



Treatment of East and West in the Bhawani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*

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Bhabani Bhattacharya is undoubtedly one of India's most well-known English fiction writers. He is an author who has piqued the interest of a huge number of readers and academics both at home and abroad. His works include *So Many Hungers!*, *A Goddess Named Gold*, *He Who Rides a Tiger*, *Music for Mohini*, *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*, which have earned him enormous acclaim and a place among the classics of Indo English literature. His six novels all included a description of the normal post-World War II circumstances as a backdrop.

Bhattacharya's novels are dedicated solely to the exploitation of the country's social and political reality. His works focus on the social and economic challenges that the Indian people face as a result of starvation, poverty, famine exploitation, conflict, and the people's desire for peace, as well as imperialism and nationalism. Bhattacharya's focus as a novelist is on the creative depiction of the social, economic, and political realities of life and Indian culture, rather than philosophical issues and ideologies. He does not demand a specific answer to their difficulties, but he is quite suggestive in his depiction of the current Indian challenges

Poverty, corruption, casteism, ignorance and superstition, exploitation, and dumb suffering have all been mentioned and represented in Bhattacharya's writings. He was born during an era of significant political and social upheaval in India, and as a result, he makes a scathing attack on the rich's inhumane and corrupt methods, as well as the administrators' passivity, both before and after independence. Bhattacharya's characters are full of hope, fervor, and courage, and he believes in social reform based on the ideas of equality, justice, and liberty.

The main characters in these works are drawn from villages, according to the novelists. These characters feel stifled and powerless when they encounter the urban environment. In the city, their major concern is to find some sort of work to support themselves. They become prey to the city's malevolent forces in the process. Because most of these folks are innocent and uninformed, the affluent class of urban culture unfairly exploits them. Occasionally, the city's notorious criminals take advantage of their poverty and persuade them to engage in dishonest and illegal acts.

Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* is concerned with India's future - its social, religious, economic, and political regeneration. As a result, the story demonstrates that neither Gandhism nor Nehruism can stand alone as the national ideal; only a harmonious mixture of the two can address the nation's current challenges.

As Bhattacharya continues to write, he bridges the gap between old and new, East and West, and different cultures. Bhattacharya's aim is to integrate us as a collective. He reaffirms Gandhi's teaching that Indians should not only keep their ancient cultures, but also enrich them with new perspectives and experiences. The spirit of the soil should adapt the alien elements. In his book, Narendra Pratap Singh argues that our blind, irrational attachment to the past, our decayed culture and tradition have played a key role in retarding progress and healthy social change. We may respect our traditions and cultures to some extent according to the novelist, but only up to a point. By blindly adhering to them, we would endanger the liberty and prosperity of our country.

However, Satyajit believes otherwise. Steeltown and Gandhigram are not incompatible, according to him. They can complement and supplement one another. Steeltown is a present-day phenomenon. Look to Gandhigram for inspiration. There is work to be done. The decrepit and soulless Steeltown will have to seek new moorings when this work is completed, when the material benefits of production have been fully realized. Gandhigram will then have the opportunity to speak (*Shadow from Ladakh*, 156). Suruchi, Satyajit's wife, understood that neither Gandhigram life nor Steeltown life should be entirely embraced or rejected. She fully understands that her husband does not completely discard Steeltown, based on their long-term relationship. He recognizes its importance. She is disappointed, however, to see Bhaskar not being able to see Gandhigram as an important landmark and its spiritual significance for the full development of people and nations. In order to integrate the two different styles of life, Suruchi wishes that Bhaskar understand the significance of Gandhigram, which he could not see-values that Steeltown would benefit from acquiring. Even the small spiritual center in the great city could benefit from the giant machines.

An essential component of productive power is self-abnegation. Without it, corrupt practices would dominate. It was impossible for materialism to be self-sufficient. Culture is integrated by the work of Suruchi. Having known that the marriage between Sumita and Bhaskar Roy will meet the needs of ancient and modern, she encourages Sumita's love for Bhaskar. Having a great engineer and technocrat like Bhaskar fighting poverty and famine in Sumita is essential. In order to achieve Bhaskar Roy's vision, Sumita has to use his scientific knowledge in a controlled and judicious way. The life of wisdom and knowledge is critical to building a happy, peaceful, prosperous nation, since knowledge without wisdom is dangerous. Gandhigram and Steeltown's differences gradually disappear in the novel, resulting in an adjustment between the two. As the two alternatives come to terms with each other slowly, they come to terms with each other. The two divergent ideas of Bhaskar and Satyajit become united because they understand each other. As far as Bireswar is concerned, they are phenomena that, despite their differences, are essential to one another. He explains his views to Satyajit thus:

You and he, facing each other like night and day.....Night and day in the hour before the sun rises and in the hour of sunset. The eternal clash—light against darkness and darkness against light. Could we have one and not the other? Could we sleep if it is only light? Or waken if darkness is without end? You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhaskar. There's Bhaskar deep within you, Satyajit! And...there's you somewhere in Bhaskar, of that also I am sure (*Shadow from Ladakh*, 352).

As the novel ends, the crisis resulted from the assault on Gandhigram by the Steeltown is resolved. The people of Steeltown go to Gandhigram and announce that the spinning wheel is not anymore, a problem for them and they have no objection and that they are brothers of the men of the village. People of the city go to Satyajit's house in procession and enquire about his health. They speak in friendly tone with the village folk. The people of Gandhigram cordially welcome them and show them the fields, small workshops, schools and the huts. As Bhattacharya writes:

There could be no easier intermingling...When the visitors had crossed the threshold of the homes, all barriers between city and village were gone. The slogan of brotherhood, enriched with emotional content, became real. The divisions were gone. Gandhigram was a frieze carved on one slab of rock. And it was rock that lived! And would make itself deathless through death! (*Shadow from Ladakh*, 352).

Resolving the conflict between Steeltown and Gandhigram, the love between Bhaskar and Sumita brought peace to Steeltown. Bhaskar graduated from a Western university. After traveling widely in Europe, Bhaskar settled in Steeltown. A westerner, Bhaskar sees the world by the eyes of the body and the mind. For him, morality and soul are irrelevant. His restlessness sometimes makes it difficult for him to work continuously. His thoughts would sometimes be akin to those of a machine, a thing of steel. The way he sees the world seems Westernized to me. Compared to Sumita, he is more Indian in nature. Like her father, she lives a life of asceticism. Indian spiritual values are extremely important to her. Her culture is rooted in the epic age of India. She is a true follower of her father and a Gandhian to the core. Bhaskar and she are irresistibly drawn to each other when they meet. Seeing them approach each other, people are shocked because they believe the gap between their lives will never be bridged. Marriage between Sumita and Bhaskar is symbolic of integrating two different cultures. However, Bhaskar attracts her and she ultimately marries him despite their differences.

By bridging Gandhigram and Steeltown, Sumita becomes the bridge for cultural synthesis. In order for the nation to prosper and maintain peace, large-scale industrialization must be merged with small-scale industrialization. Furthermore, Bhattacharya emphasizes Gandhian asceticism in combination with Tagore's aestheticism. Satyajit is a synthesis of these two modes of thought. Gandhi believed in and practiced simplicity of life, social service, village upliftment, non-violent discipline, truthfulness, fasting for penance and spiritual strength, rejection of materialism, and abstinence. Symbolizing the union of asceticism and aestheticism, the marriage between Satyajit and Suruchi is important. Although Tagore had a strong impact on him, Satyajit was a Gandhian.

In contrast, Suruchi, under the influence of her husband and her vow of Brahmacharya, is a personification of Tagore's aestheticism. In contrast, Satyajit is an essential Tagore. On his return from Cambridge, he becomes a teacher at Shantiniketan under the influence of Tagore. In Tagore, he was taught to understand that a person's greater concern is not a lack of wealth, but a want of happiness. A man who is happy is a person who is full of life, and not a person who has a wealth of possessions (*Shadow from Ladakh*, 14). In spite of Satyajit rejecting aesthetics, Satyajit cleverly portrays the defeat of his asceticism by aesthetics, leading to a successful synthesis of the two. With this novel, Bhattacharya convincingly expresses his concept of compromise and integration. According to Bhattacharya, synthesis refers to the agreement with life as it is in totality. No form of life was denied or identities were suppressed. Gandhigram and Steeltown were adjusted together in a way that exemplifies his idea of synthesis. In post-colonial English literature, the author attempts to return to the native culture after having been dominated by a foreign culture. It would be foolish to dismiss an Indian writer attempting to reach out to a Western readership simply because they are writing a travelogue. A writer's maturity and sensitivity will determine the extent of cultural amalgamation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to as "the specific intellectual" and "the universal intellectual". She ultimately marries him despite their differences. By bridging Gandhigram and Steeltown, Sumita becomes the bridge for cultural synthesis. In order for the nation to prosper and maintain peace, large-scale industrialization must be merged with small-scale industrialization. Furthermore, Bhattacharya emphasizes Gandhian asceticism in combination with Tagore's aestheticism. Satyajit is a synthesis of these two modes of thought. Gandhi believed in and practiced simplicity of life, social service, village upliftment, non-violent discipline, truthfulness, fasting for penance and spiritual strength, rejection of materialism, and abstinence. Symbolizing the union of asceticism and aestheticism, the marriage between Satyajit and Suruchi is important.

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