

BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S *SHADOW FROM LADAKH*

-- The Reconciled Self --

Moving from the fictional world of *The Dark Room* (1938) *The Guide* (1958) and the *Painter of Signs* (1976) as one comes to *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) by Bhabani Bhattacharya one is struck by the explicit and vivid change. Unlike R.K. Narayan who reigns in portraying even the serious in a comic vein and restricts himself to a small range, Bhattacharya belongs to an entirely different world--the world of the lofty and the serious. In *Shadow from Ladakh* which can be taken as a sequel to the *Music for Mohini* (1952) Bhattacharya has operated on a large canvas. Against the backdrop of Chinese aggression on India in 1962, the novel reflects Bhattacharya's view of socio-cultural and economic evolution and as usual Bhattacharya is a votary of synthesis through co-existence and co-operation of the old and the new modes of economy. The different economic systems are presented as cottage industry and heavy industry. The novel shows the former invested with human values, the latter means mass production achieved through the application of science and technology, hence gross materialism. Gandhigram is a village and represents cottage industry and stands for the Indian view of the economic structure of society. Steeltown or Lohapur is a city and represents mass production. It stands for science and technology and means Western outlook and values. The synthesis of the Indian spiritual values and the Western modernism is undoubtedly one of the major themes of the novel. At another level, the novel offers a subtle study of some charming female characters and their relationship with their male counterparts. Parallel to the political and social scenario, the novel also reflects the theme of man-woman relationship and brings to light Bhattacharya's view about female characters. Talking in general terms, in all his novels ranging from *So Many Hungers* (1947) to *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978) Bhattacharya has portrayed his female characters as creatures of utmost primary importance, marvellous figures of dignity, grace and endurance, possessing a highly marked intellect and gaining and retaining their individuality and strong identity within the confines of their homes in their roles as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters-in-law etc. The comparison of Bhattacharya's heroines with those of Anita Desai's or of Narayan's is quite natural at this juncture. None of a Bhattacharya heroine carries with herself the psychic intrigues pungently characteristic of an Anita Desai heroine. On the contrary, they display a high degree of balance even in the midst of crisis. Unlike the modern psychological novelists,

Bhattacharya does not feel much fascinated with the portrayal of the sub-conscious and the unconscious as of social reality. As for Narayan, his female characters are either helpless desperate victims at the hands of their male counterparts as Savitri or Rosie, or they are utterly independent and ambitious like Daisy, or otherwise, in many novels they are non-entities, just important enough as being present as mute spectators in the course of actions, without having to play an active role in the lives of their husbands and sons. But Bhattacharya has a high opinion about women. They are there as a storehouse of strength and vitality. They may sound very traditional in the modern Indian social set up, retiring and apparently submissive in their respective roles. But they shine through their power to give and their capacity to absorb. Marlene Fisher also feels the same way. She opines:

One of the most striking aspects of the fiction of Bhabani Bhattacharya is the importance of women in each of his novels. In one after the other, from *So Many Hungers* (1964) to *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966), women are either the central characters themselves, or of at least equal importance with the male characters, or provide the inspiration and meaning from which a man drives his strength.¹

Bhattacharya himself admits his high admiration for the Indian woman. And his attitude to the women characters is that of respectful and sympathetic criticism. A mediating man, as he is popularly labelled by the critics, he advocates neither revolutionary changes for the women's liberation, nor does he pictures her in a traditional role. He himself states:

I think they have more depth, more richness in them than our men folk. The transition from the old to the new, the crisis of value adaptation strikes deeper into the lives of our women than our menfolk.²

The novel has a good plot, a fine style and a set of beautiful images and won for its author the Sahitya Academy Award. Although *Shadow from Ladakh* has in its orbit other issues apart from the emergence of women, like the Indo-China aggression in 1962, the integrity and relevance of the Gandhian philosophy in the modern scenario, the aestheticism of Rabindranath Tagore, the clash of the cottage industry and heavy machines shown through Gandhigram and Steeltown. Nevertheless, these concerns do not detract from the presence of four important and representative women in the novel viz. Suruchi, Sumita, Mrs. Mehra and Rupa..

Reconciliation – of the old and the new, tradition and modernity, city and village has always been a favourite concern recurrent in Bhattacharya's novels. *Music for Mohini* (1952) for instance brings out a synthesis of the best of the rural and the urban set of values, the modern and the conventional, the East and the West. *Shadow from Ladakh*, highlights this mixing up in a broad dimension. Bhattacharya himself states: "...Interculturation, in a broad sense of the term, is one of the key elements in two of my novels *Music for Mohini* and *Shadow from Ladakh*..."³ Bhattacharya has an aversion neither to tradition nor to modernity. He does not seem to suggest that one is better than the other but is of the opinion that both should adopt the best of each other. *Shadow from Ladakh* is the synthesis of two ideologies represented by Gandhigram and Steeltown. As Suruchi, Satyajit's wife puts it, the fundamental idea of the novel is:

Integration – that was the poet's [Tagore's] lifelong quest: Integration of the simple and the sophisticated; the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West.⁴

As Ramesh K. Srivastava too puts it:

In *Shadow from Ladakh*, Bhattacharya advocates the reconciliation of spiritual and material values, Gandhigram and Steeltown. He approves the use of modern technology for the well-being of individuals and society yet without divorcing spiritual values. Bhattacharya recommends the meeting of the two extremes Gandhigram and Steeltown – by suggesting that they yield some of their respective grounds and yet retain their basic points.⁵

Satyajit Sen, a Cambridge educated youth, fresh, enthusiastic and energetic comes under the spell of Gandhi's ideals and decides to dedicate his life to the cause of transferring Gandhian ideas into actuality. After returning from England, he works at Shantiniketan for two years as a teacher and there he marries a beautiful and vivacious girl named Suruchi. In Suruchi's character, Bhattacharya has tried to draw an affinity with Gandhi's child-bride and life long companion Kasturba. After the initial euphoric two years of marriage Suruchi sadly discovers that a role has already been set for her by her husband on the lines of his role-model Gandhi and she feels that her youth is wrecked by Satyajit's self-imposed Brahmacharya. She brilliantly supports her husband in all his endeavours to realise his dreams and ideas oriented towards social reforms. In due course of time, a daughter is born to them. They name her Sumita.

Though Satyajit is intensely devoted to Gandhi's high principles yet lacks the strength of character to emulate them whole-heartedly. He is constantly beset by a

sense of his own inadequacy , but he persists, nevertheless. He founds a village named after his idol – Gandhigram – designing it along the austere lines of what he had experienced in Sewagram, the actual village near Wardha in Maharashtra in which Gandhi took up the village industries phase of his life in 1934. Satyajit aspires to make Gandhigram a model village which can set an example for the whole of India. But it could be possible only through the suppression of his own passionate nature. Like Jayadev in *Music for Mohini*, Satyajit too denies his wife Suruchi a life of fulfilment. Suruchi's submission, however, is not whole hearted. It is full of doubts and questions. The basic dramatic conflict that holds the pivotal position in the novel is that although Suruchi merges her will with the will of Satyajit, nevertheless, she emerges as a full, mature and most attractive woman with a strong sense of her own identity. In many ways she is as elder counterpart of Mohini in *Music for Mohini* who combines strength with grace, individualism with compassion.

Satyajit successfully establishes Gandhigram with its own system of economy and small scale industry strictly on the patterns laid down by Gandhi. It was an innovation in the idea of simple community living and economic self-sufficiency. Gandhigram comes to be known as an ideal village with its two hundred mud houses seeking to build a set of values "The Gandhian village was not its mud walls alone. It was spirit. The spirit of man striving to transcend the physical" (p. 49).

Things were moving in quite a placid way but the existence of Gandhigram was thwarted by Steeltown, named after the big factory installed to produce steel, with its heavy machines and blast furnaces that springs up in the neighbourhood. For Bhaskar Roy, the American educated chief engineer of Steeltown, Steel symbolises economic progress of India. He says:

Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But Steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom... Development plus defence-- a compulsion of our current history. (p.30).

Gandhigram and Steeltown are uneasy neighbours. The expansion of Steeltown at the frontiers of Gandhigram is a challenge not only to the physical existence of Gandhigram, but rather on the basic ideas for which it stands. Satyajit who has built Gandhigram with immense sacrifice, devotion and patient planning is genuinely concerned regarding Bhaskar's scheme of forwarding a proposal to the government of

India asking for the annexation of Steeltown and Gandhigram because he knows it fairly well that shifting of Gandhigram to some other place would mean a heavy blow to all the ideals, lifestyle and thoughts for which it stands. It will be a direct attack on the spirit of the village, so important and meaningful for Satyajit. Satyajit expresses his apprehensions to his friend Bireswar in the words: "The challenge is not just between Gandhigram and Steeltown. It's between two contrary thoughts, two contrary ways of life." (p. 343). Even Bhaskar is ruthless in his approach towards Gandhigram in the beginning. His remarks prove this evidently: "We have to capture the spirit of Gandhigram not merely the acres of earth" (p. 61). To expose the superfluity of Steeltown and its contribution to the massive production of ammunition to resist Chinese aggression, Satyajit decides to face violence by non-violence by taking peace mission to Ladakh to put moral pressure on the Chinese. He gets first shock to his ideals when his appeal to his countrymen to enroll themselves as volunteers of Peace Mission, remains unheeded. He is further disheartened when the government rejects his proposals for, it considers his march a plain suicide in the face of ruthless Chinese.

Gandhigram faces challenges from within when one of its inmates Jhanak, belonging to lower community, and fascinated by the glamour of Steeltown turns out to be a rebel. At this juncture, it is only Suruchi who justifies the behaviour of Jhanak which she finds free from any kind of inhibition. She argues with Satyajit in favour of the girl and accuses him that he knows nothing of a woman's mind. Sumita and Jhanak used to be friends in the childhood. But alien in temperament, they drew apart and Sumita became more and more her father's spiritual companion. Satyajit marvelled to see his daughter an austere follower of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. She wears white home-spun sarees and walks bare foot. She is her father's shadow and has adopted his philosophy without any question, even if it has anti-life proportions. She leads a life of dedication. Ironically enough, her visit to Delhi to help her father in Peace Mission makes her encounter life in a fresh light. It deepens her love for life and broadens her vision. The company of Nandini, the vivacious, young and brilliant niece of Bireswar and the fullness of life that she experiences in Delhi, makes her aware of the limitations of the life that she had been heading in Gandhigram so far. At another significant level, it also makes her realize in the right perspective her ignored womanhood. Nevertheless, she remains loyal to her father.

The conflict between Gandhigram and Steeltown aggravates into a crisis when pressed by the frantic demands of the government for more and more weapons and

steel. Bhaskar succeeds in taking the approval of the government to extend the frontiers of Steeltown to Gandhigram. Unable to bear this onslaught on his life-long ideals, so meticulously cherished and preserved, Satyajit follows the method used most often by the Mahatma himself. viz. a fast unto death as a move to save Gandhigram from being usurped by Steeltown. Sumita and Suruchi rally behind him and rouse the labourers of Steeltown to go on an indefinite strike as a gesture to support Satyajit. Sensing loss to the factory and also having mellowed down in attitude due to his compassion for the five Chinese sisters staying at his home, Bhaskar withdraws his project of extending the factory to Gandhigram. This results in reconciliation between Satyajit and Bhaskar and they begin to understand each other better now. If Satyajit realises the practical limitations of idealism, Bhaskar begins to understand the importance of ethical values which Satyajit stands for. He sees the evils of rivalry, jealousy and callousness infecting the gains of industrialisation. The union of Sumita -- nourished on the values very dear to Satyajit -- with Bhaskar symbolises this synthesis needed in India for its development and progress.

At the centre of all this humdrum of activity, the one who extended constant, unflinching and unconditional support to her husband to become a Satyajit is an extremely strong and devoted woman, Suruchi, Satyajit's wife. She is an intelligent, vivacious young woman with lot of enthusiasm for life. She is the most superbly realised female character in the novel. The author takes the readers to see the subtle propensities and feelings that lie in a woman's heart. And a character like Suruchi, so much in love for life, full of verve and delicacy is an example of some exceptional women created in the Indian fiction in English. She displays in the novel a high sense of compassion, sacrifice and sincerity, so very characteristic of the image of traditional Indian womanhood. With the passing years, this naïve girl comes to some stark realisations. And the dissatisfaction at the level of a woman and a mother in her has a strong bearing on her mind, enough to produce some signs of rebellion in her. But what is remarkable is that she is dignified and graceful in showing her feeling of revolt. Satyajit meets her first at Shantiniketan where she was a student. Both fell in love with each other and got married. They stayed at Shantiniketan for two years after their marriage. This span of two years spent there was the most pleasant and satisfactory phase in Suruchi's life. Satyajit, during this time, is also full of life, spontaneous and natural, free from the weight of philosophies and ideas imposed from outside. After Gandhiji's visit to Shantiniketan, Satyajit is invested with an idea of creating Gandhigram. Gandhigram is not only a village, it is an idea. But this lofty idea to be

translated into action allowed no room for indulging in the pleasures of self and family that digress the mind in realising its goal. Satyajit is one-dimensional like Jayadev, the hero in Bhattacharya's novel *Music for Mohini* and believes that the physical and the ideal can't go hand in hand. He has yet to realize that one can't postpone life in the pursuit of ideals as both these are not antithetical to each other. On the contrary, a fair indulgence in life can work as a stimulus in the realisation of ideals. But Satyajit has a different pattern of thinking. He wants to transcend the physical to attain the ideal. In the light of this he declares his decision to Suruchi viz. of practising celibacy and proposes to her to remarry. This is too big a shock for Suruchi to swallow. She thinks: "It could not be ... Not so early in their life—" (p. 23). She had always wanted two sons and also given them names in her imagination – Ajoy and Sanjoy. One child is not enough, she feels. But Satyajit's decision clearly meant the suppression of the woman and the mother in Suruchi. But like a true Hindu woman, she decides otherwise, agrees to be her husband's "companion in ideas, even if they were so very strange" (p. 24). Her surrender to her husband, at least at this juncture is complete and her faith in him so firm that she could sacrifice anything for his sake. It is only at a later stage that she realises the full implications of her denial. To quote from the text:

But she did not yet know the full meaning of her denial, the suffering to come. The suffering of the woman and the mother. It was not enough to have one child, and she had lived long on the edge of expectation. Two sons-- (p. 24).

Satyajit, obsessed with Gandhian philosophy, is bent on following the latter's footprints blindly. He felt a strong inner compulsion to uphold the ideas for which Gandhiji lived and Brahmacharya is a step in this direction. It is, as Satyajit believed, "complete chastity of body and even of thought. It is, Gandhiji, believed, a great source of spiritual strength" (p. 22). He also quotes Gandhi, while laying bare his mind to Suruchi:

Gandhiji wrote: 'Those who perform national service ... must have a celibate life, whether married or unmarried.' I do not think that in our conception of marriage, our lusts should enter. (p. 23).

Overshadowed intensely by Gandhian thoughts, he fails to realize that he is flouting that very idol and his principle of non-violence by being violent to Suruchi's feelings. He fails to see the inherent illogicality of his thoughts that only "a Gandhi, and none else, should make a Gandhian gesture" (p. 208). While striving to mould himself

after the image of greatness, he wants to see a Kasturba in Suruchi, realising little that "She, Suruchi, was no Kasturba, though. She was weak and commonplace and wanted that most women asked for". (p. 23). Although she accepted her husband's wish with dignity, but her yearning for more children remains. Even after reaching middle age, when Sumita was twenty, "Ajoy and Sanjoy came jostling sometimes into her thoughts and the yearning on her face was then vivid" (p 25).

Bhattacharya has given a tenacious critique of the pros and cons of Gandhian vision, his philosophy with all its adequacies as well as inadequacies through Satyajit who has somehow come to think himself as the reincarnation of the Mahatma. His obsession with reviving Gandhism assumes anti-life dimensions and directly affects his wife Suruchi. All the same, he has desired to present in *Shadow from Ladakh* socio-intellectual dilemma which in his consciousness has remained unresolved. Nevertheless, he has articulated his vision emphatically and also tried to offer the solutions available. With the exception of *A Goddess Named Gold* (1967) perhaps no other novel can claim to have such a rich allegorical texture as *Shadow from Ladakh*. Gandhigram is a village and represents cottage industry and stands for the Indian view of the economic structure of society. Steeltown or Lohapur is a city and represents mass production. It stands for science and technology, which means western outlook. There is also a clear-cut presentation of the Gandhian asceticism and the Tagorean aestheticism. Asceticism is the expression of the spirit and stands for the satisfaction of the spiritual requirements. Aestheticism is the expression of body and mind and stands for the material satisfaction of their needs. Satyajit, the guiding spirit of Gandhigram voices the ascetic side of life. Bhaskar, an American returned industrialist is the soul of Steeltown and voices the aesthetic side of life. Bhattacharya exhibits that neither of the stream can stand successfully in isolation. Both have to merge and adopt the best of each other to result in the expression of a fuller life. Suruchi displays a balance between these two extremes and her struggle throughout the narrative can be seen in the light of her endeavour to retain this balance in her despite being in the midst of Satyajit's stern ascetic stance of life.

At many levels, one can see the yearnings of Suruchi which could never get fulfilled, thanks to the weight of Satyajit's austere Gandhian principles. For instance there was no place for costly jewellery in Gandhigram. Suruchi, who loved to indulge in all the simple, small joys of life craved for coloured bangles. But Satyajit had a strong repulsion for all these decorative things. He says: "We have no place for non-

essentials. Besides such things will encourage frivolity. Once a loophole is created--" (p, 43). The matter was brought to the notice of the Council of the Five who were deputed as incharge to solve sundry problems of the village people. The matter was collectively discussed and for the first time the council rejected Satyajit's guidance over this issue. But Suruchi, "true to Satyajit's ideas kept her arms bare" (p. 43). However, on the village women's strong insistence, she agrees to wear white wristlets.

As a mother also, she has some unrealised and unfulfilled desires. She pines for her daughter to have a zest for the colourful and lively things of life. She would have loved to see Sumita have normal likes and dislikes of a girl of her age. In many manners, Sumita is unusual, uncommon and extraordinary in her ways of life. But Sumita was truly Satyajit's daughter. With every passing year, she drew closer to her father, adoring him and his views – like a true follower of Satyajit. She always draped herself in white saree and jacket and walked barefoot. It irks Suruchi to see her daughter as a figure of idealism and austerity, lifelessness and drabness. Suruchi wanted her to embrace life by enjoying every aspect of it by indulging into it meaningfully. Sumita was exposed to no other kind of life other than that of Gandhigram and was fed on the ideas of devotion, simplicity, idealism and service to the country and society. That made her life one dimensional. Bhaskar too forms a similar impression when he first meets Sumita:

She holds herself in cool dignity, an aloofness that makes her self-enclosed--- is that the truth about her, or is it simply the effect of her clothes, the coarse all-white homespun? Not a trace of decoration, no colour anywhere on her person. Her chapped under lip could carry a touch of red with profit (p. 32).

Suruchi too feels, and rightly enough that Sumita is governed more by the value system offered by Satyajit. Though she loves and respects her mother immensely, but she finds in her father a role-model. There is another significant episode in the narrative throwing adequate light on two aspects – Sumita's admiration for her father and Suruchi's agony as a mother. In her sixteenth year, Sumita abandoned the coloured glass bangles brought to her by Suruchi. This gave a big jolt to Suruchi's feelings who is sensitive enough to read the meaning implicated in this gesture. She had a feeling of being defeated. To quote:

... Suruchi noticed her arms and was struck with surprise. Bare! The bangles were gone, every piece, the beads as well. She understood. The defeat rankled (p. 44).

She really felt hurt by the message that Sumita had passed on to her by this gesture. Suruchi was pained to think that Sumita considers her ideas unworthy: "Sumita was holding a mirror before her mother, and it contained an image of her unworthiness" (p. 44). This event also bears an ample testimony to the fact that the father and not the mother had an influence on the mind of Sumita. The pain in Suruchi's heart is quite understandable as it points out the loss of balance in the relationship between child and parents. Sumita displays a celebration of Satyajit's ideas and a neglect of Suruchi's at the same time. It would probably not be the case if Sumita had adopted something of Satyajit and something of Suruchi. This obviously makes Suruchi feel neglected, isolated and lonely. Thus, Sumita's removing the bangles propelled Suruchi to let out her agony by stripping her own arms of the wristlets. She goes to the outside garden and breaks them with a stone on a slab as she had grown plump and the wristlets were tight. This is, therefore, another sacrifice – as difficult as a mother can ever make – to allow Satyajit to cast her daughter in his mould. And Suruchi is too sensitive and self-respecting human being to ignore it. She also conveys this irritably to Satyajit one day when she says: "Have I ever interfered? She is your daughter. I gave her birth; that was all. What I think means nothing to her" (, p. 224). But being true to Satyajit and trying to adjust to his ideals in totality, she feels it unworthy and undignified to assert her influence on Sumita. She respects Satyajit, is truly committed to him and decides not to interfere with his ways. Without grumbling, or making complaint or creating fuss over it, she takes it in her stride with fortitude and grace.

It is this basic conflict that lends richness and intricacy to the character of Suruchi. Though, on the one hand, Suruchi identifies herself with Gandhigram, yet, sometimes she feels that she is not being able to accept it completely. In a way, one part of Suruchi is never been able to reconcile herself to Satyajit's ascetic view of life. Though she, out of her loyalty to her husband, yields to his wishes, yet, the dull and monotonous pattern of Gandhigram irritates her and sometimes she feels a strong urge to revolt against it.

The problem zone is that Satyajit is an ascetic more on the spiritual side of life whereas Suruchi stands for a synthesis of asceticism and aestheticism; of traditions and the modern values. Worldly gains and physical pleasures have never meant much to Satyajit. He has been constantly striving for higher spiritual attainment. To quote:

Material possessions have always meant little to him. It was inner satisfaction that he had counted. He had been restless at Cambridge, shaken by storms within. At one time, he had been obsessed by the idea of becoming a Buddhist monk and living in a monastic abode—in Ceylon may be, or Thailand (p. 14).

Suruchi, on the contrary, believes in a balanced, synthesised view of life. The contention that "Body and Spirit must be fed together, not turn by turn" (p. 57) implies that there must be a synthesis of body and mind. Bhattacharya himself writes: "She [Suruchi] had not accepted Gandhigram in its entirety; but she had not rejected it either". (p. 273).

The fissures in the relationship of Suruchi and Satyajit are mainly not so much based on the temperamental differences, but can be attributed to the ideological differences between them. She, however, adapts herself considerably to Satyajit's wishes. She becomes "part of Satyajit. The nail of his toe. A strand of hair on his scalp" (p. 49), and realises that Satyajit's philosophy "had become a part of herself. She was as much Gandhigram as he" (p.49). Yet, despite all this, the gap between the two polar forces – asceticism and worldliness – continues to disturb her mind. She is not able to accept or reject the ideals of Gandhigram totally.

Satyajit is unjust to Suruchi in one other way. viz. he is unable to maintain a balance between his love for his daughter on the one hand and his love for his wife on the other. His excessive attachment to Sumita is equalled with an unconscious and undeliberate negligence of Suruchi at a certain level. One such episode in the novel brings the most subtle feelings of Suruchi, which sadly remain unexpressed, buried deep in her heart. On her fourteenth birthday, Satyajit gifts Sumita the Spinning Wheel that was presented to him by Gandhiji himself. It was Satyajit's most precious possession and no one, not even Suruchi was allowed to touch it. Satyajit's sharing it with Sumita made Suruchi feel her (Sumita) more privileged than herself and viewing that placid expression on Satyajit's face, while parting with his spinning wheel, she conceals her hurt and questions to herself; "Had not Sumita meant more to him than she?" (p. 42). She sadly introspects whether she has been able to fit herself in the mould made for her by Satyajit or not.

Till now we are acquainted with that aspect of Suruchi's personality that is not assertive; she suffers silently but doesn't complain. She constantly tries to shape

herself according to Satyajit's wishes, subdues her own vision and makes conscious efforts to see things with Satyajit's eyes. It is only after Suruchi's return from Moscow that she regains her lost confidence and becomes aware of the tremendous storehouse of energy and vitality within her. Her vision is clarified and she is able to peep back into her past life and analyse things on her own. For the first time, she realises that she hasn't helped her husband to let him become 'Satyajit'. She realises that she should have asserted herself at that time when Satyajit was pleading for Suruchi's assistance and support in practising celibacy. By allowing Satyajit to have his way, she has let their lives become one dimensional, dull and drab. She learns that it is unnatural as well as violent to neglect one's primal, immediate human urges. They should be given a free play and not suppressed by some system of thought, morality or ideology artificially imposed from outside. Being a woman right in the midst of life and experiencing every aspect of it, she realises that a woman's primal urge is to be a woman. No girl likes a life of dedication. It is on these grounds that she approves the behaviour of Jhanak, the girl whose open, uninhibited conduct becomes a controversial issue in the village. Her mixing up freely with the village boys and indulging in activities that are against the norms of Gandhigram brings the issue into the notice of village Panchayat (the panel of five leading men). She was sent for by the village council and cross-questioned. She returned from the interview in tears. Only Suruchi held different views regarding the actions of Jhanak because Suruchi knows what it means to be a woman. Jhanak is interpreted by everyone as mean, defined and vulgar. Only Suruchi feels that she is just natural. Though she was bound not to speak out in the village council but she argues with Satyajit about this matter. The dialogue between Suruchi and Satyajit goes thus :

"What right you have to sit as judges, knowing nothing about a young girl's mind? Jhanak is just normal. That's all"

"Ruchi, look. If we give way to our normal instincts, life will become a fearful mess. The kind of civilised life that we are trying to build is based on inner discipline. Let that discipline be relaxed and the whole structure will fall. You don't want that to happen."

"what I want is of no account. Not to you, not to anyone else. But I hate to see young minds being twisted out of shape." (p. 224).

Suruchi feels that Jhanak is courageous enough to break the iron codes of Gandhigram. She appreciates the rebel in Jhanak. As she also evidently tells Bhaskar "Bhaskar, the walls are about to fall, And – I rejoice!" (p.288). It needed a great deal of courage for the girl of the untouchables to defy Gandhigram and admit the fact to her

parents that she had gone to a movie with a youth named Great-Uncle's Grandson late in night and she also let the facts be known to the village. That was the measure of her challenge. In the absence of Satyajit, Suruchi was made the incharge to handle Jhanak's affair and take decision. This offered a great challenge and dilemma to Suruchi. The woman in her favoured the courage in Jhanak that she herself lacked. But her commitment to Gandhigram would not let her declare in favour of Jhanak, "Moral action was all that Gandhigram knew" (p.272). And Jhanak was clearly a threat to the existence of Gandhigram which had become a part of Suruchi's being. She realises, on deep thought, that Jhanak represents an extremity in behaviour while Gandhigram represents another extreme in offering strict spiritual code of conduct and expecting the citizens to follow it diligently. The solution is that Gandhigram "must make readjustments. That would mean acceptance of life in its totality. But not the Steeltown way; that was also denial of life deep under the surface. Let licence be chastened by restraint." (p. 274). Pensive in mood, she places herself with Jhanak in comparison and finds that her role throughout was that of a stop gap. "A stopgap – that had been her assigned role over the years. Humble, self-effacing, she had accepted that role without complaint. An ideal wife. Ideal, indeed! (p.274). Although Suruchi disapproves of licentiousness in Jhanak, she appreciates the courage in her. She thinks:

No, she would not stop Jhanak, who had something she herself had never possessed: Courage; the resolve to grasp life between her hands, and the boldness to fight tooth and nail to secure whatever she deeply wanted. (p.274).

Suruchi's craving to have the courage displayed by Jhanak and secondly her deep understanding of the desires of a woman make her take sides with her. She also had been craving to live life with Satyajit to its fullest and not just be a shadow of him. Both Satyajit and Sumita are amazed to learn Suruchi's opinion about the matter which makes her a quiz to them. At this stage, both are apathetic to understand her. It is only later when Sumita goes to Delhi and sees the varied aspects of life other than the flat life of Gandhigram that she understands the import of her mother's words and her strong defence for the girl of lower community. She realises that life can be lived at different planes other than that of Gandhigram, flexible and fluid unlike Gandhigram, without sacrificing the standards and values of life. It is when she herself is awakened to the love for Bhaskar that she comprehends, though with utter astonishment, the presence of some degree at least, of Jhanak in herself also.

But it is imperative to point out that though an affinity is established between Jhanak and Suruchi, they are poles apart. Truly enough that Suruchi becomes more self assertive, but unlike Jhanak, her self-assertion is moderate and disciplined and not rebellious in nature. She rather emerges as a mature human being with independent views of her own. Now she can see clearly that Satyajit, by preaching Sumita the Gandhian principles of leading a life of dedication and not that of pleasure, is rather misleading her. He is taking Sumita away from the normalcy of life. Sumita is going against the laws of nature by not allowing herself the simple pleasures usually perceptible in the girls of her age. This is the high time, she thinks, that she decides something for Sumita. She determines that Satyajit cannot exercise his will on Sumita. She won't let her child be deprived of the things and pleasures denied to her mother. She speculates:

She could not let her own life be repeated in Sumita. All these years she had stood aside in humility, resigned and helpless. She had felt too small even before her daughter (p. 101).

Suruchi resolves to find a middle ground between the extreme forces existing around her. She has seen her daughter's sexuality coming to life, though Sumita herself is not aware as to what is happening to her. And Suruchi is determined to encourage Bhaskar's love for Sumita.

Satyajit too graduates into life and realises that his denial of life has done him no good. It is his conversation with Bireswar, his college friend, during his visit to Delhi, that opens his eyes to the reality. Bhattacharya relies profusely on the strategy of contrasting characters and situations to highlight a particular point of view. It is used as an effective stylistic device by Bhattacharya. In *Shadow from Ladakh*, Bhaskar versus Satyajit, Sumita versus Rupa, and at one level, there is an explicit contrast between Satyajit and Bireswar. Satyajit stands for idealism, Bireswar for realism. During his visit to Delhi to give the nation a call for Peace March, he (Satyajit) is awakened to many ground realities which make him come out of his world of illusions. This is the second turning point in his life from where he could visualise the rapidly changing values and standards in the post – Gandhian scenario. He comes to a realisation that the changing times demand from him that the ethics and values he adheres to need to be redefined and revised so as to accommodate something new into them. Bhattacharya makes Bireswar his mouthpiece in bringing to light many vital issues. It is Bireswar who categorically tells Satyajit that his decision to take a peace march to Ladakh is totally

wrong. He says: "A Gandhi, and none else should make a Gandhian gesture" (p. 208). In other words he meant to say that any ideology or principle which is not true to life is bound to fail. The same doubt was expressed by the pressmen during the Press Conference: "Was there any room in the present world for such idealism as the peace march embodied? Would the Chinese understand any language other than that of strength?" (p.207).

And Bireswar's contention came to be true as the nation's response to Satyajit's call for peace march to Ladakh in the wake of Chinese aggression, was quite meagre: "But only a few had offered themselves. The others had urged that the peace march be abandoned. The country was not prepared for that kind of action, they said (p.210). This was a great shock to Satyajit. He felt that the hard work of his whole life time has crumbled like a pack of cards. He felt dejected and betrayed. "He hung his head and saw the work of a life time turn to dust and ash. He might have achieved more as a teacher at Shantiniketan without pretensions" (p. 210).

Another significant illumination that dawns upon him thanks to Bireswar is regarding Suruchi. It is again Bires who removes his myopia pertaining his attitude towards Suruchi. He poses a significant, thought-provoking question to him: "Sumita not Suruchi, is to be your companion in this peace march, what does it point to?" (p.205). He himself answers this question and tells Satyajit that it was because Suruchi has consciously distanced herself from Satyajit. Satyajit is struck with a realisation that all these years he had neglected Suruchi. He had taken her and her support just for granted. All these past years, Gandhigram meant more to him than his wife. And now when he sees that all his high ideals, for which he denied himself and Suruchi the bliss of marital life, have come to nothing, he is awakened to the loss of a lifetime. Gandhigram was Satyajit's dream. It was his passion. So it was quite easy for him to work in pursuit of his target. But Suruchi had her own dreams, her own passions and desires which she abandoned and not only this, she adopted Satyajit's ideals as her own, co-operated wholeheartedly with him in his endeavour to realise his dream. True to the decision she had taken, she remained Satyajit's companion in ideas, however strange they might have been. And she never grumbled or complained about it. Barring some incidents where she displayed her disapproval, she doesn't give any clue of being a non-conformist. She accepted Gandhigram and the ideas for which it stood in true sense. She confirmed to the norms and deadlines set by Satyajit in Gandhigram. Although she showed signs of restlessness at some junctures and expressed opinions

in some matters that deviated from the accepted frame work of Gandhigram, yet she herself feels that Gandhigram has now become a part of her being. This is the basic tussle, the conflict in Suruchi character – the endeavour to adhere to the ‘Sita’ image and trying to come up to the idealistic situations imposed by society, and on the other hand, fulfilment of the self which is not easy to negate, being the actuality of life. Bhattacharya always choosing and advocating a moderate middle way between the extremes, is neither totally in favour of Satyajit’s stern ethics deviating from the normalcy being untrue to life, nor does he prescribe a total indulgence in the pleasures of body, where only the self is celebrated. He is a votary of the middle way, that meeting point on the wavelength where something of Satyajit and something of Suruchi coincide. This is the realisation to which Satyajit is brought to before it is too late. He, at this point of time, realises that he has been unfair to Suruchi and denied her simple, little pleasures of life. His mind also opens up to the fact that Suruchi has been undemanding throughout whereas he himself was extremely demanding and Suruchi has constantly fulfilled his demands – whether they were just or unjust, rational or irrational. Back home, after his visit to Delhi, which is taut with a series of disillusioning experiences for him, he sees Suruchi in a different light and also confesses to her his guilt:

All these years I have deserved nothing from you, and yet my demands have been limitless. At last I see it all with clear sight” (p. 341).

All the more, Bireswar’s revelation to Satyajit that he was at one stage in love with Suruchi shocked him. He felt a pain for his friend. But at the same time, it also diverted his mind to think attentively about Suruchi. For the last few years, his mind had been so full of Gandhigram and other social issues that he had unconsciously become oblivious of Suruchi. Her presence and her support, being so spontaneous, ever ready and unasked for that Satyajit took it for granted. Bireswar’s unfolding of some long suppressed issues contributed greatly in shocking Satyajit out of his mood of neglect and indifference towards Suruchi which he had developed over years. “Then Satyajit was thinking of her, vested with a new element of mystery because of Bireswar’s revelation of his love. And a longing for her seized him overwhelmingly” (p.206). It was through Bires that Satyajit becomes alive to the real worth of Suruchi and silent sacrifices she has made to give support and strength to Satyajit. He now clearly sees Suruchi as the real source of his strength. Bireswar tells him:

Brother, a woman like Suruchi could have made you a dog on a leash. You would have hopped and jumped at her bidding – if she had wanted that. But she chose to leave you alone; she let you go your own stupid way (p.206).

Satyajit also feels deeply indebted to Suruchi when he learns that she didn't accommodate any clue of knowing Bireswar's mind. Hence, her whole-hearted devotion to Satyajit. When Satyajit asked inquisitively whether Suruchi knew about Bireswar's inclination towards her, the latter says:

Women are said to have their intuitions. If Suruchi knew, she gave no sign that she knew. The faintest response from her, a mere smile of understanding and I would have launched a hard battle. May be, then, you would have lost your wife. I have few inhibition and fewer moral scruples. I firmly believe in getting what I need" (p. 204).

Bireswar, in the heat of the moment also blames Satyajit for being cruel towards Suruchi and even to Gandhigram in his pursuit of his ideal. He tells him: "All love has in it a secret streak of cruelty. You are cruel towards Sumita you have been cruel towards Gandhigram" (p. 205). For the first time, Satyajit encounters his real self honestly and bravely. Bireswar's presentation of the factual situation before Satyajit makes the latter confront the truth about himself that despite all his idealism and asceticism, he is unable to subdue body. Bireswar's confession of his love for Suruchi leaves Satyajit a disillusioned man. He cannot bear the thought of Suruchi going away from him. Bireswar's question: "Would you have found it hard to bear Suruchi's loss? She was for you just a wife, a role that any other women could have played with equal success" (pp. 204-05), stir the innermost depths of his mind and he realises that Suruchi was not just a wife for him, and any other woman could hardly play the role. From now onwards, Satyajit starts "dreaming of a new life that she alone would fill". (p.212). He comes to realise how he has denied worldly pleasures to himself and Suruchi for long. Strange recollections come flooding back to his mind. He felt a strong urge to know: "Was her hair still as long and as beautiful as in those days? He would like to make sure; he would like to see her hair unbound, flowing down her back to the waist and beyond" (p.212). In the light of this new vision, Satyajit tells Suruchi:

"I will have everything that you condescend to give me, Ruchi". Surprised by his easy acquiescence, she cried, "Condescend? Why do you say that" "All these years I have deserved nothing from you, and yet my demands have been limitless. At last I see it all with clear sight" (p.341).

Suruchi will be the light of his life hence forth. He will let himself be led by her. He will fulfil her physically and be fulfilled by her. Satyajit reflects over their relationship :

Suruchi was an urge for him to live, relive... and not on the Gandhian plane. His newly won release would seek expression in the honest acceptance of every human need (p.353).

Suruchi too realises in her turn that during all the past years she herself has gained much on the spiritual plane. Now she does not underestimate Satyajit's achievements on that level. All that she wishes is a synthesis of the ascetic and the worldly, the idealist and the practical man in Satyajit:

The past years, too, had brought enrichment, and she could not negate them, throw them away. And she would hate to see Satyajit cast himself adrift. She would like her husband to be Satyajit in one part of his being and someone else in another. That someone else – it was Bireswar! Yes, he could be both. That was the image in which she would want him. That was the image in which she could lose herself completely and be fulfilled (341).

In this way, both Satyajit and Suruchi change. Both of them readjust their moral values and create brighter prospects of a fulfilled life in future. Bhattacharya thus happily blends tradition with modernity in the union of Satyajit and Suruchi.

In the school of life, Sumita too learns many hidden and unknown facts. Satyajit moulds his daughter according to his own way of life. She is brought up on the diet of the ideas of dedication and self negation. Satyajit wanted her to be an extraordinary girl having uncommon and unusual interests unlike the other girls of her age. As a result she becomes an unthinking copy of Satyajit and accepts her father's words as final truth. Sumita's mind is oriented towards the concept of simple living and high thinking which forms the core of her being. Hence her choice of white clothes and negation of ornaments to avoid attraction. She has decided for herself a life of dedication and deliberately keeps herself away from all the colours and glamour of life to fit appropriately in that mould. She is her father's alter ego and has full faith in the Gandhian ideology. She is not yet familiar with the normal human impulses of young age. Like her father, she is practising a philosophy that is anti-life. Sumita is innocent, obedient and idealistic. She does not know what life actually is like. She is hardly aware that she is living life in an unnatural way. It is Bhaskar Roy who locates this imposed artificial, anti-life streak in Sumita and rightly thinks; "She should have a friend

strong enough to release her from the cocoon of taboos she had built around herself ...” (p.122). The unreality of her mental make up is brought out in the incident at the dilapidated temple. Bhaskar points out to an erotic piece of sculpture and asks her what she thinks of it. Her cold detached answer is: “I know nothing about the art of sculpture” (p.127).

When he suggests that it presents a view of life, she asks incredulously: “Life”, and clicks her tongue “with honest incomprehension.” She manifests not shyness which would be normal in a girl of her age but absolute ignorance of life. Bhaskar is astounded when he finds her unmoved even by the sight of erotic sculpture:

It was hard for him to believe that any woman could remain untouched by the sight of the hand on the breast, both so faithfully rendered. Sumita must have seen that sculpture many times in the course of four years; yet, today, in the fullness of youth, how could she fail to see the reality she had missed before, and react properly? But there was her prompt dismissal of it with a click of her tongue (p.127).

It is through Bhaskar and his teachings that Sumita comes to know what life actually means. Bhaskar, the young Chief Engineer of the factory, with his American training and highly Westernised outlook, represents a three –dimensional opposition to Satyajit and Satyajitism. He believes that steel, standing for mass production is the only solution to Indian’s growing population. Steel, likewise, is the only shield that can protect the infant democracy against all enemies threatening her freedom and security. So far as attitude to life is concerned, he doesn’t believe in any kind of repression or inhibition. He believes that man should live every moment of his life to its full extent. There have been many women in his life. He enjoyed with them but he did not undertake a fast each time he made a transgression as Satyajit did at Cambridge. It is Bhaskar who makes Sumita alive to the realistic side of life. Bhaskar’s first impression of Sumita is quite unfavourable. She is too plain, too frigid for his sophisticated tastes. When he observes Sumita’s insensitivity to the sculpture, he thinks that they are moving in different orbits.

Nevertheless, there is something that Bhaskar likes in Sumita because of which he falls in love with her. Perhaps it is due to the prevailing Indianness in Bhaskar that he comes nearer and nearer to Sumita. He is fascinated by her simplicity and charm and innocence. When Bhaskar reveals his warm feelings for her, she is quick to respond. Love enters her life and changes her outlook. One day when she returns

home with Bhaskar after getting wet in rain, she feels a strange, thrilling yet fearful impulse in her heart. She is not able to understand this impulse. It is fearful and hard to bear. She is not able to control this feeling:

Sumita did not start taking off her wet things. She sat like a piece of stone... and about her the hurricane blue. As she relived the moments, she felt a curious misery come sweeping upon her, and a strong urge to cry to wash off the misery in a flood of tears. It was hard to control the impulse. She could not understand herself, and needed help, and yet would have shrunk from help (p.149).

Sumita is feeling something which she never felt before. She is going to be a changed personality due to the impact of certain situations. The transformation of her nature is indicated in the novel in the description of her visit to the temple, described earlier, and her visit to Meadow House where there was a function. There, Sumita watched the dresses of the dancing girls with a fascination. She asks herself an odd question: "How does it feel to wear such clothes"? (p.160).

She also observes her mother wearing a green-bordered saree and dark coloured jacket. She is greatly fascinated by this dress and after coming from Meadow House, when she is alone in her room, she picks up the same sari and jacket. After dressing up in this sari and bearing a red mark of adornment on her brows. She looks in the mirror.

The startled eyes in the glass dilated with fear. But she gazed on, fascinated by the fear itself: to bear in her person even a remote suggestion of the stone image! (p.165).

The healthy impulses of youth are aroused in Sumita after Bhaskar's involvement in her life. But Sumita is awakened to her full womanhood by her visit to Delhi. This visit comes to be the real turning point in her life. Here Sumita meets Nandini, the niece of Bireswar and her brother Debes. Nandini plays a great role in the education of Sumita in the ways of life. Nandini takes part selflessly in social services but does not neglect the claims of the heart. She does not suppress her emotions and normal instincts for the sake of national services. Nandini is in love with a young man who enlists in army and is tragically blinded, but her love remains unalterable in spite of his misfortune. Nandini demonstrates the power of love as one of the noblest human emotions. She warns Sumita: "One day, the terrific wave will seize you too" (p.322). But at this moment Sumita does not understand the meaning of 'terrific wave', She goes to see the Red Fort in the company of Debes, and when she is watching the statues in the

Museum, she recalls the temple incident. The sculpture of the temple mingles with the statues of the museum and Bhaskar surfaces on the mind of Sumita. Just at this moment: "The blood came splashing to her face as she recalled a solitary moment in her own life. A moment in the abandoned temple. With memory she felt a sudden restlessness, and cried, 'Let's go !' (p.277).

It is now, in the end of the novel that Sumita becomes conscious of the fact that at last the wave has seized her. Now Sumita is able to understand the meaning of life. In Delhi, she sees the splendour of Indian History scattered in various forts, mosques and museums and Nandini's blind love for Ashok. Here in Delhi, there is life, happiness and joy whereas Gandhigram, in some aspects, is anti-life. Sumita's encounter with life and its conflicts heightened her awareness of her womanhood. When Sumita returns from Delhi, she is entirely a different person. And the credit of this goes to Nandini. To quote:

Years had to pass before she gained a new vision, and it was a gift from Nandini. But that was because so much had happened to her of late, outweighing the cool self-satisfaction in which she had lived. The dedication gone, leaving a vacuum (p.325).

Face to face with life, Sumita yielded to the desire to embrace life. What Suruchi was not able to do in Gandhigram, was done to Sumita during her visit to Delhi. The encounter with the reality of life aroused normal human impulses in Sumita in the same way as Suruchi's visit to Moscow brought into focus her forgotten and neglected womanhood.

Thus she becomes a changed person. She begins to see her relations with Bhaskar in a new light. She knows that in order to live a happy married life with Bhaskar, "Sumita would need a measure of orientation. It would be no easy passage from Gandhigram to Steeltown" (p. 197). Sumita now grows up and is able to see her mother's point of view. She now comprehends Suruchi wishes for her womanly as well as her ideological fulfilment. But the intensity and richness with which Bhattacharya has delineated the character of Suruchi is missing in the character of Sumita. Suruchi is a pure creation in flesh and blood created for its own sake whereas Sumita is meant to serve as a bridge between the ancient and the modern. Balram S. Sorot also holds some similar views when he says, though in a different context:

Bhaskar's union with Sumita also illustrates a blending of the antagonistic values. In their marriage, Bhabani Bhattacharya synthesises the Western with the Eastern elements in life.⁶

Another two significant character creations that impress the readers with their liveliness and genuineness are Rupa and the warmly meddling, richly drawn Mrs. Mehra. The latter, minor as she is in the novel comes fully and dramatically alive. Bhaskar Roy's secretary and quite close to him, she is more than a secretary. She acts as Bhaskar's unasked for but good-natured foster mother worrying about his working too hard, his not eating properly and specifically about his not being inclined towards marriage. Mrs. Mehra shares a fine understanding with her husband and her kindness and warmth make her interference in Bhaskar's life not irritating but benign and amusing. Though she is given relatively less elaborate treatment as compared to Suruchi and Sumita, she proudly enjoys the privilege of being one of the most superbly realised creation of Bhattacharya. To a large extent she serves as an author-surrogate in the narrative.

Also well realised, though in a different way, and though allowed to fade from the novel, is Rupa. Half American and having been an airline hostess before returning to India to work for Bhaskar Roy, she is warm of heart and loving beneath her alluring sexual veneer and would have been a worthy mate to Bhaskar. As the latter says to her at one point, "You'll destroy the stability of our social life; you will create chaos; but you will give us something dynamic" (p.122). Willing even to attempt to seduce Satyajit if it would be of help to Bhaskar, Rupa has enough self knowledge to know that she could do little to bring Bhaskar other than to be sexually close to her. As westernised as he, she recognises the irony of Bhaskar's being drawn to the pure flame, as undiluted Indianness of Sumita. And Rupa has enough of a sense of self and of others -to leave India and Bhaskar before her situation becomes intolerable or awkward.

Agreeably enough, one critic after the other has emphasised the contention that Bhattacharya's depiction of the Indian woman is that of a creature full of endurance, self-sacrifice who is undemanding and full of depth--in short, the ideal image of Sita. But the issue that needs attention, being neglected so far is that in portraying the overall tensions and conflicts beneath the surface idealistic image that the female characters are made to cling to, constitute Bhattacharya's vision of the reality of the situation. This imparts the basic dramatic tension. Bhattacharya's sympathetic and respectful attitude towards the female characters of his novels can be appreciated in

this light. And hence his strong advocacy for synthesis, a blending—shedding some of the outdated, non-practical and idealistic notions and adopting some new trends that fit in the realistic situations of life. In the depiction of the female characters, he has time and again emphasised that too much of idealism may spoil their spontaneity and naturalness and prove to be burdensome. Suruchi emerges victorious in two ways at the end. One, she is able to modulate Satyajit to a new kind of thinking that is negotiable on human terms; Second, her desires are fulfilled when she finds that her daughter has chosen a dynamic young man of the calibre and capacity of Bhaskar.

At the end of the novel, everything is in the form of a Synthesis. Bhaskar's marriage to Sumita is the marriage of Steeltown to Gandhigram. There is reconciliation of the two ideologists, Bhaskar and Satyajit. Bhaskar attains in the end something of Satyajit in his nature. Satyajit emerging from his fast is to start a new chapter in his life. Every character comes to a common point after travelling a long path of experience. The very last words in the novel announce that the ascetic girl trained by Satyajit has surrendered herself the 'terrific wave' which stands for love and fullness of life. The novelist has ended the novel on a happy note because life lived fully with due justice to the different planes of existence can only lead to contentment and fulfilment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Cromwell Cramford, "Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Mediating Man," *Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya* ed. Ramesh K. Srivastava (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1982), p.19.
3. Ibid., p.10.
4. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1996), p.215. All the subsequent references from the text are from the same edition denoted henceforth with page number in parentheses
5. Ramesh K. Srivastava, "Introduction," *Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya* (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1982), p. XXV.
6. Balram S. Sorot, *The Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991), p.87.