

RESEARCH ARTICLE**THE REALISTIC PORTRAYAL OF INDIANS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF
BHABANI BHATTACHARYA**

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Abstract:

The study of Indo-Anglian novels covering a variety of subjects throughout the years leading up to and following Independence, including social, political, patriotic, diplomatic, cultural, etc., has revealed the importance of Indian political novels, including those by Bhabani Bhattacharya. He has argued for authenticity and honesty in literature and advanced the notion of the social and moral purpose of art. He said a novelist should write without a planned narrative and instead use current events and social reality as inspiration. Thus, the 1942 Quit India Movement and the 1943 Bengal Famine inspired his books *He Who Rides a Tiger* and *So Many Hunger*. He was compelled to create *Music for Mohini* because Indian culture blends traditional and modern ideals. *While Shadow from Ladakh* is concerned with the 1962 Indo-China border conflict, *A Goddess Named Gold* questions what it means to be free. This present paper analyzes the socio-political life of Indians through the select novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya.

Keywords: *Tradition, Culture, social, political, suppression, reality.*

The social, political, and economic climate of society in the 20th century served as the primary source of writers' inspiration. It was a time when both the social and political landscapes were undergoing significant change. The social unrest was at its height. Everyone wished for the old social norms to be changed and for new ones to be established in a free nation. The books written at that time were influenced by the shifting social and political landscape. Modern authors inexorably depicted the socioeconomic realities of society; they bravely highlighted the ills and displayed their desire to combat the problems that exist in society. They discussed the independence movement and the necessities of everyday existence in their writings.

The Gandhian Movement's social, political, economic, and ideological upheaval had a lasting influence on the minds of modern writers. These authors have not only given Indian English literary direction and energy, but they have also strived to close the gap between the East and the West. There

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have been many talented authors who have elevated English literature to new heights and made it sparkle brilliantly in the literary universe. Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, and Khushwant Singh are a few extremely accomplished authors whose works exhibit social realism.

The works of Bhabani Bhattacharya touch on modern social, economic, and political themes. His debut book, *So Many Hungers*, published in 1947, tackles issues of poverty exploitation and the widespread hunger brought on by the Bengal famine. Additionally, the Quit India Movement is highlighted. In *Music for Mohini* (1952), the combination of traditional and modern ideals is depicted, along with the prevalent superstitions in society. *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954) paints a heartbreaking image of the less fortunate members of society who struggle every day as a result of poverty, the caste system, and other ingrained prejudices.

Additionally, it demonstrates the high-born's harsh attitude towards people with low incomes. It also shows a man taking retribution to a hypocritical society. In *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), the notion of true freedom is highlighted along with man's hunger for riches. It puts in front of us opposing forces uniting for their separate goals. In *Shadow from Laddakh* (1966), which is set against the backdrop of the Indo-China conflict of 1962, the societal duties that frequently get in the way of people being happy are discussed. Even the tension between the two disparate concepts, ways of thinking, and beliefs is depicted by him. The author's experiences in the West are reflected in *A Dream in Hawaii*, published in 1978. The link between Eastern and Western ideas is presented in the narrative concurrently. It is impossible to undervalue Bhabani Bhattacharya's contribution to Indian English literature. Even though he has only published six books, each of them exposes the harsh truths of society and how they affect all aspects of life.

A profound emotional tone is presented in the book *So Many Hungers!* Through its heartbreaking passages. Numerous villagers move to Calcutta and perish there. The scenes where a jackal perches on a pregnant woman's thigh and tears at her bloated belly while her screams cut through the air, where Kishore falls victim to events, where mass arrests are made in response to the Quit India Resolution, and where Kajoli is raped by a soldier shock the readers' sense of humanity. The novel's depiction of Indian rural life is notable for how the villagers are united by a sense of brotherhood and shared prosperity and hardship. The dedication and hero-worship of the villagers, as well as their slogan of "living and dying together," are depicted via the persona of Devesh Basu.

The novel also explores the peasants' superstitions, customs, traditions, convictions, and beliefs in omens. The loyalty and love of the Indian people for the great epics, the Ramayana and the Bhagavata, is also mentioned. The villagers' devotion to the cow Mangala is evidence of their affection for a mother cow. Through Kajoli's mother's giving of the cow to the fisherwoman, the sacrificial spirit that runs through the blood and veins of rural people is also depicted.

Bhabani Bhattacharya skillfully captures the belief of the Indian people in the predetermined lot of man, the mysterious fate, and the unchangeable Destiny. A woman covering her face with her sari whenever a stranger enters the house, washing a stranger's feet after a trip, worshipping the dusk

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Gods and the sacred Tulsi plant, blowing a conch as a sign of good luck and happiness, chanting the names of Rama and Hanuman to scare away ghosts and demons, etc., are just a few of the customs and beliefs of the rural populace that are mentioned. It is shown that the impoverished and exploited employ hunger strikes, political protests, agitations, and processions to detect and shock the wealthy elite. Bhabani Bhattacharya advances his thesis of a society based on the mutual recognition of humans by humans through these methods of the lower class.

Music for Mohini, the second book by Bhabani Bhattacharya and a social tale, was released in 1952. This story, set in post-independence India, operates on both a personal and a societal level. Many conflicts may be seen in the novel when it is analyzed, including those between the husband's mind and the wife's body, between East and West, Hamlet and town, tradition and modernity, astrology and rationality, and daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. All of these conflicts are finally resolved, indicating the harmony of the music. The novel depicts a cross-section of modern Indian culture, which is rife with superstitions and absurd dogma. In his description of society, the author says, "Society, rural society (and nine-tenths of India was rural) was sick with taboos and inhibitions of its own making; the iniquities of caste and untouchability; the ritualism that passed for religion; the wide-flung cobweb of superstitious faith."(*Mohini* 102)

The novel examines societal developments following Independence. By presenting the protagonist Jayadev as a person who combines time-honored Indian traditions with modern aspects, the writer hopes to inspire a social renaissance and the achievement of man's full potential in society. The caste system that still governs Indian society today is also mentioned in the story. The novel depicts the parents' marital difficulties. The marriage of Mohini demonstrates how parents are anxious and busy in their search for a suitable partner. Dowry is a factor that occasionally determines a marriage's difficulty. The superstitions and rituals that were prevalent in the society of the time are also mentioned in this book. When seen from a societal perspective, the novel focuses on social freedom, which is crucial for the conservative and superstitious Indian population to advance in reality. As a result, Jayadev, the novel's protagonist, is shown as being committed to social reform and Independence. In the words of Dr. B. Shyamala Rao, "The novel *Music for Mohini* is a true replica of India, of the Post-war Independence still making fruitless attempts to escape the conventional and traditional muck."(42)

Simons de Beauvoir also criticized men's frequently conflicted attitudes towards women. She states,

—The men of today show a certain duplicity of attitude that is painfully lacerating to women; they are willing, on the whole, to accept a woman as a fellow being, an equal, but they still require her to remain the inessential. For her, those two destinies are incompatible; she hesitates between one and the other without being precisely adapted to either, and from this comes her lack of equilibrium. With man, there is no break between public and private life: the more he confirms his grasp on the world in action and work, the more virile he seems to be; human and vital values are combined in

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him, whereas woman's independent successes are in contradiction with her femininity since the 'true woman' is required to make herself object, to be the other. (407)

He Who Rides a Tiger, the third novel, portrays modern Indian life in a caste-based society with a decaying political and economic structure. The moral outcry of the moment was embodied in the principal character, Kalo's revolt against the class. The work depicts caste-sanctimoniousness, Brahminic ways of life, the arrogant hypocrisy of the local affluent, human brutality, and emotional deformity as a result of the ruined economics of the area in graphic detail. The narrative follows the life of one person from his early years until his final spiritual freedom. This book and *So Many Hunger* have the same setting! The two main topics covered are the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the Indian Freedom Struggle. However, they differ in how the topic is handled and in the intended and actualized ultimate result. According to Dr. K.R. Chandrasekharan, "While the earlier novel focuses attention on the national movement and Bengal's travail and their cataclysmic effect on the teeming millions of people, the later novel is more concerned with the history of one mind or at the most of two or three minds"(qtd. in Singh 58).

A Goddess Named Gold, Bhabani Bhattacharya's fourth book, was released in 1960. The post-independence national consciousness is highlighted in this book. An examination of the book will demonstrate how the freedom we currently have is not the kind of liberty Gandhi intended; instead, it is a luxury enjoyed by a select group of affluent men. The novel explicitly addresses the issue of the impoverished people's economic Independence. The book is a woman's fiction since only women are responsible for freeing the nation from Sethji's control. It offers a clear picture of Indian rural society today. It displays the moral superiority of the peasants' group over the greed of the Sethi and the landowners.

The author's magnificent view of life is reflected in the book. He emphasizes fundamental human qualities like kindness, selflessness, friendship, purity, dignity, and fighting for the underprivileged against the oppression of the wealthy, among others. The author of the story also underlines the necessity of political and social reforms. The presence of profiteers and black-marketeers in Indian rural life is one facet that the book portrays. In this book, the concept of freedom is thoroughly explored. In the story, women who participated in the liberation fight are depicted as living in Indian villages.

The Cowhouse Five, a female association, and its members Munni, Champa, Meera, Subhadri, Sohagi, and Lakshmi are important players in the liberation fight. Lakshmi makes reference to the 1942 Quit India Movement in her speech to Meera and other people. The work also explores how women might achieve economic liberation through Satyagraha and procession, two Gandhian methods. It is a lovely tale about Indian society and a masterful satire of those who are drawn to the allure of money.

Bhabani Bhattacharya published books of political and social significance. In fact, he saw full-blooded men and women, peasants, and the oppressed as victims of societal forces who yet had

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the power to transform their own India into a new India. The study of Indo-Anglian novels covering a variety of subjects throughout the years leading up to and following Independence, including social, political, patriotic, diplomatic, cultural, etc., has revealed the importance of Indian political novels, including those by Bhabani Bhattacharya. He has argued for authenticity and honesty in literature and advanced the notion of the social and moral purpose of art. He said that a novelist should write without a planned narrative and instead use current events and social reality as inspiration. Thus, the 1942 Quit India Movement and the 1943 Bengal Famine served as inspiration for his books *He Who Rides a Tiger* and *So Many Hungers*. He was compelled to create *Music for Mohini* because of how Indian culture blends traditional and modern ideals. *While Shadow from Ladakh* is concerned with the 1962 Indo-China border conflict, *A Goddess Named Gold* questions what it means to be free.

In each of his writings, he has explored an optimistic worldview. He has argued for a full and joyful existence in his works *Music for Mohini*, *Shadow from Ladakh*, and *A Dream in Hawaii*, denouncing asceticism and self-abnegation. Despite being unfamiliar to Westerners, Bhabani Bhattacharya's perspective on art is not at all unusual in contemporary Indian writing, which is known for its profound socio-political consciousness. He writes philosophical, not artistic, novels. He doesn't write for amusement; he writes for instruction. In conclusion, Bhabani Bhattacharya is without a doubt one of the most notable Indo-Anglian novelists due to his substantial contributions to topic, form, and style.

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