

Shadow from Ladakh- A Kaleidoscopic View of Indian Society from Independence to Chinese Aggression

Shalini Sharma

Assistant Professor Department of English & Foreign Languages SRM Institute of Science & Technology NCR Campus, Modinagar India

Abstract

Bhabani Bhattacharya was a successful writer who conveyed a social message through his fictional writings- a message which has already gone a long way in improving and bettering the conditions of the masses and, which in turn, done immense good to the society. The novel, 'Shadow From Ladakh' dwells on the theme of integrating village and city, Gandhism and Nehruism and east and west. An appeal has been made through this paper that the path of success for any nation can be achieved and decorated by the combination of advancement in science and technology along with spiritual and internal ideologies.

KEYWORDS: Aggression, Panorama, Fraternity, Trespass, Sophisticated, Amalgamation, Kaleidoscopic, Invasion.

'Shadow From Ladakh', a fine piece of Bhabani Bhattacharya's writings, gives a kaleidoscopic view of Indian society from Independence to Chinese aggression. The novel is set in the complete background of Chinese invasion of India in 1962. It presents a true panorama of India's difficulties, faced during the time of conflict. Likewise, this novel also contains a good record of two sorts of opposing opinions prevalent at that time in the country. These views are expressed through two sets of people represented by Satyajit and Bhashkar, spokesmen of Gandhigram and Steeltown respectively. But there is mutual understanding between the two in the end. Both understand each other and come forward for the welfare of the country. It has been truly said for Bhabani by K. R. Chandrasekharan, "*Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the foremost among Indian writers who have dealt with these epoch-making events. His novels deal with the situation in modern India and therefore constitute a social document of great value.*"

China took Indians unawares when they came to know the advancing steps of Chinese frontier guards towards India, because there were cordial and friendly relations between both the countries. Mark how Bhabani Bhattacharya relates it:

New Delhi had sent a protest note to Peking, pointing out the obvious error in Chinese troop movements. An error- it could be nothing else. No reply had come officially, but Radio Peking had spoken: Chinese frontier guards had simply moved into territory belonging to their People's Republic. Indian check-post must be withdrawn over a wide sector. The question settled that way, the two great peoples of Asia would be the best of friends for the next ten thousand years. (Shadow from Ladakh, 27)

The people of Gandhigram want to solve the problem of the Chinese aggression peacefully. People like Satyajit want to solve it through peaceful means rather than through violence. Such people were naturally affected by Gandhian view of life revealed through Gandhigram in the novel. Let us first understand what Gandhigram is. The people of Gandhigram adopt and act upon the ideals of Gandhiji. India got her freedom only recently and the Gandhian impact was powerful upon them. That's why; they are far away from violence, hatred and vices otherwise rife in the society. They believe in complete equality. They use 'Charakha' and their simple methods of handloom for production. Here is an example:

The village with its two hundred mud houses, seeking to build a set of values. Values to be lived, to be expressed in terms indeed. Complete equality. Unreserved fraternity, limitless non-violence, as much in thought as in action. Slogans glibly voiced every where; in Gandhigram they had to be real.(49)

The Education System of this village is also based on the Gandhian Basic Education Scheme. Bhabani Bhattacharya gives the description of their simple old schoolhouse in the following manner:

This also was to be a mud house with straw thatched roof, and in addition to the class rooms, it would have one large hall, there the people would assemble after sunset and listen to reading from books, ancient or modern. Village bards would recite the poems they had composed. (99)

Speaking about his own work, Bhabani says, "*I have mixed up black and white since that is the way of real life. Most of us are made up of some good, some evil, and some virtue, some vice. The proportions vary, of course but we are never made in the proportions of Rama and Ravana, all hero and all villain.*" R. K. Badal, 'Bhabani Bhattacharya and His Novels', 50.

The children are taught to make handloom products. They learn to play upon the musical instruments like flute and many. Night- classes are held for adults also. The people of Gandhigram do not consider 'Machines' suitable for the development of India, because they realize that the increasing number of industrial factories are the main cause of destroying the rural environment of India: "*The factory or mill was ugly, repressive. It up-rooted masses of people from a healthy rural environment. Simplicity had to give way to sophistication. The craze for speed grew speed for its own sake, an end in itself.*" (Shadow from Ladakh, 73)

The people of Gandhigram as mentioned above are far away from any feeling of violence or hatred, so they are in favor of solving each and every problem in a peaceful manner. They want to face Chinese with friendship and brotherly affection. They are of the

opinion that nothing can be gained by war, so they are ready to accept their challenge in non-violent method. They are making their mind to organize a 'Peace March' for China in order to remove the misunderstanding between the two nations and to avoid the war. They decide that five people will go for this mission and try their level best to establish their impact of Indian culture and friendship on Chinese. They wish to take their slogan of universal brotherhood to the country. They know that-

India was all warmth for China's new way of life, even though it was not her way. India believed in many paths leading to one goal-human happiness. Those many paths had to co-exist. Universal brotherhood was the Ultimate value. So India stood for enlightenment.

That was Nehru's gift to his people; in its long-range meaning. That was a gift for many peoples. (79)

But the people of Steeltown uphold the principle of tit for tat. They want to give the answer of war through the language of war. Mark how Bhabani expresses this view in the following lines: "*The whole world can be modeled only with the gun. War can be abolished only the war. To get rid of the gun, we must first grasp it in our hand.*" (80)

Indians had never thought that there would be any danger to them from the side of China, but the Chinese betrayed their faith. Chinese army had made their headquarters amid the snow covered mountains. They had made Aksai-Chin road only to trespass a vast area of Indian Territory, but China did not give any information of it to the Indian Government. Without paying any heed to Indian Government, Chinese army dared to advance slowly and meaningless towards India. They not only created their posts and stations on the Indian ground but also passed several comments on Indian political personalities like Nehru. This made Indians filled with fury and they were eager to take their revenge. They wanted to show the Chinese that they had enough strength and power to serve and save their freedom. They had courage to push the Chinese out from the ground of India. Indians were ready to face any eventuality or disaster due to war but they were not at all prepared to tolerate Chinese. The feelings of sacrifice and nationalism were sublime and strong in them. They soldiers were ready to lay down their lives for the safety of their beloved motherland. The wives were not lagging behind to send their dear husbands on the front for the protection of their country. The mothers were ready to give their sons' lives as a sacrifice for their great nation. They prevented their tears from rolling down their cheeks at the time of bidding farewell to them. Rather they were proud of their sons getting a golden opportunity to shed their blood for a lofty cause. Mark, in this respect, what the novelist has to comment, "*The battles will come as a matter of course. Nothing to talk about. The kind of advice mother has just given us will be lost on our men. You do your job; you carry out your assigned task; you die if a bullet finds you. What's unusual about all that? So the soldiers think.*" (277)

But to give the suitable answer to the Chinese, India needed more and more steel and for it mere feelings and devotion could not work well. Modernization in thinking and industrialization in inventing are of the utmost importance. Sophisticated modern weapons and devices are necessary. The need of the hour was to find out the sources

which could ensure India's protection. The Defense Minister of India had himself acknowledged that this war could not be won on the basis of sentiments rather it could be won on technological methods:

India had no option but to get ready for the worst. Steeltown must play its part in full

Measure; its industrial complex must reach a high level of growth in the nearest future.

Peking had settled the fate of Gandhigram, and it was too late for a low way of persuasion.

Time lost on sentimental grounds would be lost on national interests. India could speak to Peking only from a position of strength. Idealism... humanism...universal brotherhood...

world peace-those were empty bubbles. (Shadow from Ladakh , 177)

Indians very well know that India is recognized world over on account of its great ideals and it cannot be separated from them which are so deeply rooted in its culture. But people like Bashkar also feel that India, to have existence in this world has to be progressive in technological fields. People with both points of view should understand each other and exchange their views because they all are working for the welfare of the nation. In an interview he observes: "*I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society's point of view.*" Sudhakar Joshi, 'An Evening with Bhabani bhattacharya'. The novelist, thus, very skilfully and competently succeeds in synthesizing them. It is interesting to note here what Bashkar remarks; "We have no quarrel with the spinning wheel! Gandhigram!...Soul force, not brute force..Men of Gandhigram, we are your brother!" (Shadow from Ladakh, 351)

Here is a fine example of amalgamation of Gandhigram and Steeltown-

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 attained, Steel

Town, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek newness. Then it will be Gandhigram's turn

To come forward! (351)

It may be concluded from the foregoing discussion that Shadow From Ladakh beautifully presents a Kaleidoscopic view of Indian society right from Independence to Chinese aggression. The dilemma and conflict the Indians were subject to during that time has been very successfully revealed in the novel of Bhabani. They resolve to be sound and strong in militarism, of course in technology and science, without leaving Gandhism, the

path of peace and non-violence. India, consequently, is more powerful and stronger than those days in every sphere of life and still advancing and advancing.

Work Cited

1. Bhattacharya Bhabani. “*Shadow from Ladakh*” Crown Publishing Group, India. 1966. Printed.
2. Badal R. K. “*Bhabani Bhattacharya and His Novels*, The Literary half-yearly Vol. XII, No-2. Printed.
3. Chandrasekharan K. R. “ *Bhabani Bhattacharya A Journal of Indian Writres Series*”, Vol. vii India: Arnold- Heinemann Publishers, 1974. Printed.
4. Joshi Sudhakar. “*An Evening with Bhabani Bhattacharya*”. The Sunday Standard. April 27, 1969.