to stare at the food displayed therein. Men die in such large numbers that the bodies have to be taken away by the truckload. The piercing cry of people begging for food can be heard - a 'wail from the bowels of Bengal'. [38]
The novelist's delineation of the ordeals of the destitute in *He Who Rides a Tiger* varies from his treatment of the same subject in *So Many Hungers* not so much in detail but in emphasis. In the later novel the accent visibly shifts from mute, passive suffering to protest and rebellion. This is understandable because the story of Kalo is a story of protest. The starving men whom old Viswanath joins, rend the air with the cries "Food for all!" "Work for all" and "Jail for the rice profiteers!" [1620] Biten is arrested and jailed because he protests against the brutal behaviour of the police towards an innocent and emaciated man whose only crime was to be hungry. Another point of difference concerning the emphasis is that *He Who Rides a Tiger* gives much more prominence to one type of Hunger, the hunger of the all owing few for pleasure and more pleasure, a raging fever of the time." [54] Kalo's retaliation against the hungry rich is sparked off by the incident of his daughter narrowly escaping from becoming a victim to this variety of hunger. These subtle touches account for the difference in tone between one novel and the other.

*He Who Rides a Tiger* is a novel of protest not only against political and economic system which degrades human beings but also against an established social order which labels men as superior and inferior by virtue of the accident of their birth. The
caste system comes in for chastisement in the novel, the symbol and agent of protest against the tyranny of caste, it should be carefully noted, in not Kalo, the blacksmith, but Biten the Brahmin. The story of his rebellion against caste is given as an inset story. His sister, Purnima 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. When Basav taunts Biten about this cruel incident, he renounces his Brahminhood forthwith, breaks and throws away his sacred thread and takes a vow never more to speak about his caste. This accounts for his refusal to name his caste when Kalo questions about it. Biten takes risk in losing the girl whom he loves in sticking to his resolve never more to refer to his caste. Bhattacharya shows good artistic judgment in avoiding explicit culminations against the caste system and by exposing and ridiculing it in a dramatic manner. The juxtaposition of Biten’s rejection of the Brahminhood which is his birthright and Kalo’s renunciation of the Brahminhood he has created for himself through fraud makes the novelist’s condemnation of the total system.

*He Who Rides a Tiger* marks a departure from *So Many Hungers* in the sense that though the background is common, the
former highlights the growing protest in country. The protest is chiefly against two evils - the evil of exploitation which results in hunger and degradation and the evil of caste. Two characters present the protest Kalo that of against exploitation and Biten that of against caste. Biten becomes Kalo's mentor and guide. Both have witnessed the ill-treatment of the have-nots by the haves and Biten's advice is forcefully conveyed in these words:

"We are the slum of the earth. They hit us where it hurts badly - in the belly. We have got to hit back." [54]

Biten's imprisonment is the price he has to pay for protesting against the callous treatment given to the hungry by the authorities. The agitation to which desperate men resort when they are no longer able to bear the pangs of hunger is graphically represented in the novel. When Kalo and Lekha are comfortably settled in the temple, they one day see a procession of the destitute carrying a banner and shouting: "Food Food! we demand food for the hungry!" [122] Viswanath, the old Kamar joins the procession though he himself is now safe in the protection of Mangal Adhikari. The trustees of the temple discharge him from the service for his act of rebellion. Bhattacharya indicates that the protest against hunger becomes a board-based movement with which all patriotic people begin to identify themselves and also
that it gets merged with the larger movement for national movement for freedom.

"Something had seized the people so that their apathy was broken. Great demonstrations were to be seen in the street almost every day. They were not composed of down and outs; among the hunger marchers were men from workshops, students from colleges, clerks from offices." [161]

These demonstrations are linked to the Quit India Movement by the fact that the committee which controls them includes men who were in jail earlier. Describing them and their aims the novelist writes:

"Imprisoned in the great movement that shocks the country two years before. Imprisoned for no crime save one of loving their country and asking a better way of life for it, a life free from hunger and indignity, a life built by hard self-denial which was a joy because each iron today was the framework of a secure, happier tomorrow. [175]

The type of freedom first in He Who Rides a Tiger is the one which a prisoner pines for. Kalo is imprisoned for stealing fruits in a desperate state of starvation. During his stay in jail, even his movement and time are not his own. He is not free to sleep in his own way, he is directed to sleep at a particular time. Thus, he finds
the prison life very painful and craves for the liberty to live according to his own free will. However, the novelist points out that even in jail this blacksmith has at least the freedom of thinking and dreaming; "only his feelings and thoughts had been free, free to look forward to his movement of release, free to dream." [144] Kalo longs for complete independence. Imprisonment oppresses him so much that he becomes oblivious of the terrible hunger which has ruined him completely: he is alienated from his profession, blood relations and native place. Bhattacharya reveals his belief that man loves freedom above everything by showing Kalo a completely transformed man saturated with vigour and joy at the time of his release from jail:

"Kalo feels queer. A new warmth, the power of life itself, replaced the chill of dread he had been feeling. He was no longer a member in jail. The deadening yoke was off his shoulder, He was liberated at last." [45]

The novelist treats the theme of social freedom quite exhaustively in this novel. Kalo is a greater champion of social freedom than Jayadev of Music for Mohini. He is able to perform a miracle and becomes a great exponent of freedom. In order to take his revenge, Kalo creates a plan full of miracle. In one of the suburbs of the city a vast crowd has assembled to witness a
promised miracle. The man who has foretold the miracle is sitting in an attitude of fervent prayer occasionally sprinkling water on the earth. A young girl is seated by his side. Both wear robes pertaining to an ascetic order. "The holy man has had a dream that at a certain hour an image of lord Shiva will miraculously rise from the earth. A temple is to be built on the spot to bring the solace of religion to the people of the great city. The man has a striking resemblance with Kalo because he is Kalo himself. He wears the sacred thread like a Brahmin. The girl by his side is Chandralekha. The promised miracle takes place and a stone image of Shiva – the phallic image - slowly emerges from the ground. The onlookers are thrilled and happy because the God has chosen this spot in the city as a habituation. A large group of destitute are also among the audience. They have the hope that at last the deity will put an end to all their sorrow and exploitation.

The next development is the erection and inauguration of a temple on the hollowed spot. Money and materials pour in from all sides, especially from the black-marketers and speculators for whom worship is an atonement for sins committed and a guarantee of success in future undertakings. A magnificent temple is built and it attracts large number of worshipers. Kalo, already, wearing the sacred thread and passing for a brahmin, also assumes
a recognizably Brahmin name, Mangal Adhikari. A pujari is appointed as Kalo knows little about the ritual of worship and has, anyway, to pretend to be so concerned with more important matters that he has no time for pedestrian work. 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 worshipers who come to the temple and touch Mangal Adhikari’s feet is the magistrate who had sentenced Kalo to hard labour for stealing bananas. Thus, Kalo making others fool, takes his revenge. A low-caste immensely blacksmith, he suffers immensely at rich people’s hands. Terribly upset mentally and emotionally by incidentally finding his daughter Chandralekha at a brothel a mere object of rich man’s lust, he resolves to work hard for the social emancipation of the lowly and to take revenge on the wealthy who look down upon them and treat them inhumanly. He wishes to raise Chandralekha as high as the upper class people who have debased and maltreated her. "She was society’s scum in a true sense than he. Her suffering had been incomparably more than his. She had to hit back." [85] Kalo wants to fight, not with an individual, but with the entire upper class that dominates society.
He installs a false Shiva in the great city of Calcutta to put the true temple into the shade by the false one. He succeeds wondrously in befooling the rich and making them worship the false God in his temple and bow to him. In his disguise of Mangal Adhikari, he is soon believed to be a true Brahmin under whose guidance and influence people can never be able to lose faith in social order and religion. Than he thinks of marrying his daughter to a Brahmin boy so that she may be freed from the load of her misery. He is extremely happy to think that he is able to shatter the caste barriers and that a Kamar and his daughter easily command the respect of the people of the highest caste. He foresees his daughter's bright future, "She had seen her father break down caste barriers, expose their falseness and no thunder bolt has crashed on his head or on hers! She would have to be ready to take her place as the wife of twice-born, which, truly, meant so little!" [143] Believing in social freedom, he is of the view that his daughter richly deserves to marry an educated Brahmin boy because even as a Kamar's daughter, she is able to win the medal as the best student of her class, though due recognition and encouragement are never given to her simply because she belongs to a low caste. He is very happy to see how easy it is to break the ageless caste barriers and seek social emancipation; it only needs a little bit of courage and
cleverness. He is deeply concerned with the social problems and endeavours to make people live freely amidst them. He is remarkably successful in upsetting the old social order by investing himself with Brahminhood and rising to the top. Thus using society's own strength against it, he governs the wealthy people corrupted by cash and caste, and makes them worship his simple-hearted daughter as the mother of seven-fold bliss. He tries to make people believe that God is not a Brahmin by caste, and that the Kamars as much deserve to go to heaven as people of any other caste. When he discloses his real identity to the people of Calcutta, the Brahmins and the wealthy are panic-stricken, while the downtrodden masses hail him by crying repeatedly "Victory to our brother". Voicing the feelings of the common folk, Biten proclaims that he is a great exponent of social freedom and that his life will be a legend of freedom:

"... You have triumphed over those others-and over yourself. What you have done just now will steal the spirit of hundreds and thousands of us. Your story will be a legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken." [232]

*His Who Rides a Tiger* discusses political freedom also. There are numerous casual references to the Indian freedom struggle, especially the Quit India Movement. There is a vivid description of
Indians sent to the jail for participating in the memorable all-India movement. Through Viswanath, an interesting minor character in the novel, we learn how the prison cells are choked with 'Quit India' men. These freedom fighters are treated very shabbily, contemptuously and heartlessly by the Britishers and their Indian henchmen. They are looked down as sons of swine who are stupidly and fruitlessly attempting to beat and score away the mighty British lion by a comical tricolor flag. They are in no way considered better than mad men. The Englishmen and their pupils treat them derisively and wish: "Quit India, Indeed! would that the jail had a device to seal up mouths, or keep them wide open the way they were at the dentist's." [140] But in spite of derision and tyranny heaped upon them to crush the freedom struggle, the Quit India Movement grows in strength everyday. Men from all social strata join it. Soon a large number of women belonging to all classes come out of their homes to participate in it, and thus it assumes the dimensions of a mass struggle. For every man's voice that cries Quit India, there is a woman's voice also. This, indeed, shakes the foundations of the great British Empire and makes lovers of freedom confident of victory in the near future. Processions of Men and Women with tall banners in their hands are commonly to be seen every day. Lathi charges and pistol fires
by the white uniformed horsemen on the freedom fighters are a common-place or site of the Indian life of that period. Indeed, there is agitation in the entire country. Shaking off their centuries old sleep, the Indians feel the chains of slavery on their legs. No wonder "when they are fully awake and the strength surges in their limbs, they will snap the chains with a mighty effort." [170] It appears that whole of India is willing and joyfully ready to go to jail, and that the great movement will continue with unabated enthusiasm, until three hundred million men and women are thrown behind the bars. Countless people are relentlessly tortured and imprisoned for the sheer quest for freedom and dignified way of living:

"Imprisoned in the great movement that shocks the country............. Imprisoned for no crime save the one of loving their country and asking a better way of life for it, a life free from hunger and indignity, a life built by hard self –denial which was a joy because each iron today was the framework of a secure, happier tomorrow." [167-168]

In the case of Kalo, Bhattacharya clearly manifests that freedom is above all things. Though Kalo becomes Mangal Adhikari mentally but by heart he remains Kolo, a blacksmith. He
always craves for his own individual self. In the novel, we are given indications by the author that in spite of his best attempts to assimilate Brahminism, Kalo remains in his heart of hearts the simple blacksmith. He insists on doing his shopping by himself. He converts the top storey of his house into a temporary smithy and works there secretly so that the urge in him to do his true work may be satisfied. He takes pity on an old blacksmith, Viswanath, who comes to beg as a destitute. Kalo gives him work as gardener and tells himself that he will set him up as a blacksmith in course of time. He also takes into his home a destitute boy who has been separated from his parents and stranded in the city and gives him the Brahmin name Obhijit. Lekha is very fond of the boy whom she treats as a younger brother and wants to bring up in the ways of respectability. Viswanath has no faith in the temple. His approach is logical and humanitarian. He creates a storm in the temple by one of his characteristic acts. According to usage the milk that has been used for the ritual bath given to the image every day is collected and thrown into sacred river, the Ganga. Viswanath begins to steal the milk and distributes it after boiling to destitute children in neighborhood. This is considered as sacrilege. Mangal Adhikari is touched by the humanity of the gesture and supports Viswanath.
The trustees and the worshippers who pay for the milk through endowments create a furor but he rides the storm and finally establishes the custom of using the sanctified milk for feeding the hungry children.

Mangal Adhikari is faced with a serious problem concerning Lekha. She is of marriageable age and as the manager of a prosperous temple he has to find a suitable Brahmin boy for her. He suggests to Biten that he should wear the sacred thread and call himself a Brahmin so that he may marry Lekha without shaking public opinion, but the latter is obstinate in his refusal. The person who suffers most in Lekha's case is certainly Biten because he loves her in a true sense. Lekha has become bored with the game of make-believe that her father and she have been playing. Therefore, she goes about her duties in the temple mechanically without the least enthusiasm. Once when Biten and she are together alone, he declares his love and is about to embrace her. This gesture has the psychological effect of producing revulsion and fear in her as it reminds her of the painful event in the brothel when the rich owner of a Jute Mill tried to seduce her. Noticing her reaction and mistaking it to be a sign of coldness, Biten leaves her and does not reappear till near the end of the novel. Lekha has been so far idealizing and worshipping him but
now she has realized that her golden image has the feet of clay. Biten is no more a god but he has awaken a woman in her. She is troubled in her mind to find that her father has apparently lost his original simplicity and rectitude. Actually they have lost their freedom in which lack they are forced to show themselves in a false way. They have lost their own identity which was the main thing in their personalities. Lekha is unhappy about the hypocritical part she has been playing with others. It seems as if they are riding on a tiger's back. It has become difficult, indeed, for them to dismount from the tiger's back. In her desperate need for some solace she throws herself heart and soul into her work, in the temple and feels genuine piety. Bhattacharya suggests through this that genuine faith and worship are states of mind which can he induced. A temple that has been built on fraud can become a true temple even to the perpetrator of the fraud. The phenomenon is parallel to that depicted in R.K. Narayan's novel, The Guide, where the tourist guide and ex-convict turned into a Swami gets into a state of mind in which he becomes a true man of God at least momentarily.

The finale to the drama comes with Kalo's realization that his beloved child is about to ruin herself for his sake. The shock of this realization opens his eyes. He sees himself and his moral fall.
Moreover, he was fed up with a life of double personality. Now he wants individual freedom. His soul pines for the trick he is playing with society. He had started with the idea of revenge but had deceived not only his supposed enemies, but his own innerself. His desire for integrity which had been present in his mental make-up all the time now reasserts itself. He decides to act and to act dramatically. On the day of the ceremony for the installation of the mother, when the whole congregation is assembled and Mangal Adhikari is asked to make a speech, he stuns everyone by revealing his true story that he is no Brahmin and the temple no true temple. He graphically describes how he faked the miracle of the image of Shiva sprouting from the ground. The image which he had got made had been placed on the top of a tin containing two seers of gram and both had been covered with earth. When the water sprinkled on the earth by the man of god had soaked down to the tin and made the ground germinate. The stone image had been gradually pushed up. The revelation produces diverse reactions among the audience. Some want to beat him up. Some suggest legal action and the prince of black marketers, Sir Abalabandhu, wishes he had a man of genius like Kalo to assist him in his business. A large number of destitute and men of the lower castes have stationed themselves in the rear.
They are all thrilled and happy that one of their class has outwitted the so-called superior castes. Viswanath and Biten are also with them, they raise the cry, 'victory to our brother, which resounds like a war-cry. At the end Kalo and Lekha walk out of the temple for ever presumably to go back to their old way of life, seeking the peace which is the fruit of being true to one's own self. In this way Kalo resumes his earlier position which shows that freedom is essential for everyone. Without freedom we can do nothing. Freedom is a thing which is preferred even by the animals. Thus Bhattacharya, smartly, shows how valuable the freedom is for a person. In his disguise Kalo had everything except freedom. That's why he was not satisfied with his life. Moreover, he is giving a mental pain to his beloved daughter in an indirect way. And finally, he breaks every web and recognises his own self.

A correct appraisal of the artistic effect produced by the conclusion of the novel is possible only if we carefully analyse the course of Kalo's Struggle with himself and its culmination. Meenakshi Mukherjee takes cognizance of the novelist's statement about Kalo: "putting on the sacred thread he had made himself rootless" [84] and then tries to prove that having cut himself off from his own caste he attempts to identify himself with the Brahmin caste out of a desperate desire to belong somewhere. He
does not possess the intellectual strength of Biten to enable him to maintain himself in a state of rootlessness. Mrs. Mukherjee points out that Kalo succeeds in bringing himself to believe that he is a Brahmin and even manages to show Brahmin arrogance spontaneously. According to her, Kalo's identification with the Brahmin caste and his dissociation with his own become so complete that what he does at the end of the novel is unnatural. As Mrs. Mukherjee points out:

“... the end simplifies the complex issues involved in the novel. Kalo is made to escape the consequence of his confession and the doubts raised earlier about Kalo's capacity to go back and be satisfied in his original station in life remain. Kalo had always wanted to rise above his caste as the naming episode in the earlier part of the novel indicates.... Therefore when circumstances raise him to the status of a Brahmin it was the fulfillment of his own submerged wishes. How is one to reconcile Kalo's sudden renunciation of his power, his money and his status with his background" (The Twice Born Fiction 122) After raising this question she proceeds to compare Kalo with Raju in R.K Narayan's The Guide and comes to this conclusion;

"The Guide and Who Rids a Tiger both deal with men whose holiness is only a convenient disguise, but in both these novels the
men undergo so transformation that the fraud ceases to be a fraud." [130-131]

Mrs. Mukherjee's hypothesis is not supported by the facts presented in the novel, in fact there is ample evidence to make it untenable. There is no indication anywhere of Kalo's 'submerged wishes' to become a Brahmin. The name Chandralekha suggested by a Brahmin and accepted on the spot by Kalo proves nothing except that he liked the sound of it. Not is the name exclusively a Brahmin name. Sending Lekha to school again does not prove aspiration for Brahminhood. It only means that Kalo wants her to get educated like the children of parents who can afford the accomplishment. Infact, the novelist stressed the fact that orthodox Brahmins are opposed to the education of girls through the story of the unfortunate Purnima. Her mother suggests discontinuation of her studies as they interfere with her assisting at home with the daily ritual of worship. What is brought forward as evidence of submerged wishes to become a Brahmin only shows the almost universal desire of a parent to do the best in his power for a child. Nor need we take the reference to Kalo's having become rootless as a result of his wearing the sacred thread to mean that he has rejected his own past or his caste. Actually, his quest is not for
higher status, it is material gain and as revenge. It requires a lot of effort on his part to 'Keep up the awful Masquerade.

As Kalo is playing the role of a Brahmin, it is not surprising that his identification with the role becomes at times embarrassingly complete. Trapped in his Brahminic plenty he has to continue playing the game as the alternative would be the old certainly and fear. He learns Brahminical lore to speak words of profound wisdom with reference to faith, sin, punishment and Karama thrown in. We see a most disturbing sign that perhaps the mask has begun to eat into his spirit when Mangal Adhikari rebukes the blacksmith Viswanath for having touched his forearm while supplicating for charity. Mrs. Mukherjee cites this incident to show that Kalo has struck root in the soil of Brahminism, or at any rate is desperately trying to do so.

*There* are two more serious misconceptions in Mrs. Mukherjee's analysis of the novel, first she writes about Kalo:

"But his final moment of illumination comes when he discovers with horror that his own daughter is going to be sacrificed at the alter of his ambition. The temple authorities are going to transform Lekha into "The Mother of Sevenfold Bliss", a living goddess, and Lekha submits to this deception because she has no will left to protest.” [121]
This shows a complete misunderstanding of what happens in the novel. Kalo has no objection to Lekha's becoming the mother of Sevenfold Bliss if she cannot get a suitable Brahmin husband. But she rebels against the idea because she wants to live like a human being. The whole of chapter twenty six deals with her rebellion. She is determined to break out of the prison designed for her. She wants to take breath in a free society. She wants herself to be freed from the social bandage that is, to a great extent, created by herself and her father. Her plan is to agree to Motichand's proposal that she should become his fourth wife. He uses blackmail by threatening to get Obhijit expelled from the temple if Lekha does not agree to marry him. Lekha's situation is to accept Motichand's loathsome proposal with the twin objects of saving Obhijit and escaping from the lot of playing the role of the mother of Sevenfold Bliss. Lekha is a determined rebel. Secondly Mrs. Mukherjee writes:

"The final outburst that releases Lekha from her bondage comes not from herself, but quite expectedly, from her father, who makes a clean breast of his deception to a large crowd. . . ." [121]

Mrs. Mukherjee has here reversed the roles of father and daughter. The rebel and liberator is Lekha. She shocks her father into a realization of their position by announcing to him her
decision to marry Motichand a week after her installation as mother. He asks her in consternation whether she is to marry that old shark with his caste off wives. [He Who Rides a Tiger, 229] She asks him to counter questions whether he expects her to stay for ever 'buried' in the temple. [229] Now Kalo understands the nature and magnitude of the sacrifice that Lekha is about to make in order to liberate herself from a living death in the temple and to give him the security he seems to desire. All his tenderness walls up within him and he takes the momentous decision. Lekha has been his liberator because she has opened his eyes to the truth. He wins his redemption when he makes his confession to the assembled people; his integrity has been re established. How much this achievement thrills Lekha is shown by her exaltation when she watches him. Seeing her reaction, Kalo also experiences great bliss:

"Her expression was one of rapt worship. He had seen it in her face when, as a child, she had watched him work, shaping a horse shoe with fire and iron He could shake the earth with his hands or endure agony in silence. He felt unbearably happy." [237]

Now Kalo realizes that he has captured the freedom of Lekha as well as he himself is not free. Actually Bhattacharya's main aim in this novel is to accentuate man's need for individual freedom. Though Lekha achieves immense fame and wealth as the
daughter of Mangal Adhikari, the reputed priest of the famous temple of Shiva in Calcutta, yet she is not free to live in her own way. Everyone wants freedom. So it was natural for Lekha to pine for this freedom. As a matter of fact, she is placed in a very dangerous position like that of riding the tiger. Naturally, she deeply desires to get rid of the life of strict restrictions. To achieve freedom, she is ready even to marry the aged Motichand who already has a wife named Radha:

"For the remaining hours of that day Lekha’s burden was lifted. Wearing the vermilion mark of marriage at the central part of her hair, as a woman must she would gain freedom, freedom to live in her own way..." [218]

She knows that it is really very unfortunate to marry the aged, lecherous Motichand, but to live as his wife guarantees some sort of personal freedom which she badly misses as daughter of Mangal Adhikari. So she decides to come out of one pit just to fall into another for the sake of getting the right to be free.

"She would find her place in life. She would not negate herself. By giving herself to Motichand, she would pay off her debt of love to her father and then at last have the right to be free." [219]

Same is the case with Kalo. He is unable to live without freedom for long. And that's why he discloses his real identity by
proclaiming that he is a Chamar named Kalo, and not a Brahmin. Notwithstanding his life of prosperity, prestige and power as Mangal Adhikari, the Brahmin priest, he feels suffocated and unhappy for want of freedom to live his own life according to his own desires and aspirations.
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