



## NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND STYLE OF BHABANI BHATTACHARYA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines in detail about the narrative technique and style employed by Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novels. Bhattacharya's writing also effects a kind of separation from others writings. Because his technique and style was bilingual. **So Many Hungers, Music for Mohini** exposed the politics, poverty, hunger, love, and alienation which were the crux of his novels. The very action pictures diverse situations and events and incidents in the lives of the characters when they try to assert their identity and grow. The most significant thing about the style is his originality and his effort to forge his own language.*

**Key Words: Traditional, Tremendous, Quit India Movement, Psychological, Cinematographic Technique, Manipulation, Ecosystem.**

Dr. Bhabani is unquestionably a gifted writer who renks with some of the best Indian novelists writing in English. he has both fictional and non-fictional works to his credit but he is best known for his novels. which have received the highest critical acclaim in India and abroad. Having vast experience and background, it is no wonder that "Bhattacharya has risen like a meteor in the literary firmament" (Reddy 23). Bhattacharya's technique as a novelist is based on the traditional novel of a number of English, American, Scottish and Indian predecessors. Bhattacharya never fails to captivate the subtleties and surrounding nuances that light up the facts of life. He not only describes and explains but also dramatizes incidents and creates characters which are very vivid and realistic. Bhattacharya is a conscientious artist and he is most methodical in his work. His capacity for creative writing is surprisingly tremendous.

Bhattacharya has proved himself a consummate artist in his novels and his contribution in this respect to Indo-Anglian fiction is remarkable and cannot be denied. As a portrayer of the life of the Indians, he is unique. Bhattacharya has managed to pierce through the political and ethical attitudes of the people to the human depths beyond. He generally concentrates on a small upper-class; the qualities on which he emphasizes have a universal significance. Though a lover of tradition, he is not against every modernity, progress and development. As he is against the tyranny and superstitious restrictions of tradition, so is he against the negative qualities of the modern times like corruption of all types at the cost of human values.

The novels of Bhattacharya are happily free from two evils of the twentieth century novel that have alienated readers even among the intellectual elite. Those evils are the extreme subjectivism so prominent both in the well made novel and among the modernists and the emphasis laid on abnormal types. The reader had been baffled by an excess of the intellect. While the writers have been interested in what their characters think, the readers are eager to know what the characters do. His novels insist on what the characters do rather than on what they think. That is perhaps the secret of their success and popularity.

His plots are not structures suggesting something static but processes of change- unraveling the continuing interrelatedness of the exterior states of mind\_ which uncover a change in the nature of the character or in their situations, or in our understanding of them, or in all. The action of the various novels offers diverse situations and events and incidents to the characters when they try to assert their identity and grow. The life pattern of the characters of Bhattacharya is a quest for identity and fulfillment, and they all bravely encounter the various problems of life and death while resisting the temptations of evil which may be traditional, social, modern or moral. The action in some of his novels is complex as it does not begin at the actual beginning of the action but breaks into the middle, then flashes back to the earlier scenes, and then picks up and the continues to the end.



Bhattacharya seems to favor the circular pattern in narration. Speed and movement and action are the primary traits of Bhattacharya's narrative art, and his action which is centered round the hero and heroes and their life pattern solves the problem of unity in the novels of Bhattacharya.

In most of his novels Bhattacharya employs the cinematographic technique. Flash back, juxtaposition and montage are finely fused with conventional chronological sequence. The technique adopted in **Shadow from Ladakh**, **Dream in Hawaii** is retrospective narration. Emotional concentration is achieved by telescoping events. He is quite an adept in the use of the flashback technique and it is used effectively in the above novels. He adheres to his own theory of fiction that contemporary events and social realities are suitable for writing novels. So he deals with contemporary Indian problems in all his novels.

The frequent use of flashback does not result in the disjointedness of the narrative which is as usual unimpeded in its flow, but is able to achieve a considerable emotional concentration. Bhattacharya's exploitation of the flashback is so judicious and adroit that it does not affect the progress of the action in the episodic structure of his novels. Bhattacharya is most skilful in the manipulation of various narrative techniques. He is a superb story teller. He is so conscious of minute details that very often the most trivial incidents are described in an elaborate and detailed manner. While analyzing events and characters he rises above the personal level and is quite objective. Bhattacharya's art of characterization is superb. A character can be presented in various ways, by a psychological analysis of character, by dialogue, by action and reaction which is very closely connected with the main concern of the narrative. Bhattacharya's characters are not types but are individuals with strongly defined personalities.

When we examine **So Many Hungers**, one of the examples for his good characterization, each of the character stands as an individual and at the same time as universal. Samarendra, who is a very shrewd person, manages to be in the good looks of the Governor and other British officials. He tells the Chief Secretary to the Government a lie that Rahoul might discover a Death Ray which the allied powers could make use of in order to win the war. However, his dreams are shattered when Rahoul joins the quit India Movement and Kunal is reported missing. He is totally a lost man. It is at this moment that he learns that the British government has honored him with the award of the title, Companion of the Indian Empire, C.I.E. Devesh Basu, Samarendra's father, is a true Gandhian. He is a patriot and loves the common people. It is for their love that he settles down in a village called Baruni. He is a very popular figure amongst the villagers. They all adore him and call him Devata. Rahoul and Kunal are more at home with their grandfather than with their father. When the question of sending Rahoul to Cambridge was being discussed Devata emphatically said that the country came first and that Cambridge could wait. He tried to convince the people that their fight was not with the British people but with the British Government.

Devesh was fond of a particular family in Baruni which consisted of a farmer, his wife and their two sons Kanu and Onu and a daughter Kajoli. Their father was imprisoned for participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Devesh Basu considered Kajoli's mother as his daughter and Kajoli as his granddaughter. He always preached ahimsa to the villagers. He was arrested. As he was being taken to prison, he advised the people of Baruni to be strong, true and deathless. When the quit India Movement was at its zenith he undertook a fast at the Dehra Dun Prison. Kajoli symbolizes the cruel fate of the rural population of Bengal.

Within his limited sphere, he has achieved a vision of simple, normal human relations. There are many scenes in his novels which are very sensitive and touching. His heroes are larger than themselves as they are both individuals and types Bhattacharya does not lead his reader to an interest in character for its own sake like some extreme realities and psychological novelists, nor does he neglect to deal at sufficient length with the motivation of characters and working of their minds. For the characters of Bhattacharya the world is the biggest school and life is the best teacher.

In **Music for Mohini**, the forces of tradition are at their strongest. Mohini, a Modern city-bred, continually comes up against strong forces of tradition. Living in the city, she can lead a modern life, but has the old mother to



contend with, who is a symbol of tradition in the modern city. The old mother lives in the city but does not relent or give in to the forces of modernity. She has a strong moral code by which she lives her life, and directs the lives of her sons and grandchildren who are very modern in their outlook. The old mother is strict in bringing up the children, and allows them only that much freedom as tradition would allow. She inculcates in them respect for their elders. However, living in the city, she has to compromise with forces of modernity sometimes. She has to agree to send Mohini to convent school. She also strongly disapproves of Mohini singing over the radio and of having her songs recorded. When marriage negotiations are going on, Mohini is expected to remain quiet. She is not expected to raise her eyes and must speak only when spoken to. Then members of the family of a prospective bridegroom examine her critically and heap all kinds of insults on her. The indignity and insult that Mohini suffers is the fate of the girls brought up in a traditional society.

Jaydev wishes that he and his wife should be like Yagnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi. He wants Mohini to be with him in everything that he does. Jaydev has been a scholar all along and is disappointed to know that there is no scholarship in his wife. The grave mistake that Jayadev makes is to separate spiritual love from physical love. Real love can be achieved if the spiritual and the physical planes are one. The titles of the novels of Bhattacharya show how conscious he is of his art and technique. They are not causal or simple or plain. But they are highly suggestive and deeply symbolical and throw light on the direction and meaning of the novels. **So Many Hungers** suggests the ecosystem in the human society.

One person may become a prey to the hunger of the other. Hunger is described in many shapes. They are hungers of food, money, sex, freedom etc. In *Music for Mohini* music suggests the deep tunings in a young woman who wants to make her life melodious in her married life. In *He Who Rides a Tiger* the writer compares the society to the tiger in which everyone is part and parcel and no one can live against its traditions especially in Indian society which is full of orthodoxy. Kalo becomes the rider of the tiger. So he is in the dangerous situation to get down from the back of the tiger. However, finally he gets down from it back. Bhattacharya maintained well the theme of retaliation throughout the novel. In *Goddess Named Gold* the novelist symbolically explains man's greediness, and his concentration towards temporary materialistic world. He also points out how man degrades himself for temporary things.

In his next novel **Shadow from Ladakh** by using the word shadow, the novelist reveals fears of war which is due to suspicious activities of china against India. In his next novel **Dream in Hawaii** Bhattacharya reveals the illusions and assumptions of the modern man who proposes many things for the sake of material gains but fails to fulfill them. Hawaii stands for the west. Bhattacharya compares and contrasts values of the East and West, and spiritual and material worlds. Whatever he writes about, be it war, army, rural life, city life, bureaucrats, criminals, the English and Indians he writes it most authentically and authoritatively. His style is characterized by lucidity, precision and control, quickness, confidence, eagerness and masterly control over vocabulary.

It is as if his own life of action and drama has been transposed into the pattern of his novels. His main concern is with humanity, but not the average and democratic but unusual and exceptional in human experience and tradition and the disintegration of these values is disheartening to him. In keeping with his choice of subject and vision Bhattacharya chooses his own form and style. He has firm convictions about his aim as a novelist that is to tell a story well.

He specially admires the novelist Tagore because his novels are well constructed and dramatic and they are not afraid of incident. Bhattacharya's conservative attitude to technique is extended also to his use of language and style. While surmounting the initial difficulty with the language, Even though he is supposed to have remarked that the English language writer often experiences a counterfeit feeling as if he is going about with a false caste mark Bhattacharya is also able to cultivate a highly individualistic and sensitive style.



He might not write like the masters of English fiction as the language they used was suited only to their conditions. But an Indo-Anglian writer consciously or unconsciously tries to develop a separate and distinct dialect of English which does not go against the basic pattern of English but at the same time is capable of expressing the Indian spirit and sensibility. He doesn't consciously attempt to imitate either American English or British English. On the other hand, he uses it as he knows and as effectively as he can. He tries to overcome his limitations by bringing in sometimes Hindi and Bengali words and phrases. He chooses phrases and words from Indian languages only when he feels sure that they are more effective than the English equivalent he knows.

Bhattacharya is a conscious and effective artist and he is acutely conscious of the problem of his medium. Even a casual examination of the various speech styles he employs in his very first novel **So Many Hungers** bears testimony to the care and accuracy with which he uses the language. His mastery over the foreign medium is strikingly evident in all his works of fiction which he organizes mainly in terms of action and characters. The most significant thing about the style of Bhattacharya is his originality and his effort to forge his own language. His English is neither derivative nor imitative of English or American English. His style has all accuracy, ease and grace which a good style should possess and it does not suffer from clumsiness of expression. His style is free from an excess of solemnity'. His style and contents are inseparable. It is not artificial but natural, not affected but genuine, not pretentious but authentic, not dull but dynamic.

Bhattacharya has achieved a style which is special. He manages to avoid monotony by not having a long succession of too many short sentences and saves the reader from bogging down in a quagmire of extremely long sentences running to several lines. The variety is secured sometimes by an alternation of short and long sentences and sometimes by varying the structure of the sentence. There are loose sentences, period sentences, and balanced sentences in his works. His sentence or paragraph the claims exerted upon it by the total composition.

Bhattacharya has the necessary vocabulary to ensure that each character speaks his own language. Bhattacharya uses the different speech styles of his characters not only to give an insight into their mentalities but also to indicate the influence of the vernacular. The pronunciation and intonation of the typical Indian is different. The speech pattern of the Bengali is again different and distinctive from that of the man from the north of India. Bhattacharya was acutely aware of the problem. The language used by Kajoli in and Meera in Goddess Named Gold becomes their characters. They are typical girls from the countryside. His characters are not careless in and indifferent to the use of their words.

Bhattacharya is at his best in his descriptions and he is a master in the use of the epithet and very unusual stylistic devices. Generally Bhattacharya uses the vocabulary of an educated Indian, but it changes with the situation. In a situation where there is a dialogue between people whose relations are not very intimate and cordial he uses a formal diction. Normally, however, he tries to use an informal and colloquial type of language. Being a master artist, he utilizes all resources of the language with utmost effect. His reliance on adjectives seems to grow less and less, though he is not completely free from it. Adverbs, verbs, and nouns also are used effectively. Repetition of words is one of the devices he uses to acquire an emphatic utterance. His similes are simple and functional and they are not intended to impede the progress of narration and action and cloud the clarity of thought. They are a part of the total composition and do not draw special attention to themselves.

Bhattacharya has a pronounced preference for simple and effective words which make his style very distinctive and at the same time he does not ignore the utility of abstract the general words. He makes a judicious use of both. His passages of description and narration thrive on the specific and concrete words; his passages of exposition and argument find a use for abstract and general words. His economy and control over his medium is admirable. Bhattacharya has deliberately used slang not only to isolate the identity of the speaker but also to create a specialized atmosphere. He makes copious use of official and diplomatic terminology in **Shadow from Ladakh**. In **Dream in Hawaii** the American element is predominant and thus he uses typical American slang. Punctuation



also plays a very important part in his style. Many a time he uses an accentuated manner to indicate a special attitude.

Many Indo-Anglian novelists have been responsible for many innovations and experiments with their native languages as a part of creating Indian atmosphere in their novels. Bhattacharya's distinction does not lie so much in his experiment with language. In his novels, there are more Indian words and expressions, just to such an extent as one finds them in the novels of Anand, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Malgonkar and some others. Bhattacharya also used some of the methods or strategies employed by other Indo-Anglian novelists in tackling the problem of dialogue. Whenever necessary, he uses Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit words and phrases like Ramayana, Maidan, Puja, Pujari, Bhai, Yagna, Tantra, Saitan.

It is a special feature, generally employed by a few other Indian novelists that whenever he used an Indian word or a phrase he gives the English translation. The dialogue between a village pandit, rather a priest, and an old lady withered and shriveled with the experience of life is very well portrayed. The Indian words are Siva and Ganges evocative of Indian culture and religion; there are sayings from popular folklore; the use of typical Indian proverbs brings out the Indian spirit in the dialogue. Bhattacharya also uses the native words, translations of certain characteristic expressions, idioms, and sayings, the syntax of the native tongue and its speech rhythms.

Bhattacharya uses free indirect speech as well as the mixed dialect, useful for characterization, most skillfully and their English equivalent is cleverly inserted in dialogues. Bhattacharya's prose has a fine rhythm and at times is poetical. It is the rhythmical quality of prose that makes it great. Bhattacharya's mastery over language proves equal to the difficult task of expressing most competently and sensitively the subtle and complex nature of the variety of characters and situations that one comes across in his novels. His dramatis personae range from governors, viceroys, ambassadors, professors, and the top brass of the army to the meanest of the coolies and black smiths. They include the English, the Americans, the Japanese, the Chinese, Hindus Christians and Muslims. The situations vary from the public events of national and political importance to those of the most intimate contact between wife and husband.

Through his skilful use of language Bhattacharya is able to achieve authenticity and verisimilitude in expressing the Indian vision of the reality and experience almost on all occasions and there is no jarring effect on the reader, whether Western or Indian. His preference for the more conservative style of language is a mixture of deliberate choice to suit his traditional mode of technique and the peculiarity of the situations in his novels. His real strength hand value as a novelist lies in the recognition of his limitations and the meticulous maintenance of integrity in the use of his material and medium.

It is true that the novels of Bhattacharya have all the elements of a bestseller like sex, sensationalism, religion, revenge, love, war, romance, hunting, adventure; a wide canvas, a variety of characters, incidents and situations. They have not only width and range but also depth and height, not only entertainment but also significant. His technique is that of the art as an aesthetic experience. Bhattacharya holds the view that it is the dramatist and the novelist, who give him his creative fire and not nature because,

“... the novel and the drama, the two forms of creative art that have almost replaced the epic and the lyric, are wholly concerned with the human scene” (p 394).

Bhattacharya is of the view that art is inalienable from the truth and invariably presents it, though not dogmatically but dramatically and emotionally, in terms of life. Bhattacharya does emphasize the artist's concern with truth and reality and remarks:

“... the creative artist's final business is to reveal the truth” (394).

In fact, the depiction of truth, as an artist sees it, leads him to keep the ethical values in his art.



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