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## SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIA IN BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S GODDESS NAMED GOLD

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### ABSTRACT

"Bhabani Bhattacharya's fiction mirrors the social, economic, and political conditions of pre-and post-independence India," says the author of the novel. Starting with *So Many Hungers* and ending with *A Dream in Hawaii* his six novels cover the entire spectrum of society and human nature. He has a wide range of subtopics in his novels, which is evident in the previous chapters of the book. When it comes to his main theme, Bhattacharya's genius lies in the seamless integration of the subthemes that are just as important and interesting. In his novels, we can clearly see the profound influence of the changing society on him. The novels of Bhattacharya can be classified as bipartite novels. There is a continual focus on social issues, as well as economic issues. The social and economic issues of his time are reflected in his novels and he treats them equally. Humanity is portrayed through the lens of social and economic realities of modern life. It is thanks to Bhattacharya's keen observation that he has a deep understanding of the conditions in India that have not changed over the centuries. The main aim of this study is to investigate social evils and anomalies such as poverty, class relations, and decadent values that are eroding society's vitals it also uncovers the novelist's philosophy for reducing social tension and restoring peace in *Goddess Named Gold*.

**Keywords** – Social, Economic, Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novels, *Goddess Named Gold*, hunger, poverty etc.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Bhattacharya is a genuine diamond of Indian English Fiction writers. His books exhibit a valid portrayal of the choppiness in India because of social, political and economic transition. His profound understanding of human instinct and human mind helped him create remarkable characters and deliver extraordinary literature. Every one of his books hold a profound social reason, yet at 24 a similar time, they are sufficiently fascinating to keep the pursuer's interest unblemished. Bhattacharya's books are an impression of Indian society and the handy significance of his books is ageless. They are applicable even today. The thirty long periods of his life as a writer amid which he delivered his significant works were really the

brilliant years ever of English Literature.

#### 1.1 His Life and Influences

As the winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, Bhabani Bhattacharya, is a gifted essayist who can compete with many of India's top novelists who are writing in English today. Dr. Bhattacharya's novels began to appear between 1947 and 1948. Novels by him include *So Many Hungers!* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966), and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978). Bhattacharya's personal experiences led to a better

understanding of his social, economic, and political issues. Bhattacharya was born on November 10th, 1906 in Bhagalpur, Bihar to a wealthy family. He was introduced to the entire world by his father, the promoter of Bhattacharya. When Bhattacharya was younger, he and his parents had the opportunity to travel to several parts of India, which is one of the reasons for his enviable position. Because he came into contact with youth in a time when the nation was fighting for human rights and independence, he depicts the situation in all of his novels.

### 1.2 Indian culture and social issues

Bhattacharya moved to London to continue his education after completing his bachelor's degree in India. At King's College in London, he studied literature and history. He holds a doctorate in history from the University of London with honors. As a result of the fact that he had chosen a topic on the political and socio-economic conditions of Bengal during the mistreatment and also time of the Indians by the British, his fill-ins reflect this theme, as well. He had ignored the conditions as he had taken a shot at his subject matter and also was profound.

Many of Bhattacharya's novels depict Indian culture and social issues, such as hunger and discrimination, that are experienced by the downtrodden. It's interesting to note, for example, in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, what happens when an unrespectable blacksmith assumes the role of an esteemed Brahmin. The Bengal Famine of the 1940s is also depicted in *So Many Hungers!* by Bhattacharya, which ravaged the region and, by extension, the entire nation. His book demonstrates how poverty and famine, brought on by the British Raj's lack of concern and the avarice of high society individuals, can annihilate the Indian culture's exceptional physical, financial, social, moral, and spiritual texture. In his novels *So Many Hungers!* and *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Bhattacharya explores the theme of hunger, whereas in *Music for Mohini*, he explores the theme of social amalgamation. His novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, is the quintessential example of effortlessness and modernity working together in perfect harmony. Bhattacharya's exploratory writing drew on all of his life's moments. Aware of this, he portrays life in Indian culture as he observed it. To avoid disappointing anyone, he chose a sombre tone when speaking about India's contemporary society.

### 1.3 Works of Bhabhani Bhattacharya

- So Many Hungers
- Music For Mohini
- He Who Rides a Tiger
- A Goddess Named Gold
- Shadow From Ladakh
- A Dream in Hawaii
- The Golden Boat
- Indian Cavalcade
- Steel Hawk and Other Stories
- Towards Universal Man
- Gandhi The Writer

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**T. Ahalya and Dr. V.S. Bindhu (2020)** Studying conflict and compromise between two different modes of life in *Shadow from Ladakh* is the goal of the study. *Shadow from Ladakh* by Bhabani Bhattacharya explores the various ideologies and approaches that people have in order to live a happy life. Iron civilization and Gandhian life are central themes in the novel. *Shadow from Ladakh* focuses on social and economic issues, which leads the reader to a different thought process than they would normally have.

**Dr. Poonam Rani and Navneeta (2016)** *Pestilence* is characterised by craving. Bengali starvation is not only depicted in an unfavourable light, but it is also described in terms of its physical and psychological characteristics. He portrays Indian writers of the twentieth century as having a strong desire to manage the changing national scenes related to social, political, recorded, and monetary measurements. Bhabani Bhattacharya, Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markanda, for example, use anecdotes to express their disdain for the financial and social obscenities.

**Neetu. Chaudhary (2012)** This study examines the political, religious, and other types of movements that led to modern India's rapid growth. The writers' explanations of Independence and the Quit India Movement differ from Gandhi's. Bhattacharya uses Gandhi and Raja Rao's influence to select themes of the time, such as indiscriminate, poverty, starvation, and traditional social rules.

**A.Rameshbabu and Rameshchandrasrikanth, (2012)** Bhabani Bhattacharya's first novel, *So Many Hungers!* is one of the principal bits of experimental writing conceived out of the struggled torment of body and soul persisted by the consecrated soil of Bengal amid the repulsive starvation years and the beginning

times of the Second World War. The novel manages Bengal starvation as well as human relations.

**Oligachanu. Ningombam (2011)** A Dream in Hawaii is a novel by Bhabani Bhattacharya that explores the conflicting views of the East and the West. Oriental aestheticism and spiritualism captivate the West. They are inextricably linked. The author of this novel, Bhattacharya, has made an effort to convey this viewpoint.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research work makes an attempt to explore the novels of Bhattacharya for the themes of hunger and poverty, feminine consciousness, Gandhian sensibilities and cultural integration. The research not only examines the ills and anomalies, such as poverty, class relationship and decadent values eating into vitals of society, but also discovers the philosophy, suggested by the novelist, to mitigate social tension and restore harmony. It analyses and comments competently on Bhattacharya's promotion of universal brotherhood, humanism and the richness of human spirit to help others at the cost of one's own life and judicious synthesis of divergent values of life as an effective social panacea. The thesis depicts contemporary social, political, economic and religious realities of India before and after independence in Bhattacharya's novels.

The investigation depends on secondary resources. The work makes utilization of publications and authentic sources discharged by different writers, scholars, daily paper office, Government of India. For profound understanding of the issue, books, journals, newspapers, periodicals and web access are the wellspring of material for the investigation of the theme. The analysis and assessment of the investigation endeavors to make similar analysis of some of the selected novels of Amitav Ghosh in respect to history and society. The accentuation is laid on the analysis of five works.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The Goddess Named Gold is set in a rural setting and explores man's desire for wealth. The novel is about gold, which represents riches, status, and position, and it examines money as a need, want, or desire for different people depending on their worldview. The story's centrepiece, gold, appears to be a panacea for all problems. Because of greed, the writer has brilliantly demonstrated how human behaviour, cognitive processes, and behaviours have changed.

He has also demonstrated that man's need for gold frequently blinds him and drives him to his limits. The story takes place in the village of Sonamitti. The village's name literally means "place of gold soil," but oddly, the gold soil was only beneath Seth's feet. The plot revolves around Seth and the average people. The Seth portrays the society's wealthy and greedy face, while the regular villagers represent the struggling poor. People of all colours make up a kaleidoscope picture of society among the regular folk. The plot is flavoured by the destitute but self-respecting, the powerless but visionary, the dependent yet vociferous, and many other characters. This novel, unlike others by Bhattacharya, features strong female characters. Females who believe in equality, who are not afraid to take a risk in the sake of social progress, and who are willing to fight for what is right and against what is wrong. The novel explores human greed for gold, which is fueled by the desire to accumulate wealth for some and the need to escape their misery for others. Another longing that lingers in the novel is the desire for a miracle. The protagonists in the novel represent the unquenchable desire for a miracle after a hard fight extremely well. The story depicts the dire need to eradicate poverty while also focusing on the vices of riches that comes without effort. It depicts the consequences of money greed as well as the bad consequences of social sins such as hoarding and black marketing.

The story opens with the cow-house—usual five's get-together, during which they reminisced about their freedom battle. Meera is one of five ladies who make up the cow-house-five. Meera is seen as the group's leader and their genuine strength by the cow house five. They adore her and are inspired by her bravery. They recalled her active participation in the independence fight as a child: Even though you were only ten and eleven years old at the time, you did have your role in the great struggle... She was actually as skinny as a squirrel at that age... What a sight with straw in your hair and clothes. The women were crammed into one police officer, while the guys were crammed into four others. The child cried, "Quit India!" as though she didn't want to miss the bus to town and prison! Grandma grumbled loudly when she watched her being apprehended, yet there was a light of pride on her cheeks! (7-8).

They were debating an agenda that required rapid action today. The community was in a state of destitution, and the inhabitants were heavily in debt. The village women lacked suitable clothing and had to rely on tatters to maintain their dignity. Patches covered their sarees, and ripped jackets served as a

cover. The situation was so bad in Sonamitti that some of the women had to sleep virtually naked at night. "This, in a community of rich black earth producing a hundred bales of good fiber cotton every season, enough to clothe the entire district," they reasoned (9). Because to Seth Samsundar, a Sonamitti merchant, the situation worsened too much. The Seth owns the only fabric shop in the region's seven villages. People stare down their noses at him. "Taking advantage of the countrywide sari shortage, he seized the supply and drove up prices," they claimed (9). He is unconcerned about the peasants, and he takes advantage of their misery on a regular basis.

Seth, like Meera, is a significant figure in the plot. He is a ruthless businessman who has little regard for human principles. He is astute and astutely calculated. His primary goal in life is to amass wealth and build a large empire. He is a fabric dealer as well as a moneylender who charges exorbitant interest rates on his loans. "The community was buried in debt to him and gnawed at his exorbitant interest rate" (9). He is aware of the villagers' plight, particularly that of the village ladies, but he has no sympathy for them. When his wife Lakshmi pleaded with him to offer one sari for each individual in a year or more, he rejected and explained his position by saying, "Have I manacled their wrists?" He had inquired. Is it true that I snatched their moneybags? Or have I hidden the linen bundles in my stomach's thick paunch" (9-10)? When Lakshmi complained about the five-fold increase in price and requested that a reasonable rate be established, he became enraged and sarcastically advised Lakshmi to urge those people to go to court. He appears to be completely unconcerned about their suffering. His wife, Lakshmi, on the other hand, is a staunch supporter of the locals. She is caring and understanding. She doesn't exude the superiority of a Seth's wife. She attempts to persuade her husband to understand the villager's concerns, but her efforts are in vain. She came from a poor family before she married, and Seth makes no attempt to convince her otherwise. Because of their auspicious star alignment, he married her.

Under the same home, the author has depicted two opposing individuals. In nature, demeanour, and conduct, Lakshmi and the Seth are diametrically opposed. Seth is stingy, whereas Lakshmi is generous. She has always stood by her friends through thick and thin, and she did not hesitate to do so tonight, even if it meant going against her husband. They decided to put their zeal into action by organising a procession against the Seth in order to

free women from servitude. They also determined that if the Seth would not agree to their requests, a nude march through the streets would be held. Nago, Lakshmi's kid, drowned in a well on the same day. Everybody was on the lookout for a saviour. While no one had the bravery to risk their lives, Meera, ever thoughtful, dived into the well to save Nago, putting her own life in jeopardy. The villagers then remembered another incident in which Meera had saved a snake-bitten Ganeshi as a toddler by draining the poisonous blood from his body. Meera had always been fearless and selfless since she was a child. Lakshmi's faith in Meera was strengthened by this occurrence, and she made the solid decision to join the procession. They began their parade with vigour, shouting aloud, "We demand fabric to wear." "They set out toward Main Road with a ragged sari spread between two poles for their banner, and their cries joined together in harmony, we demand cloth to wear, cloth" (24).

"Words will melt a ripe coconut, but not the Seth's heart in its cast-iron shell!" ironically stated by many who observed the parade. He'll have a bellyful of belly laughs. The demand will make him spit. Return to your domestic duties, women, and leave Seth-war ji's to the men (24). The women, on the other hand, paid no heed to anyone and walked together. Meera went into Seth's shop to speak with him. By that time, Seth had learned that Meera had saved his kid, Nago. He liked Meera's bravery, but he refused to satisfy her demand for cloth as soon as she made it. When she threatened to strip naked, the Seth joked that he was waiting for her and her companions to do so. Meera, like all the other women, was shocked.

Lakshmi saw Meera's crestfallen face and decided to be their representative and went to talk to Seth her husband. When the Seth denied her demand too, she said, "This is no bluff. I will strip for certain. Even though I may be the only one" (30). She forewarned the Seth by going half naked in front of him and as soon as she was about to unknot her sari the Seth got stunned and agreed to her demand unwillingly. He tried to emotionally blackmail Lakshmi but his efforts went futile. "Your bread-giver will gasp in poverty, remember that. The child of your womb will turn one day into a whining beggar boy (32)" This was a true victory for all the women of the village. The Seth was badly hurt due to his loss. He thought that seeing his own wife naked would have been no big deal.

He was sorry for his decision, but he was a businessman who knew how to make the best of the situation. He believed that by portraying his loss as a charitable act, he would be able to win the following district board elections. He made the decision to enter politics in order to recoup his losses. "The saris were part of his electoral preparations, the first debit item in his election accounts. For there were many women in rags whose husbands or sons would be eligible to vote" (31). Seth demonstrates the kind of savvy that is essential to manage a successful business. His sole goal is to make money, and he excels at calculating figures. He'd taught himself to visualize accounts as a mental picture, with the credit and debit columns neatly recorded, the balance calculated, and no unnecessary paper or records preserved. His march through the dark lanes of the clandestine market had been led by this ability. Even the sharp-toothed city sharks referred to him as a brother and an equal as a result of this talent (35).

He began planning election strategies and determined that the village schoolboys could be employed to canvass for him. He knew the schoolmaster would not refuse because he is heavily in debt and could gain the schoolchildren's interest by providing them fried bread and cookies. He assumed that by winning the district board elections, he would be able to compensate for all of his prior losses. The Seth also staged a picture play in the hamlet to advertise the 'Peerless' firm's goods, which was planned by the company. Because he was considered to be the biggest eater of Peerless vegetable, the Seth kept the village halwai at the top of the guest list. Ghee. When he learned of the females' excitement for the show, he determined to deny them access to the play in order to avenge their protest against him.

He seems to have been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reclaim his lost dignity. The females were enraged and completely disappointed by Seth's actions. In their opinion, it was a form of gender discrimination. "Let ten women, any ten in the village, go to the exhibition, and there will be no grouse." This prohibition applies to all women!" (43). The cow house five's females resolved to teach Seth a lesson. Meera somberly discussed everything with her grandma, but she was confident that they would be able to see the movie.

Meera's grandmother is an elderly woman with a minstrel for a husband. She is the village's backbone. People in the village look up to her and listen to what she has to say. She is a peasant who is intelligent, thoughtful, and diligent. However, her advanced age

and gout cause her a great deal of discomfort. Even so, nothing can dampen her enthusiasm. She was an active participant in the independence fight, and she continues to support the village's demands today. Meera's parents have passed away, and Grandma has taken over their responsibilities in her life. Meera learns from her grandmother that her grandfather will be visiting the hamlet shortly. Meera had a lot of faith in her grandpa, who is a wanderer who travels the world singing religious and moral songs to people. People in the hamlet revere him and regard him as a wise man. There are numerous legends around the minstrel. People believe that in a previous life, he was a guru known as 'Atmaram,' who meditated for years in the Himalayas and gained a celestial soul. His tunes have a way of hypnotising listeners. Meera, who was overjoyed to learn of her grandpa's visit, headed to the Halwai to find out when he would be arriving. Another greedy person, the Halwai, sought to persuade Meera to accept his proposal. "It's a pity that our castings, mine and yours, don't accord... Otherwise, lass, I'd be happy to have thee as my second wife" (53). Because his previous wife had died, the Halwai fantasised of marrying Meera. He, a father of two married daughters, desired to marry Meera, a sixteen-year-old girl. Meera ignored his proposition, and when she learned of the date on which her grandpa was expected to come, an idea occurred to her. The minstrel will perform on the same day and at the same time as the picture play, she informed the Halwai. This, she realised, would cause confusion among the audience, and the picture play would be a fiasco.

The minstrel, Meera's grandfather, arrived in the village on time. People were ecstatic since they had been waiting for his music for a long time. Meera told the minstrel about their experiences with the Seth and how she had organized his concert to coincide with the picture play. The minstrel told Meera that this was not the best approach to convey their message and that he would sing later. "Meera, His voice was soothing and reassuring. You can't make up for one mistake with another. "You can't fight evil with evil" (62). Meera agreed with him, albeit reluctantly. She also informed him of Seth's dictatorship, his future aspirations to enter politics, and their anti-Seth processions. She also told him about her lack of knowledge regarding the district board elections. Then there's the 'vote-mote.' "You have to know," he said. His brow sunk into a frown. Will you appoint the tyrant to the district board of directors to speak and act on your behalf?" He taught Meera a lot about the people in power and how citizens have the right and power to choose who they want.

Meera's other plan worked on the day of the picture play. She was successful in deceiving the villagers about the existence of a big number of monkeys wreaking havoc in the village. Everyone in the audience, including Seth, rushed to their heels to preserve their belongings. When they returned after finding nothing, they saw the females watching the movie with some men. Except for Seth, everyone laughed a lot during the episode. When the minstrel began his performance, he mentioned an amulet that might change copper into gold if the bearer performed a genuine act of kindness. He handed it to Meera and warned her that if she let go of her arm, it would turn into a stone. He was able to persuade people to believe him. Seth became agitated when he learned about the "touchstone," as he had expected to receive it. When Seth received an offer from Meera to acquire the touchstone in exchange for oil for her grandma's gout after a few days, he refused to accept the existence of any such touchstone. He remembered his prior misfortunes and resolved not to fall into the same trap. However, he couldn't shake the image of the gold goddess that he had once. He went to the city one day and bought a red motorcycle and a driver named Sohanlal.

Sohanlal is a young boy who spent five years in military transport. He accepted Seth's offer and began to appreciate the new village setup. He is an intellectual with a wide range of life experiences. Sohanlal assimilated into the village and befriended everyone, particularly Meera and her grandmother. The three of them would sit and talk about their lives every evening. Sohanlal explained his background, including how his father died in an earthquake and how his mother died after he enlisted in the army. He tries to explain reality and the new social system to Meera, who has seen a lot of the outside world and is aware of the villager's conflict with the Seth. Meera's level of comprehension astonishes him. Meera and Sohanlal grew to love each other over time, but they kept their feelings to themselves. Sohanlal was also a favourite of Meera's grandmother. While the Seth's preparations were in full flow, Meera's grandma decided to select another candidate to run against him. The Cowhouse five and other females began canvassing for Meera's Grandma, despite Meera's disapproval of herself as a candidate. She was not seen as a threat by the Seth. He was well aware that the loan he had provided her would come between her attempts to harm him. In his approach, he is extremely astute. Several individuals were forced to abandon their ancestral homes and go to cities in order to make a living due to his excessive interest rates on loans. Despite this, he sees himself as a giver. In his

soliloquy, he praised himself: sEvery individual who migrated in hardship received from him a financial present of five, ten, or even fifteen rupees. Depending on how much land he'd lost. There was no justification for such a gift. You bought wheat and ate it, you bought fabric and used it up, and the vendor refused to replace even a single grain or strand of thread for free. The Seth of Sonamitti, on the other hand, was far too gentle in his dealings. That was his problem; he had to keep a close eye on himself and keep his softness in check, lest it overcome him and harm his son and heir. (132).

The Seth deep in his heart also knows Meera's grandmother's goodness but is too arrogant to acknowledge it.

She had written her fate with her own hand. The minstrel had left her six broad fields, half of them black cotton earth. Only two mouths to feed. Two depending on the land could have all they needed. But then, they had to gain popularity. They had to go out of their way to give help (133).

When they needed another loan, Meera approached the Seth fearing the worst. She could see her doom nearing with her departure from the village round the corner. The time was tough and their accounts with the Seth were bad, but suddenly a miracle happened. The Seth happened to see Meera's ring which was of gold and when Meera stated that it was copper he concluded that the great miracle had happened. He kept that ring with him and contemplated for a long time. The miracle had blown his senses away and he decided to make Meera his partner in harvesting gold. He called Meera and told her about his plans to invest in copper jewelry so that it can be transformed into gold. He also offered her an equal share in the partnership. Meera agreed as she wanted to have abundant gold to put an end to everyone's misery. The village people were however cynical, thinking that Meera would not be able to go against the Seth for 'vote-mote' after joining hands with him. Meera assured them by saying, "With all of myself I will work with the Seth in one field where our motives meet. With all of myself I will work against him in another where our motives are in conflict" (163).

The five seniors who were being considered for nomination against the Seth, on the other hand, had differing views on contesting the elections. Seth, on the other hand, was engrossed in the creation of golden visions. He was out for Meera's life, trying to persuade her to remember the act of generosity that

led to the miraculous transformation of her copper ring into gold. And he wished for her to perform more acts of kindness. He was too agitated to notice that kindness comes naturally to him. He supplied puris and jalebis to a large number of boys, but it was in vain. Sohanlal attempted to persuade Meera that people should not give up in the expectation of a miracle. "Gold is a strip of field released from bonds," Meera, who was simply thinking about the benefit of everyone, said. A new straw thatch on the walls of a mud cottage is gold. It is the old father's dream for a pilgrimage to Holy Benares and the rag-escape women from hunger" (175). Sohanlal does not believe in the miracle, but he understands Meera's feelings. As an intellectual and visionary, he wished for people to be self-sufficient and fight for their rights. "Sonamitti cannot survive on charity, even if it comes from your hands. We must fight for what is rightfully ours: the right to live as human beings" (176). Meera, who had no desire for gold, said, "The gold will not be mine." I'm afraid I'll have to pass it on. That's what Grandpapa was getting at. That is why the amulet was given to me. In her mind's eye, she recalls: "to wipe every tear from every eye" (176). The folks' gazes were fixed on Meera. Their lone hope became a miracle.

As time went on, the villagers began to offer Meera their copper pennies so she might wear them on her body. They had already begun to regard her as a wealthy woman. The miracle's word spread like wildfire. Seth was also offered a partnership by a wealthy individual, but he declined. He hoped that he would soon be basking in a gold-filled pond and also a member of the district. Then he noticed a procession, which was canvassing for Rajaram, one of the village's five elders. People who had been looking forward to the miracle increasingly became critical of Meera. Even her closest friends were baffled by her true feelings. Sohanlal tried to reason with Meera on several occasions.

You will save this community with your gold. The seven villages will be saved by you. However, there are another 800,000 people. Each one has its own Seth. Each Seth is waiting to seize the people's new authority. There isn't enough gold to save all of India! ... It is the war against the Seths, not a miracle or armfuls of riches, that will save India. You did have a significant role in the battle- (197).

She wanted to know what he was thinking. She, on the other hand, could never doubt the minstrel's statements. Meera became a local celebrity. The

Halwai, Meera's lover, dispatched a mediator, the barber, to her house to talk about Meera's marriage to Halwai. Meera's grandmother burst out laughing at the proposal, recommending Buddhu's widowed mother as a suitable match for the Halwai. The Halwai, on the other hand, had his heart set on Meera and was dreaming of a golden future with her. The peasants, on the other hand, saw Meera's body as a treasure. They expected her to wear everyone's coins, but when she expressed dissatisfaction, they agreed she'd wear fifty coins at a time. Their desire for the miracle grew stronger as time passed. "Whatever else may happen, good or evil, we crave for the miracle" (207).

So, on the one side, Meera's friends, who had abandoned her, were canvassing for Rajaram with Meera's Grandma, while on the other hand, Seth and Meera were hoping for a miracle, for their own reasons. Meera was devastated internally. She couldn't understand why people were against her. "It's my destiny to wear the taveez for one reason only. Bulaki Rao, the Seth's manager shared a lot of stories with Sohanlal about the village and outside. He is a sly and greedy person. He eavesdrops on people's conversations and has no shame. He indulges in juicy gossips. He told Sohanlal about the drunk, whose wife's death made him a drunk, the bad woman who was a prostitute and many more such stories. Bulaki Rao also suggested Sohanlal to visit the bad woman and gave him the whereabouts of her place. He was so sly that he was even able to extract money from the Seth who was famous as a miser.

The Seth on the other hand grew restless, as he had spent a fortune on the copper jewelry and there were no signs of a positive outcome. Meera had clearly told him not to superficially create any act of kindness, but his impatient mind led him to do so twice. Once he, along with Bulaki Rao, pretended that a little boy had fallen in the well so that Meera could get in and save him but instead of Meera, Sohanlal went in the well and found nothing. Meera was furious. She felt sick of the Seth and yelled at him. In the meanwhile, Sohanlal wrote a letter to the minstrel in Grandma's name updating him about the incidents in village. Lakshmi, who had long back gone to her parent's house, had also returned to the village. She saw the change in behaviour of everyone towards Meera. She met Meera and also tried to convince her friends. But by that time the situation had gone worse. Lakshmi overheard the Halwai telling people about the plans of burning Meera's effigy. Lakshmi felt gloomy. She went to Sohanlal and revealed a secret to him. She told Sohanlal that the gold ring that Meera was

wearing was hers. She had slipped it in Meera's hand while she was asleep as per the minstrel's wish. She also told Sohanlal about the effigy. Sohanlal and Lakshmi along with their other friends were furious on learning about the plans to burn Meera's effigy. They found her effigy and gave it to the grandma. The old lady was shocked to see it. She, who had always been with the villagers had never imagined that this treatment would be meted out to her granddaughter. She took the effigy in the field and addressed the villagers:

You forget what she is, a mere child. You try to make a savior out of her. You bid her fulfill an inmost wish of your heart. Your stern voice says, do or die. She has no value for you apart from the gold. She must be made to produce. Not for once has it occurred to you to ask yourself: Why must she? (270)

All of them felt guilty and they agreed that their greed had blinded them. They felt ashamed. But the Seth unaware of all this tried to do another act of kindness by getting the 'drunk' and the 'bad woman' wed to each other. He believed this to be an act of real kindness but unfortunately this idea too failed. Meera was exhausted doing all this. A sudden urge sprung inside her and she started removing the ornaments from her body one after the other. It was like a bad dream that had passed away. Sohanlal supported her and they went back home in the darkness of the night. The Seth was abjectly disappointed but later he too realized that he had spent too much of his time, money and energy on this distant dream.

Meera's Grandpa also reached home. Grandma narrated everything to him including the plans of burning Meera's effigy. She also told him about Sohanlal and how he was her support all this while. Later Grandpa revealed to Meera the point that easy money doesn't bring happiness by weaving a dream in which Meera is able to turn copper to gold. He tries to show her how money makes people idle. They would have nothing to do in the fields as they would have all the money to buy whatever they want. With more money there would be more money lenders. The poor outside the village would look at them in scorn because of their own debt. The rich would want to stay in the town and gradually Sonamitti would lose its real people. Meera would be called a Devi who shared her fortune with the less privileged ones and would be married to an affluent man, an elephant merchant or so. This was a moment of realization for Meera. "With a sudden jerk of her hand she bared her right arm, pulled at the red string of her taveez until it

snapped, and in the same movement she flung the taveez far into the river" (298). Her grandfather enlightened her by telling her the importance of a purposeful life.

The next morning, Sonamitti was in a daze. With the loss of the touchstone a long-cherished dream was broken. However, the Cowhouse five seemed to have the best day of their life. They got their Meera back. The same day the minstrel addressed the people in the village. They listened to him attentively. He told them that finally the touchstone worked and the miracle they got is freedom.

Brothers, now that we have freedom, we need acts of faith. Then only will there be a transmutation. Friends, then only will our lives turn into gold. Without acts of faith, freedom is a dead pebble tied to the arm with a bit of string, fit only to be cast into the river (303).

Bhabani Bhattacharya, along with the social issues, has portrayed the need and greed for money through his superbly etched characters. He portrays the need through Meera and greed through the Seth. Gold has an overarching influence on the novel. Along with its physical importance the writer has metaphorically suggested that human heart is as good as gold as long as it is untouched by any evil. The writer not only talks about greed, but also shows the vices it brings along. He not only portrays suffering but also shows the ways to fight it. Along-with depicting the evils of the society he also suggests ways to counter them. He states that money that comes without hard work only brings momentary happiness and relief. Like all other Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels this novel too has strong Gandhian influence. The character of the minstrel is inspired by Gandhian philosophy and his influence has also been stamped on Meera. The novel is sprinkled with happy and sad moments finally leading to a happy ending.

Another issue raised by the author is feudalism, which was widespread in society at the time. The poor were always oppressed by feuds, which made the wealthy powerful. People who took out loans were never able to repay them, and as a result, they were forced to give up their estates and, in many cases, their whole possessions. It was a never-ending cycle. The peasants' situation was so bad that they had to borrow money even for the most basic necessities. For this activity, the Seth of Sonamitti had his own set of laws. His interest rate was so high that most people were never able to pay off their debts. Meera gave her

grandpa the following information about him:

He entered forty-a-interest year's levied in advance as soon as the loan was provided in his book when he handed out twenty rupees. The debtor had no choice except to moan or howl. Go somewhere else if you don't like my terms. Go to the city's largest money lender. Alternatively, visit the Imperial Bank of India. That was the Seth's way of speaking. So, the debtor took a deep breath and scribbled his thumbprint on the bond before continuing on his way. When he returned to the cloth shop after harvest, the money he paid reduced the amount, but the balance more than doubled with the addition of the new year's advanced interest. Year after year, it continued on like this (67-68).

This was the scenario in every other hamlet in India, and it was even worse in some places. This scenario used to push individuals to leave their ancestral villages in pursuit of work in the city.

Money's unequal distribution has caused a lot of strife in society. The poor must work long and hard hours to provide for their families. Everyone in these households is fighting for survival. Children are unable to enjoy their childhoods, while the elderly are unable to unwind. To be able to exist in a world of few fortunate individuals, they must all be constantly worried and on their toes. Meera's Grandma's talk with Roghuvir, Meera's childhood buddy, and Roghuvir's reaction reflect Meera's depressed mental state. "Why don't I ever hear you laugh?" says the narrator. You have the owliness of an elderly man! In response, he stated, "I feel as old as Old Father" (68). This economic disparity paints a picture of a society that is unjust. There are a few people who have enough money to purchase all of life's luxuries, and many more who must sell or mortgage their assets to meet their fundamental needs. There is enough earth for everyone if it is shared equitably. So little belongs to so few people. Everywhere, the same story is told. Half of the community is owned by one guy, while the rest is divided into 500 morsels by the tillers." (69).

The unequal allocation of money generates an ever-widening chasm between society's two classes. The rich do not wish to reach out to the poor, and the poor do not have access to the rich. The impoverished have no means of changing their circumstances, while the wealthy have no desire to do so. Their lives become two ends of a never-ending bridge. A river has flowed

between the rich and the poor, in the words of Sohagi.

There is no boat to transport the destitute to the opposite side of the river. The wealthy can cross the brook at their leisure. They walk carefully over the muck, hailing the needy and speaking pleasant things from afar, delighted with themselves for being so generous. It's a game for the wealthy only. The river, however, continues to flow, and the wealthy return to their bank to wash the dirt off their shoes. And the water continues to flow (256).

The impoverished who were severely in debt could clearly see their impending destiny. They knew there would come a day when they, like so many others, would have to leave their homes and journey for a living. The touchstone became their road to safety in this situation. They all began to regard it as their only option. They were hoping for a miracle to occur. Through this, the author attempted to demonstrate a common human inclination. We anticipate a miracle to save us while we are helpless. Our activities toward our work and obligations are hampered by this mentality. Even Seth of Sonamitti was aware of how his desire for gold had diverted his attention away from his labor and business.

People become superstitious as a result of these mistaken expectations. They begin to place greater faith in the unseen and turn away from reality. The author also discusses a girl who makes wishes by plucking a flower from her hair. The persona of the minstrel has been portrayed by Bhabani Bhattacharya as a mix of old and new concepts. He is dedicated to preserving the great heritage of his country and working tirelessly for the development of all people. "The miracle isn't going to happen to us. It is up to us to build it with love and sweat" (303). His character is a follower of Gandhi's beliefs and believes in putting them into practice in everyday life.

Bhabani Bhattacharya provides an in-depth analysis of women's roles in society. He's demonstrated how dowry becomes a defining component in their relationship. Even in current times, some households openly offer and receive dowry. In some Indian states, a predetermined price is set based on a boy's profession, which the girl's parents are expected to pay. And if they can't afford the set price, they're supposed to make a concession on the potential match. Because their parents are unable to pay the dowry, some girls remain unmarried for the rest of their lives. Bhabani Bhattacharya also mentions a

poor guy who is unable to afford the dowry required to marry his daughter. "Spectacle for foggy eyes on the verge of blindness... a dowry for a girl who was well past marriage age; she lacked beauty, but a mate could be found for eighty rupees..." (181).

Women have long been regarded as second-class citizens to men. She grew up in the shadow of her brother, and after marriage, her husband's shadow. She is not permitted to make her own choices. Women are taught from an early age that their husbands are gods and that their wishes are to be obeyed. Lakshmi, who had always been kind to everyone, was hesitant to join the parade against her husband. "What can a lady do?" says the narrator. What strength does she have against the king of her household" (5)? Males appear to have a natural right to rule over their lives. Women in Indian society are never free to make their own judgments, despite the fact that we gained independence in 1947. Discrimination based on gender is well-documented. The regulations for men and women are different. A widow is not afforded the same latitude as a male when it comes to remarrying. They are deemed unlucky and, as a result, are not permitted to remarry. Likewise, the belief that a woman is born to serve does not change. She must be suppressed by her spouse after marriage. She is expected to listen to everyone in her new home and obey their directions, even if some of them are incomprehensible to her. "Four steps ahead, freedom. Women, this is not for you. We thrive on squeezing our masters' legs" (43). The idea of equating women with cattle is an old one. Cattle are expected to toil at home and listen to their masters as they toil in the fields. "Loosen the reins of constraint, and the women will go out of hand," the writer tries to portray through Seth's remarks. These are trying times. We can't be too cautious" (42). It is highly impracticable to expect a woman to not have her own cognitive process.

Bhattacharya's novels are largely about women's adjustments and sacrifices. It is uncharacteristic of Bhabani Bhattacharya to speak of a lady taking aggressive measures. The women of the village decide to stage a nude march if their demand is not met in the novel. Goddess Named Gold, unlike his earlier novels, discusses the existence and importance of women. The novelist has created strong female characters who are both wise and intelligent. The writer demonstrates women's power via Meera. The struggle of women against Seth and their triumph exemplifies women's power. Women have been active participants in social movements since the days of the liberation struggle, and even before that.

Goddess Named Gold also makes a few feminism-related references. "We outwitted you..." Meera says to Seth, sounding a little abrasive. We had no choice but to do it. The song was for equal rights for men and women. That music was something we had to fight for (148). Another time, Lakshmi questioned her husband, saying, "Plead?" We've done it for a long time. "We demand it" (29). Bhabani Bhattacharya appears to have been influenced by the feminist movement, which was quite popular at the time. The writer represents female waking for their rights through these female characters. He also discusses the shallowness of the wealthy. People who make money by deception are constantly terrified of the consequences, so they try to bribe God as a penance. They would spend money on the idol but not on actual life, which is nothing more than the manifestation of the Supreme Lord. The Seth of Sonamitti, who is unconcerned about anybody else's well-being and is unconcerned about anyone's life, speaks about charity in his own unique style.

Later, he would have to donate in charity in order to gain merit for the afterlife, but he would do so with great care. Giving to a Brahmin was considered more humane than giving to any other individual. Giving to a priest was much better. To offer to a Deva or Devi is the best... He would create a new temple near the end of his life, a magnificent edifice with a polished top that shone in the sun, a pure marble figure in the sanctum, and black diamonds for its eyes (133).

While the true God (Man) waits outside with an empty stomach for a sympathetic glance from the wealthy, their sacrifices are given to the Idol.

## 5. CONCLUSION

However, despite the fact that Bhattacharya believes in adjustment and emphasizes it through his characters, especially female characters, his novel *A Goddess Named Gold* features strong female characters who advocate equal rights and reflect the need for change in patriarchal society. We see the women's struggle for equality only in this novel.

Similarly, in real life, people priorities fulfilling their worldly instincts while being dissatisfied with their soul. Along with his socioeconomic treatment, the writer appears to have a deep comprehension of human behaviour. Goddess of Gold is a depiction of a community striving for a better future. The horrors that are depicted via human personalities are the true

roadblocks to progress. The novel implies that mental liberty is more essential than physical liberty. It is possible to keep a positive spirit alive by being free of selfishness and having sympathy for others. We may have gained independence, but it can only be maintained if our minds are free of inhibitions, anxieties, and evils. The treatment of Goddess Named Gold differs significantly from that of other Bhattacharya novels. While exploring social and economic issues in contemporary India, the novel maintains a pleasant tone. Seth's character, Samsundar, has a sense of comedy that keeps the reader entertained. The novel guarantees a happy ending, with something good in store for every one of the characters. The delicate message about life and how it can be lived meaningfully by knowing the actual meaning of freedom and exercising one's right intelligently is also received by the readers.

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