



## REFLECTION OF GANDHI'S IDEOLOGY IN THE FICTION OF BHABANI BHATTACHARYA

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### **Abstract:**

Gandhiji is an immortal personality who not only served India but also has given most valuable teaching to the entire world through his words of wisdom and great thoughts. Gandhian ideology includes Truth, Non-violence, Satyagraha, Simplicity, Love, Brotherhood, etc. Indian English novels written before and after independence were greatly influenced by Gandhism. He struggled for the sake of Indian freedom and development. He became an immense source of writing and influenced novelists. Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the most celebrated Indo Anglian writers, who have caught the fancy of quite a large reading public and academics both at home and abroad. He is widely acclaimed for having a conscious and sensitive approach of the contemporary period. He belongs to the significant historical phase of the National Movement. Bhattacharya was greatly influenced with the towering personality of Mahatma Gandhi. It is truly asserted that all the novels of Bhattacharya are deeply rooted in Gandhian Ideology. The father of nation left his deep imprint on the mind and soul of Bhattacharya. The present article is an attempt to analyze the reflection of Gandhi's ideology in the fictions of Bhabani Bhattacharya.

**Key Words:** Non-Violence, Satyagraha, Brotherhood, Truth and Ideology.

### **Introduction:**

Gandhiji had a multi-faceted personality. He has been the only Indian after the Buddha to attain worldwide fame. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he had performed many miracles during his lifetime and his message was a source of inspiration and strength to the people for all times. Gandhiji was a psychologist in one sense and an idealist on the other as he could feel the pulse of India and its people on whom he could exert a tremendous influence and preach his Gandhian ideology. It was Gandhi who had waged a war against the forces behind these evils and had given new visions to modernize India, instructing and campaigning against old traditions and customs, which is hinted at in the novels of the Indian writers.

Indian writers have been attracted their attention towards the major themes including East-West conflict, Caste, Pestilence, Reconciliation, Hunger, Poverty and Gandhian thoughts. These themes serve them as the means for exposing the problems of the Indians and thereby suggest suitable solutions for solving them. Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of such Indian novelists who met Gandhiji and got intensively affected by his Ideology.

### **Reflection of Gandhi's Ideology in the fictions of Bhabani Bhattacharya:**

Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the Indo-Anglian novelists and short story writers of the period witnessing Indian freedom movement and impact of Gandhiji on it. His first novel *So Many Hungers* (1947) reflects an aspect of the freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhi. It deals with the Gandhian ideal of rural reconstruction as a step towards winning Swaraj. The main theme reflects the national movement for political freedom under leadership of Gandhi.

There are also themes of hunger for food and rural reconstruction of India after the ideal of Gandhi. Devesh is introduced here as a character with the ideals of Gandhi and the novelist seems to have done it with a purpose. He wants to show how every village or town during that period had one Gandhi of its own to lead the people by staying in their midst. The pictures of life and manners in the novel expound the main theme more markedly. The Quit India movement of 1942, The Bengal Famine of 1943 is described in the novel. But Hunger for freedom becomes the main theme in the novel. Mainly the story moves round the two incidents of National Movement and impact of Bengal famine in the history.

Bhattacharya presents the unshivered determination, hard work, active participation and dedication of people in the National Movement. Devesh Basu in *So Many Hungers* is shown as a great patriot and freedom fighter. He is a man of simplicity full of Gandhian principles. The people of Baruni love him and honour him by calling him Devata (God). Devata becomes philosopher, and guide to the people. He educates them, and trains them as freedom fighters. Devesh Basu is completely different from his son, Samarendra Basu who is a famous speculator in the city. Samarendra is greedy, selfish, and money minded. There is not even a tinge of patriotism in him. When World War-II starts, he cleverly makes use of the opportunity to multiply his wealth by speculation in shares. He has not been influenced in any way by his father Devesh. He never cares for nation's good. Money is everything for him. So Devesh detaches himself from his son and lives a simple life in the midst of village people.

Devesh adopts a peasant's family in Baruni. This family consists of a peasant, wife and three children, two boys named Kanu and Onu and a daughter, Kajoli, the heroine of the novel. The family is influenced very much by the preaching of Devesh. They never deviate from his path and principles. Devesh acts as master to the

peasant's family, he refers to Kajoli as his grand-daughter. He educates them, and preaches patriotism. He cultivates moral strength in the country people. He inspires and guides their lives. He shares their joys and supports them in their adversities. He makes them partners in the national movement and suggests to them to be non-violent. He encourages nationalism in his people by saying:

"Friends and comrades do not betray the flag. Do not betray yourselves. The supreme test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless, Bandematram!" (Bhattacharya 269)

These kinds of preaching touch their hearts deeply and strengthen them morally. Kajoli always remembers him even during the Bengal famine. The shoutings of a newspaper boy remind her Devesh who is going to start hunger strike in Dehra Dun jailhouse. She recollects Devesh, a man of Great Spirit who always teaches ethics to be followed in life. She thinks it is not appropriate to her join in the nefarious trade of prostitution. Then she readily changes her opinion to join in the brother and makes up her mind to become a sales girl of the newspaper, Hindustan. We can understand easily the cause behind her escape from spiritual fall.

The stirring moral lessons of Devesh impact on minds of the village people. Devesh is a Gandhian Character; he inspires the people of Baruni by his speeches and actions. Inspired by his speeches people join voluntarily in national movement. The peasant (whose name is not mentioned) and his son Kanu join in the national movement and go to prison, is just an example to tell the range of influence of Devesh on people of Baruni. It also reveals the novelist's desire to show how every village had one Gandhi of its own to lead people by staying in their midst.

Rahoul is grandson of Devesh and attracted to the noble principles of his grandfather and joins in the national movement. He is a staunch nationalist and he cannot forget the hypocrisy of the foreign rulers. Rahoul always follows his grandfather; he visits the village Baruni along with Devesh and works for the village people. He develops deep attachment with the village people. He serves the hunger stricken people. He is more and more convinced that a foreign government is incapable of solving the problems of the country and that freedom is an imperative need. He is suspected by the police, he faces the problems by the Government but he never deviates from his path National Movement. He feels that it is his responsibility for him to fight for the sake of his people.

The theme of hunger for freedom occupies the first place among the other hungers for food, money, etc. in the novel. Bhattacharya has shown the importance of Spiritual strength that, if people are spiritually stronger they can defeat any kind of enemy. Devesh like Bhattacharya emphasizes on the importance of Indian tradition and culture, beliefs and superstitions. The novel reveals the truth that the national movement embraced all sections of the population. Kunal like young stars join in the army and fight for the British cause as the British government has promised freedom for Indians on a condition of Indians participation in the war. Kunal says, "Humanity crusading to save from destruction all that worth living for." (Bhattacharya 269) Kunal is inspired by his grandfather Devesh, as a true patriot, he joins in the army and sacrifices his life for the nation's sake. The story of the novel narrates the sufferings of a whole people of a particular time in particular situation created by the British Government. The novel has traced the influence of the principles of Gandhiji on the people of all sphere of life.

Bhattacharya's Shadow from Ladakh is set against the frictional background between the Chinese and India. The novel reflects the Gandhian thought. The novelist reveals the India's condition which needs new strategies for its development according to the changing conditions in the contemporary situations. Industrialization is inevitable in the competitive context along with the neighbor countries. The Industrial Revolution, ought not to transform Indian life into a mechanical life in the west. Bhattacharya hopes the amalgamation of ideological views with Western thought of industrialization.

The two opposite ideologies, the novelist expects as complementary parts, they can play in the building up of the nation. This theme became the central part of the novel. Gandhism is represented by the simple rural community of Gandhigram, established by the veteran Gandhian, Satyajit Sen, while industrialization is represented by a young engineer, Bhaskar who is in charge Steel town, which in the process of its growth to swallow up Gandhigram. The confrontation between Gandhigram and industrialism takes on a political colouring owing to Chinese invasion. The exigencies of war production make the steel town engineers anxious to take over the adjoin Gandhigram. Gandhigram presents a model of rural India as envisaged by Gandhi. Satyajit has been selected by the founder to guide the destinies of this ideal village and to regulate its life so that it may become an example and a source of inspiration to the rest of the country.

The growth of Satyajit till almost the end of the novel is a growth in the direction of asceticism and Gandhian idealism. For all appearances Satyajit is a disciplined Gandhian applying the principles of Gandhian economics and ethics in the regulation of life of Gandhigram and the conduct of his own life. A testing time comes with the launching of Chinese aggression against India. One point of view in the country is that strength can be met only with strength, but Satyajit represents the opposite point of view, namely that physical force may be conquered by spiritual force. He, therefore, uses a weapon from the armory of the opponent himself, the weapon of non-violence. Gandhigram to be won over gradually to the new way symbolized Steel town.

The crisis in the novel comes with Satyajit's commencement of a fast to death to protest against the Government's decision to let Steeltown swallow the village. Bhaskar has, in the meantime, unconsciously undergone a profound change. Bhaskar has had one important moving emotional experience. The four daughters of a Chinese prisoner are temporarily in his care. His kindness inspires in them the deepest gratitude and affection. Their warm adoration touches his heart and he is convinced more than ever that love can conquer hatred. These developments indicate that the man of steel has after all a human heart and there is something of Gandhi in his nature also. The crisis of the novel is resolved by Bhaskar himself leading a procession of workmen from Steeltown who march to Gandhigram to support the cause of Satyajit. This means that Steeltown has given up its plan to expand at the expense of Gandhigram. The two are to co-exist. The co-existence, however, is not merely a matter of live- and -let-live; it is a result of compromise and readjustment of values on either side.

The novel makes numerous references to Gandhiji's teachings and his work. Satyajit is a character who tries to mould him and others according to the principles lay down by Gandhi. The seventh chapter gives a resume of Gandhi's work, first in South Africa and later in India. The perfection of the weapon of non-violence, the victory General Smuts, the struggle against the British Government in India, the demonstration of the potency of moral force at Naokhali, are all recapitulated. Gandhigram is a model village in which we find the principles of Gandhian economics and ethics worked out. The village is self-sufficient as all its needs besides food are satisfied by cottage-based industry.

In the sphere of education, the village follows the basic scheme of craft-centered teaching advocated by Gandhiji. Gandhigram seeks to build up a new set of values. Gandhi's championship of celibacy or continence is a doctrine that figures prominently in the novel. The major teaching of Gandhiji that figures in the novel is non-violence. Satyajit's plan of forming a Shanti Sena is born of his faith in this creed. Satyajit believed that the Santhi Sena could touch the hearts of the Chinese and draw them away from their aggressive designs. Absence of hatred for the opponent is one of the concomitants of Gandhiji's gospel of non-violence.

Bhaskar also with his modern ideas has something of Gandhi in him. He conceives the plan of converting Gandhigram through understanding and love by bringing the people of the village and Steeltown together in Meadow house. Gandhian precept is to be seen in his reaction to the presence of the helpless Chinese children in his house. They are no longer citizens of a hostile, alien country but God's children, to be treated with generosity and love. The experience of love is one of the turning points in the life of Bhaskar. Bhattacharya's patriotism and his reverence towards Gandhian and the other National leaders, their reverence towards principles to restore peace in the international relations are depicted in this novel.

#### **Conclusion:**

Dr Bhabani Bhattacharya, winner of the Sahitya Academy award, is a gifted writer and holds the same position with some of the best Indian novelists writing in English today. He was greatly influenced by the Gandhian Ideology. As of *So Many Hungers*, Gandhi's principle is spread through Devata, a great follower of Gandhi. He sacrifices his family and lives a life along with the peasants in a village named Baruni, spreading Gandhi's teaching among the peasants in order to fight for political independence. Bhattacharya highlights the emerging conflict between Gandhian set of values and modern industrialization in his novel *Shadow From Ladakh*. Bhattacharya creates mini Gandhi's in all his novels.

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