

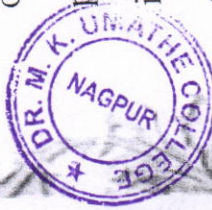



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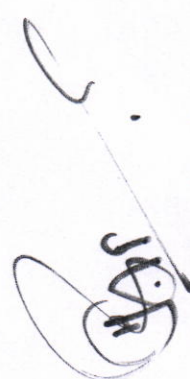
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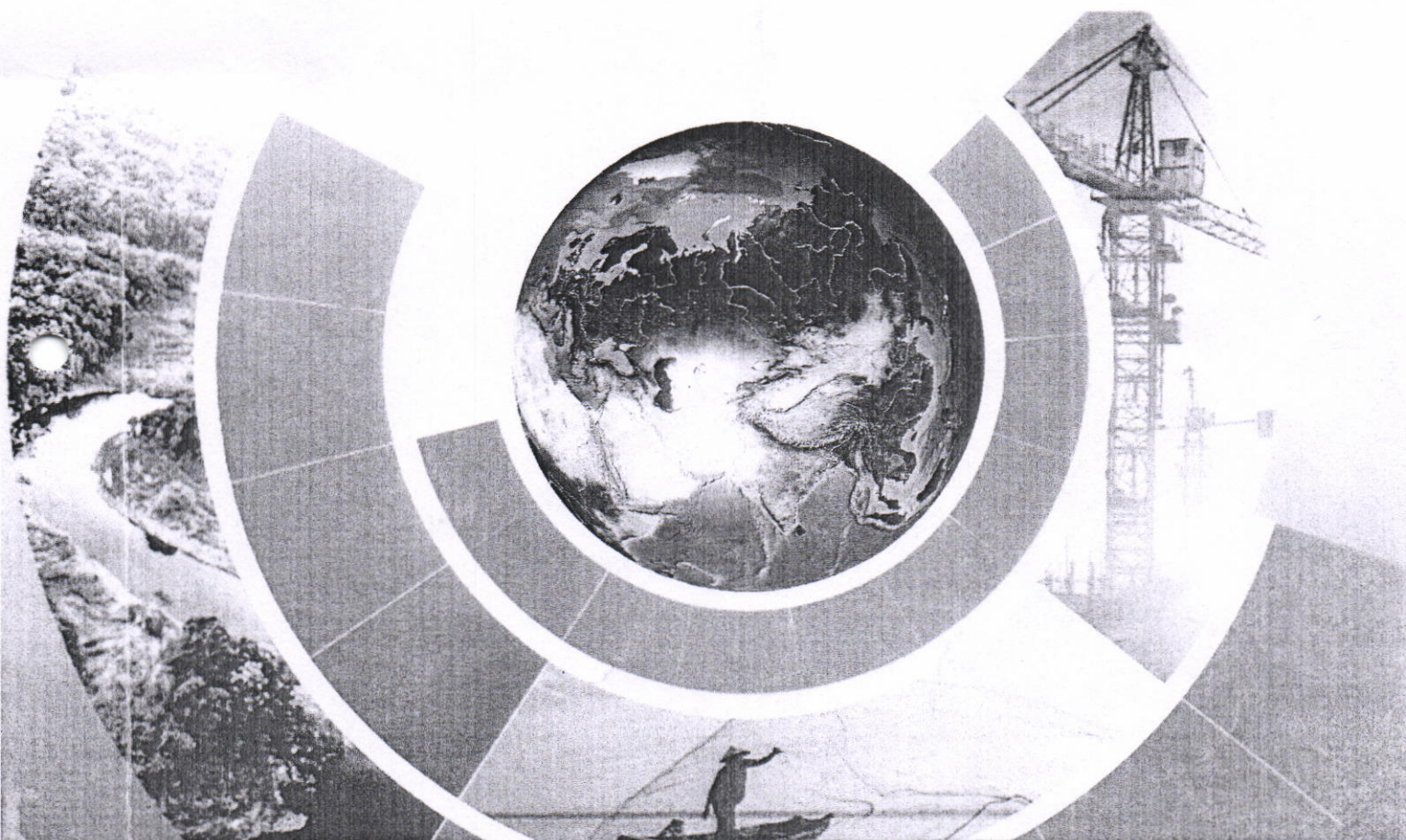
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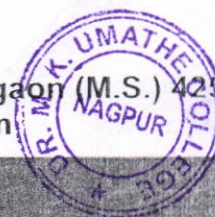
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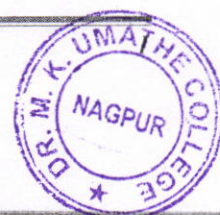
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## An Overview of the Study of the Theme of Reconciliation Reflected in the Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya

Dr. Vaishali Meshram, Assistant Professor

Dr. M. K. Umathe College, Nagpur

### Abstract:

Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya has closely witnessed Indian cultural life as well as an alien culture in India and abroad. He has spent most of his life in abroad and hence has an experience of both the lives. We, therefore, can say Bhabani Bhattacharya is the heir to the cultural riches of two worlds – the East and the West. Having an eclectic temper, he has absorbed the influences from diverse sources, and is influenced by the democracy as preached by British statesmen as well but unfortunately British rulers didn't follow those noble ideas in India. He has witnessed the condition of India during Bengal famine and National Movement. Being a profound scholar of an Indian history, he has concentrated upon the great Indian tradition of integration of diverse and conflicting elements, viewpoints and cultures. His creative work artistically embodies in miniature of the essential Indian ideal of unity in diversity resulting from the compromise between the various aspects of life. This research paper aims at studying and analyzing the theme of reconciliation i.e. the synthesis of the East and the West reflected in the novels of Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya.

**Keywords:** Reconciliation, Synthesis, Fusion, Tradition, Modernity, Compromise

### Introduction:

Having a positive attitude towards life, Bhattacharya upholds the policy of compromise between the two opposite ways of life— orthodoxy and modernity, materialism and idealism and spiritualism and industrialism. A Life of joy and hope is possible through the ideal of synthesis in life. Bhattacharya makes a very clear statement regarding this through one of his characters—“integration of the simple and the sophisticated, the ancient and the modern, city and village, East and West.” (Shadow from Ladakh: 215) Highlighting the significant characteristics of the fusion of the traditional and the modern values of Bhattacharya, Dr. K.R. Chandrasekharan aptly remarks, “With his progressive ideas and his vision of a glorious future he has also great admiration for the spiritual and cultural heritage of the country. Like the great men whom he admired particularly Tagore and Gandhi, he is also a builder of bridge between the present and the past.” (Chandrasekharan: 8)

Bhattacharya conveys the idea of the integration of approaches and the blending of values through his novels. He does not elaborate the theme of synthesis directly in his first novel *So Many Hungers*, but in other novels he earnestly tries to blend the traditional and the modern values of life and art. Bhattacharya, in his first novel *So Many Hungers* presents a blending of tradition and modernity subtly but impressively. He synthesizes the old and the new values through different sets of characters and episodes. He projects his belief that life is all compromise, and there can be unity in diversity through the stories of the Basu family in Calcutta and Kajoli's family in Baruni. The Basu family of Calcutta has six members in all comprising of four males and two female members. All except one live together under one roof despite more or less opposition to one another with the exception of Rahoul and Devata, yet they live peacefully and happily together. The eldest member of this family, Devesh Basu who is above seventy, is an earnest Gandhite, an idealist and freedom fighter and lives in a village. Devata's son, Samarendra Basu, just opposite to his father, is a materialist and a realist, middle-aged man with greed for money and fame and has a motto 'the end justifies means.' His eldest son, Rahoul is a scientist, an idealist and has a deep faith in the moral values of human life. Besides male members, female members of Basu family namely Rahoul's mother and his wife Monju, also have different temperaments and outlooks on life. His mother is a practical minded lady who





Monju lacks practical wisdom. We get a clear impression after analyzing men and women characters of Basu family that they have altogether varying temperaments, attitudes and ways and modes of life and yet there is no clash between them.

Kajoli is not highly educated or sophisticated but there exists a great affinity between her and the old man Devata. Similarly Kishore's happy union with Kajoli and their mutual adjustment symbolizes Bhattacharya's ideas of blending of the traditional and the modern values. Bhattacharya shows the encounter of the old values and the new through the episode in which a destitute girl bares herself not only to save herself but also to save a number of other destitute from starvation. She is common yet uncommon, traditional and yet modern, ideal and yet real girl of modern India. In the beginning the girl appears to be unconventional and different when we find her surrendering to the animal passions of the alien soldiers but becomes one of the extraordinary ones when she spends all her money to feed the starving destitute. She exalts herself on human level while demeaning her on physical level and rises to the position of mother.

Bhattacharya in *Music for Mohini* gives a detailed study of the old and the new values of life in Indian society. Here he puts forward the views that reconciliation between contrary ideas and values i.e. modern and traditional can lead to a happy and harmonious life. There are two sets of characters: first who uphold the old, established values of the past and secondly, those who plead for change and deviation from the dead past in favour of the new ideologies that suit the modern age. Bhattacharya juxtaposes different antagonistic characters to bring out their ideological conflict and finally leads them towards reconciliation. Mohini's father synthesizes the old and the modern values in his character. However, he yields to Old Mother's outdated notions because of his traditional love for his mother and belief in compromise. Old Mother, on the other hand, is also flexible, does not adhere rigidly to her outdated conservative ideas and compromises with modernity-the spirit of the new times. In Bhattacharya's own words, "Every Sunday evening the family went to the cinema, often an Indian film, though Old Mother, with all her orthodox heart, enjoyed English pictures as well-the "shadow-show" was to her mind a wonder of wonders, the supreme achievement of the Western people." (Music for Mohini: p. 30) In this way Bhattacharya synthesizes the old values with the new ones in the characters of the Professor and the Old Mother. Mohini has to adjust with her mother-in-law's absolute ideas and superstitious beliefs after her marriage with Jaydev. In the beginning she finds it unbearable since she has been brought up in a different environment. She struggles hard to accommodate herself comfortably at Behula. Eventually Mohini and her mother-in-law who represent the modern and the traditional values respectively, begin to understand each other. Her mother-in-law also starts to change her ideas so as to put up with new age. It is not that Bhattacharya always makes his younger characters submit before the aged ones to present the mutual adjustment. He also makes his old characters realize in their turn the genuine demands of the new age. The Mother realizes the need of compromise in order to end all the discords in life. This realization brings the mother nearer to Jayadev and Mohini. Thus the discord between the mother and the son, the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law and the husband and the wife ends. As a scholar he is sensitive to modern liberal and progressive ideas, while as the master of the Big House he symbolizes the old traditions in his personality. Though rooted in the past, he does not lose sight of his vision of the new dawn. The synthesis of the old and the new values is also evident in the story of Harindra's family. His father, the old Kaviraj, has been practicing the ancient Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine for over forty years and considers it a very effective for all sorts of diseases whereas Harindra, a full-fledged surgeon, educated and trained in a Western-style Medical College argues upholds that modern medicines are more effective in curing diseases. The miracle happens and the mother's life is saved and the old man lives happily with his wife and son, quite reconciled to the modern values and systems.

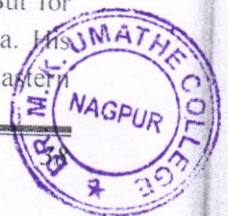




*He Who Rides a Tiger* also presents the blending of the traditional and the modern values. Bhattacharya illustrates that neither a rigid adherence to the established social code nor an abrupt break from it is beneficial to man. Kalo has a firm faith in the traditional values of life. He has a simple set of values such as honesty, hard-work and faith in law and justice. The oppressive awareness of his low birth, poverty, hunger, three month's imprisonment for a small offence, his work as a brothel-house agent, and above all Lekha's degradation and humiliation in the harlot-house are the factors which turn Kalo into a social rebel. He metamorphoses himself and casts away the old values and rebels against the entire social system. He renounces his caste and becomes a twice-born by wearing the sacred Brahminic thread across his chest, revolts against 'tradition' free from his spiritual bondage and emerges as a modern man with the release from the oppressive bondage of class and caste and starts believing in the modern man's faith in equality between man and man. There is another instance of the blending between the traditional and the modern elements in the union of Chandra Lekha with B-10.

Bhattacharya's *A Goddess Named Gold* deals with the theme of the confrontation of the old and the values acquire a new dimension in the novel. Atmaram combines spiritual faith and modern outlook in life in his character He sings his own folk songs and thus keeps the ancient folklore alive to them. He is also aware of the existing social conditions and the exploitation of the common people by the rich. He knows the importance of the terms like 'vote' and 'election' and hence warns Meera against the Seth. The minstrel is a Gandhian idealist who wants better life for the people of our country. He is practical-minded man and is fully aware of the danger to his people from the Seth's unscrupulous ways. He gives Meera 'an amulet' to save not only his own family, but the entire village from the Seth's deadly clutches. He takes the middle course between two ways of life and represents a happy synthesis of the old and the new elements in his character. Meera also shows the blend of old values and modern outlook in her character. Her marriage with Sohanlal symbolizes the union of the old and the new values.

The synthesis of the Indian spiritual values and the Western modernism is the central theme of Bhattacharya's celebrated novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*. Satyajit believes in a healthy synthesis of the old traditions and the new elements in life. He duly recognizes the vital role of Steeltown in the national prosperity. He thinks that Gandhigram will take the lead when Steeltown finishes its race. He asserts, "Steeltown belongs to the present, Gandhigram to the future. Steeltown must do its work. But when that work is done, when the material benefits of production have been fully attained, Steeltown, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek new moorings. Then it will be Gandhigram's turn to come forward." (*Shadow from Ladakh*: 156) Satyajit has definite views about the integration of values. He meets Dalai Lama at Darjeeling and makes it clear to him as well. Suruchi also pleads for a synthesis of traditional and modern values of life. She believes in the Tagorean Philosophy of Integration. She does not appreciate Gandhigram's rigid adherence to the outdated morals and traditions. According to her, there must be a synthesis of the old and the new in the life of the village. The married life of Satyajit and Suruchi is a synthesis of the old and new values. Bhattacharya blends the asceticism with worldliness in their marriage. Satyajit is a spiritualist. Worldly pleasures are always little to him and strives hard for higher spiritual attainments. Bhattacharya thus happily blends tradition with modernity in the union of Satyajit and Suruchi. Bhashkar's character itself is a curious mixture of the old and the new values. He has lived long in the West, but does not forget his Indian heritage. He has a high respect for the basic human values nevertheless; he does not see any harm in drinking wine, dating, merry-making. He appreciates undoubtedly a highly advanced scientific and technical knowledge of Western civilization and wants to introduce it in India for material progress. But for human values he draws more to the East than to the West. Thus he prefers Sumita to Rupa. His marriage with Sumita also shows a blending of the antagonistic values—the Western with the Eastern.





elements. The friendship between Satyajit and Bireswar signifies the synthesis of the idealistic and the realistic values of life. Bhattacharya, himself asserts, "Life is all compromise. One yields a bit here and gets it back elsewhere." (Shadow from Ladakh; 115)

**Conclusion:**

In this way Dr. Bhattacharya blends the old and the new values in his male as well as female characters. It is not that he always makes his younger characters submit before the aged ones to present the mutual adjustment. He also makes his old characters realize in their turn the genuine demands of the new age. He illustrates that neither a rigid adherence to the established social code nor an abrupt break from it is beneficial to man. The novelist has successfully depicted an integrated family in almost all his novels. There is a queer amalgam of the old and the young, the idealist and the materialist, and the imperialist and the democrat.

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