

# Social Issues in the Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya

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**Abstract** - *The social issues in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya is an attempt to put forward the philosophy of life and major social issues addressed in the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya. In fact, the novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya we find the themes like freedom, hunger, casteism, exploitation, poverty, humanism, and individualities in conflict, the now and the old generation in conflict as well as the contemporary socio-economic conditions. Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels tried to expand the horizon of Indian novels by making a realistic representation of social problems that have been the subject of serious discourse in the colonial and post-colonial India.*

**Keywords** - *hunger, poverty, liberty, freedom etc.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The various narrative techniques, realism is an approach that attempts to define life truthfully without idealization. Literary realism is a method of picturing life as it really is, untouched by myth, spiritualism, idealism and freedom. According to Fischer, the term realism in literary studies refers to a style that attempts to describe as it is in the natural form. The historical event in India, which formed the background of Bhattacharya's writings and influenced them powerfully, can be divided in two phases: the first phase stretched from World War II to Independence and the second from Independence to the late seventies. The social, political and economic conditions of both these historical phases are reflected in his writings.

India faced man problems of serious magnitude in the wake of its emergence as an independent country. The freedom was born in the hour of communal disturbances of unprecedented ferocity and unbelievable bestiality. Millions of people had to flee leaving their homes and property, nearly half a million were killed, and over a lac woman, young and old, were abducted, raped and mutilated. It was the shame and agony of the partition, the glory as well as the defeat of the hour of freedom. Added to this was the shocking assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the unprovoked attack on Kashmir by Pakistan. The attack by Pakistan came when the Indian Government was busy in solving the Herculean problems of the rehabilitation of millions of refugees and the integration of the scattered and unfriendly princely states in the Indian Union. Indian leaders faced these problems with sagacity and courage, and went ahead with their

plans to establish political and economic stability in the country, and usher in a new era of hopes and aspirations. On January 26, 1950, India became a republic and opted for secular democracy with socialism as its goal. Since then it had been making all out efforts to speed up the industrialization in the country to lead it to its onward march on the road of progress. Though the aggressions on its borders by Pakistan and China have attempted to destabilize and damage its political and economic set-up, India has remained undaunted in its efforts to advance itself to the front rank of the development countries.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, who has witnessed these significant turning points in the life of his country with keenness, has tried to delineate them in his novels and short stories artistically. Reconciling his art with the native social and cultural commitments, Bhattacharya weaves the web of his fiction round the contemporary historical events and social conditions. As he is alive to the social, economic and political changes that India has been undergoing from time to time, he is also interested in analyzing the historical forces working behind these changes.

## Social Reality:Based on real experience

Bhattacharya depicts life in Indian society exactly as he has viewed it with a discerning eye. His themes are close to social reality and based on real experience. He is concerned with large public issues and social problems. He generally writes about the poverty, hunger, pestilence, traditionalism and the resulting controversy of Gandhian panacea versus rapid industrialization. In this way, he touches almost all the aspects of the present-day India while

weaving a pattern for the stories of his novels. The first five novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), and *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) which won Sahitya Akademi award, are set against the background of the changes in the political, economic and social life in India. *So Many Hungers* depicts the Bengal Famine of 1943. *Music for Mohini* attempts a synthesis of eastern and western cultures. The novel *He Who Rides a Tiger* not only champions the cause of the poor and down-trodden but also records the cruelty of the rich at the time of war. *A Goddess Named Gold* presents the problems that India faced about the dawn of independence. *Shadow from Ladakh* takes a more kaleidoscopic view of Indian society right from the independence to the Chinese aggression. In these novels, Bhattacharya describes the horrors of war and famine, pestilence, clash of traditions, ignorance, misguided faith in religion, superstitions, casteism, and economic and food crisis. The sixth and the last of Bhattacharya's novels, *A Dream of Hawaii* (1978), deals with the East-West encounters by juxtaposing Indian spiritualism with Western materialism and uses both India and the island of Hawaii for its setting.

### Hunger, Faminism and World War 2nd

Bhattacharya's first novel *So Many Hungers!* and the third novel *He Who Rides a Tiger* deal with the theme of hunger, born of the World War II and the famine of 1943 which was aggravated by the monster of imperialism. Both novels have Bengal for their fictional locate. In *So Many Hungers* the general picture of starvation is particularized by showing the plight of Kajoli Onu, her mother and their search for food. In *He Who Rides a Tiger* the treatment of hunger is made more effective by showing trials of Kalo and his daughter in the face of hunger. The novel deals with the theme of manufactured hunger that caused mass exodus of destitutes, the plague stricken people bereft of any possession from Jharna and other villages to the city of gold - Calcutta in search of food. Hunger is of two kinds: the hunger of the rich, black-marketers, the oppressors for sexual pleasure and the hunger of the poor to meet the bare needs of life. However, it is not the horror of hunger that keeps our interest alive in the novel but Kalo's sustained struggle to salvage the dignity of the masses, to conquer the conquerors and finally to conquer his own self.

### Incertitude, Alienation and Communication

Bhattacharya's other novel *Music for Mohini* delineates the theme of incertitude, alienation and communication in married life. Here the loneliness of a homemaker is rendered on a more general plane. It is the alienation of a woman, a wife, a mother - an alienation conditioned by society as well as family. There are lacerated and tense moments in her life giving it an existential dimension. Here, Bhattacharya dramatizes the conflict between two temperaments and two diametrically opposed attitudes. One is reminded of Maya and Gautama, the ill assorted couple of Anita

Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*. The protagonist of *Music for Mohini*, like Desai's Maya in *Cry the Peacock*, is a sensitive, young, newly married girl, who is isolated from her husband and family because of her inability, rather, her reluctance to accept the traditions of her husband's family and their societal norms and values. Unable to accommodate and adjust herself with her in-laws, she withdraws from this milieu into her own sequestered and co-coned shell. Mohini symbolizes the strife and struggle of a sensitive individual in an indifferent social milieu.

### CONCLUSION

"Conclusion" sums up the Indo-Anglian fiction and the detailed analysis of the prominent socio-political novels. The position and achievement of Bhabani Bhattacharya in the domain of Indian fiction. Strongly influenced by the Tagorean and the Gandhian ideals and inspired by the vision of a just social order, Bhattacharya wrote novels for social purpose and political value. Indeed, she portrayed full-blooded men and women, the peasant and the down-trodden as victims of social forces, but possessing the strength of re-making their motherland into a new India.

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