

Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novels through the Lens of Gandhian Values.

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Abstract:

Mahatma Gandhi was more of a humanist and a spiritual figure than a politician or nationalist. Gandhi's insights extended to India's political landscape and the literary realm of Indian English writing. Gandhi recognized not only the political form of India but also the literary firmament of Indian writing in English—directly through his writings and indirectly through his practices and thought process. Gandhi's ideology and his philosophy castes and infused a magic spell on one such socialistic representative and believer in progressiveness—who was a well-versed contemporary writer, Bhabani Bhattacharya. This paper focuses on how Bhabani Bhattacharya was captivated by Gandhi and his life, which overshadowed almost all of his novels. What's more absorbing is how the Gandhian philosophy, much publicized and apprised of truth and non-violence, crept deep into his mind.

Keywords: social transformation, social reconstruction, humanism, ethics, values

Introduction:

Indian English novels encompass contemplative writings by social activists, reformers, and countless freedom fighters. They delve into pressing issues like man-made calamities, atrocities, and servility. These narratives played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle, giving voice to hopes, aspirations, and firm stances on vital concerns.

These works proved opportune for infusing kinetic energy into the spirit of integration and nationalism. They aimed to explain and expose socioeconomic disparities, inhuman realities, and coercive repression to the entire world.

Gandhian movements and his writings showed a profound impression on Indian writers. They set forth the right pathway in the dark with an incandescent lamp—to outmarch and gain desired ground, giving them inevitable celerity and special impetus.

Mahatma Gandhi was a highly distinguished and towering personality, leaving an impeccable impact on the mindset of common people—especially victims afflicted with a churlish mentality—and myriad litterateurs of India.

His ideas, cognition, and prudence encompassed all areas of life. He symbolized ethics, liberty, equality, mortality, humanity, and values of tenacious schools of life. These transformed numerous individuals in his time and for ages to come.

Ram Manohar Lohia says: "Tens of millions through the world saw in him their spokesman, the solace and the remedy for their sufferings and distress." (p.121)

Thereby, Gandhi permeates Indian fiction. His thoughts have been a reservoir of themes for Indian writers since independence. Novelists like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya were con-naturally heirs to the legacy of Gandhism in the fictional world, portraying social criticism and political deliverance.

Bhabani's Enchantment with Gandhian Ideals and Socialism

Bhattacharya himself remarked:

"Purposelessness art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to me a sound judgement."

Bhabani was born in the age of transition when India was breaking its shackles to transform itself into an awakened world. The downtrodden people mostly impoverished and backward, predominantly from rural India, were direly victimized under the rule of feudalism. The people were edified, undeceived, by the movements of contemporary reformist writers. Bhabani grew up with two great influences upon him: Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

Bhabani himself, being a rationalist, radical thinker and socialist, was entranced with Gandhi's idea of a classless and caste-less society. Gandhi believed in a society free from the fetters of different denominations, which create deep chasms among people born inherently equal as uniform humans. Conceptually, there must be freedom, equality of status, and liberty for all mankind.

Bhabani Bhattacharya deeply regarded the doctrine of Gandhian ideologies to reform society; he firmly believed in the schools and unitary measures postulated by Gandhi to revivify Indian society based on the ethical values averred by Mahatma Gandhi.

Bhabani Bhattacharya deeply regarded the doctrine of Gandhian ideologies to reform society. He firmly believed in the principles and unitary measures postulated by Gandhi to revivify Indian society based on the ethical values averred by Mahatma Gandhi. On an extended level, substantially, people knew that novels and books are the best companions and educators to address pervasive evils. Bhabani's writings became a milestone in sensitizing vulnerable people, awakening them to the subtleties of comprehending centuries of social evils—casteism, exploitation, oppression, and a farrago of deceit and lies.

Bhabani was a true reformer. He awakened people through expressive writings on economic disparity. He evoked them to raise their voice against wily politicians and landlords. The people stood invigorated by Bhabani, who imbued Gandhi's values into characters in his novels. His novels reflect morality, rectitude, conscientiousness, and inner conflicts. They delve into individual sacrifices and societal transformations—integral to the quest for freedom and justice for all. Bhabani was captivated by Mahatma Gandhi from their first meeting in England. Overwhelmed by the encounter, he wrote two books about Gandhi: 'Gandhi the Writer (1969) and 'Mahatma Gandhi (1977).

Gandhian principles and values are irrefutably predominant, evident throughout Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels, as astutely observed about him.

D.B.Shemier remarks: "Those acquainted with Bhattacharya's own creative writing must acknowledge the influence Gandhi has had on his work. All the Bhattacharya novels are rooted in Gandhian philosophy....." (p 15-16)

Thus, Bhabani aspired to tread on the path of Gandhi's inherent character—either ingrained or rendered it explicating his personality. The creative and innovative ideals of the practicality of social service to mankind and his doctrine of inspiring values through his writings are conceivable instinctively. All his novels carry seminal objectives or an obligatory onus towards society, significantly relevant to today's life in India.

Bhabani's**Novels Reflecting Gandhian Values:**

"I want a picture that will reflect spirit, your true inmost grace. A picture that will be you." (p.254)

Bhabani Bhattacharya has done pioneering work in designing English with utmost care as per the immediate exigencies of Indians. He successfully moulded the English language, philologically, to depict Indian ethos and present the true spirit of Indian society.

His novels reflect Gandhi's visionary leadership for the future by avowing his firm faith in humanism and brotherhood. Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel 'So Many Hungers,' published in October 1947, presents Gandhi's extensive impact of staple principles of his philosophy, proving to be most congenial to the struggle for independence.

Bhabani's novels exerted a multidimensional impact vigorously on the people. They would infrequently confront impending situations, challenging Gandhi's non-violence and passive resistance ideals. The novel creates a dichotomy - hunger for food with incendiary hunger for wealth. Bhabani delineated the scary Bengal famine of 1943 and people direly afflicted with heart-wrenching starvation that led to an orgy of unbearable ravage of corpses in the then-deranged Bengal.

In view of the political ramifications and many problems, conflated with a myriad of social and economic disparities, are substantially perceived. It seems relevant even today and is still a harsh reality. The novel raises significant questions about morality. Humanity, truth, and non-violence are rudiment-genre of Gandhian ideology, which is still incontrovertibly relevant in the present transforming world.

Gandhi was a direly persevering personage, fiercely concerned for conservative gender inequality; he perceived the pervaded social evils wielded well within the society and culture. In a broader perspective of Bhabani, Gandhi embodied a visionary theorem—a general proposition proved through reasoning, a truth established by accepted truths. Gandhi held an ingrained conceptual model of a resumptive societal renaissance. This model would be insubstantial and delusive if women lack access to equal opportunities. Extensive improvement in the male-dominated society depends on women having a wider window of opportunities.

Just as men are adorned with an epochal plenipotentiary status, the same holds salutary value for women. It provides prioritized access to health, education, economics, and dignified recognition in social and political spheres of life.

Women's economic empowerment should be grounded in social security. This ensures their legitimate rights of co-equality in sharing ancestral assets. Equanimity of social rights and justice, along with obligatory dignity and due respect, is crucial.

The novel 'Music for Mohini' portrays rural upliftment. It explores influencing factors of social reconstruction, women empowerment, and adult education. Bhabani distinctively depicts rural scenery in his striking novel.

Music for Mohini establishes Bhabani as a women's rights and empowerment champion. Simultaneously, it proves his dedication as a social reformer. The novel seeks to represent the vision of Mahatma Gandhi, establishing the ideal society—Ram Rajya—where women play a pivotal role in shaping the futuristic view of Indian society. They are more than marginalized commodities.

'Music for Mohini' epitomized a new and regency society, free from dreary conventions and dead beliefs. It seeks to build a truly independent country. The novel concludes positively: a woman empowered with inborn talent exudes infinite energy, enthusiasm, and vitality. She possesses the power to balance her aspirations and relationships adeptly, assessing her potency in comparison and contrast to others.

Bhattacharya's fourth novel, 'The Goddess Named Gold,' published in 1960, depicts the Gandhian economic development vision in post-independent India. It presents a precise exegesis of freedom and paves the way to its sustainability, adroitly satirizing the materialistic attitude of people in society.

The novel 'Shadow from Ladakh' deals with the Gandhian nation bracing itself for the fierce gaze of the Chinese forces. Bhabani's meaty masterpiece integrates two schools of thought: Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of truth and non-violence and cottage industries aiming for political, economic transformation, and radical social reforms. These build a self-reliant society. On the other hand, there's the Nehruvian model—comprehensive, placing India on the world map with pride. It takes measured steps in technology, scientific research, industrial advancement, and education. This aims to match global standards despite limited resources. The well-born 'Nehruvian Model' substantiates Bhattacharya's plea for adopting 'the way of integration and synthesis' with gratification and aptness.

Conclusion:

"The purpose of writing is to communicate, isn't it? If so say your say in any language that comes to hand". (Iyengar ix)

Gandhi was a multitalented personality. He possessed foreknowledge and was a visionary leader. A world-known theoretician-nationalist, he excelled as a communicator who reconciled the interrelation between speaker and listener. He was also a good writer, known for writing that was distilled, precise, and devoid of inaccuracy or artificiality. His writing was intrinsically linked and worthwhile for rational communication with people. He aimed to access and influence people to transform society inevitably, conveying a message of peace and brotherhood across the country.

Gandhi said, 'Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility.' He meant that communication was the best vehicle to awaken people and help them escape unbearable oppression by society and feudal lords. This communication aimed to restore lost self-confidence through the infallible Gandhian weapon of 'Truth and Non-Violence'.

Mahatma Gandhi paved a path of indomitable will, spirit, and unbounded courage for perpetual tread by humanity. His vision sought unfettered love, affinity, and brotherhood in society. Bhabani, drawing from Gandhian credulous tenets, nourished his literary world for social transformation.

Bhabani and Gandhi shared a resemblance, characterized by a homogenous and egalitarian mindset. Both were radical thinkers, true navigators of society.

Gandhi and Bhabani serve as iconic guides, consistently shedding light and advocating for the subaltern. Gandhi conducted experiments and instilled honesty and integrity in governance for genuine societal reform. Bhabani harnessed his creativity and animated willpower for societal transformation. His endowments remain in the history of the literary firmament.

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