

BHABANI'S HE WHO RIDES A TIGER: CASTE SYSTEM AND PROBLEMS OF POOR PEOPLE

Dr. Seema*

Assistant Professor of English, Hindu Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jind, Haryana, India

Email ID: ssemadalal85@gmail.com

Accepted: 07.05.2023

Published: 01.06.2023

Keywords: Prominent, Famine, Exploitation, Grasping, Spectre, Encountered, Chastened, Survival, Eliminates, Sensual, Acute, Attainments, Eminence, Dehumanization, Orthodox.

Abstract

Bhabani Bhattacharya is the most prominent writer the four most celebrated writers of Indian English novel the other three are Milk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao. The present study is a portrayal of Indian freedom struggle and Bengal famine, in his novel He Who Rides a Tiger, Bhattacharya tells the story of Kalo's triumph of revenge against society and his grasping of the principles through different experiences the honesty and unity is the outstanding accomplishment of man. The main focus of my paper is on the Indian themes like famine poverty, exploitation, class, consciousness, freedom and many more.

Paper Identification



**Corresponding Author*

© IJRTS Takshila Foundation, Dr. Seema, All Rights Reserved.

Introduction

The harrowing experiences left incomplete in So Many Hungers, get completed in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. The spectre of the Bengal famine and the problems people encountered are pictured in this novel. The famine is the valley of the shadow of death through which the characters have to

pass before they attain their full stature as human beings. Of the Hero, P K.R.Chandrasekhar observes: "Kalo, in particular, chastened and purified by three his experiences and sufferings, learns the secret that to be true to one's own self is the greatest achievement of man"(8).

He Who Rides a Tiger is a novel that focusses the real problems the poor confront in their day-to-day life. Day in and day out their survival becomes an ordeal; food is not within their reach to acquire, shelter is beyond their reach, education unthinkable, dress less said the better - that is the way of their existence. That is their tragic predicament. The caste Systems come in for chastisement in the novel.

The representative along with sign of protest from the tyranny of caste is proven to the way Kalo's daughter Purnima, is hastily provided at a distance in marriage to an aged widower once the parents find that a male of lower caste, Basav is within really like with her. The unhappy married life of her directs her to commit suicide. When Basav taunts Biten concerning the harsh incident, he renounces the caste forthwith of his, he claims he's simply no longer a Brahmin and also eliminates his sacred thread too.

Here once again casteism played every individual and the havoc faces the tragic situation due to it. As the denunciation on the caste product is among the reasons on the novelist, he alludes to it inside sensual locations in the novel. The product may be so nicely entrenched that Chandra Lekha's going to college meets with serious criticism all out of the excessive caste as well as the minimal caste individuals of Tharna. The issue emphasised by Bhattacharya here's that caste evolved into a pattern of thinking almost as a means of living and it's not too much simple to eradicate it.

The novel reveals that greatest achievement of man in life is to be true to himself. Kalo, a blaksmith, lived with his only daughter Chandra Lekha in Tharna town. The girl's unusual cleverness and attainments, the touching tenderness of the mutual affection of father and daughter are clearly brought out in the beginning of the story. The shadow of the Bengal famine now begins to fall over Tharna town. Food grains become scarce and unemployment becomes an acute problem. Weavers and other traders sell. The novel reveals that greatest achievement of man in life is to be true to himself. Kalo, a blaksmith, lived with his only daughter Chandra Lekha in Tharna town. The girl's unusual cleverness and attainments, the touching tenderness of the mutual affection of father and daughter are clearly brought out in the beginning of the story. The shadow of the Bengal famine now begins to fall over Tharna town. Food grains become scarce and unemployment becomes an acute problem. Weavers and other traders sell. *dark year started three or four months after Chandra Lekha won her silver medal. It was almost the*

darkest in the history of Bengal. A plague took the land in its grip, the plague of hunger, in the wake of war.

Thou who are the secret breath in all created beings,

Hail to thee, Mother, and hail, and hail, hail!

Thou who are the joyous light in all created beings,

Hail to thee, Mother, and hail, and hail, hail!

Thou who are the core of bliss in all created beings.

Hail to thee, Mother, and hail, and hail, hail! (Bhattacharya 233).

Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-89) born at Bhagalpur Bihar, an Honours graduate in English literature from the University of London (1934), occupies a position of eminence in Indian English Literature. He is renowned world-wide and his books have appeared in twenty-six languages, sixteen of which are European. He has won the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award for *Shadow from Ladakh* in 1967. "In his writings he ... portrays feelings ... inhumanities committed by man against his fellow beings" (Sharma K, Aesthetics, X). His major preoccupation is with the future of India in context of its social, religious, economic, and political regeneration: "*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 bridges between the present and the past*" (Chandrasekharan, 8). Recollecting his journey as a novelist he recalls how his first two attempts at writing a novel were left half way through because the great famine swept down upon Bengal.

"The emotional stirrings felt were a sheer compulsion to creativity. The result was the novel *So Many Hungers*" (Chandrasekharan, 2). All the novels of Bhattacharya present a true picture of India and its teeming millions surging with life. He does not believe in the dictum of art for art's sake. All writing for him has a social purpose and his outlook is highly constructive and creative. His writing compels one to hear the dialogue between man and his situation, between man and man and between man and the ideas he lives by. He visits slums and sucks up the misery of dwellers in his inner self He investigates the shriveled faces and sunken eyes of the depressed, marginalized and dominated, shares their anguish, suffers quietly, and pours out the sufferings in

words. The process involves deep agony but the product is a major creative endeavour. Bhabani Bhattacharya concedes that creative writing spontaneously brings out the inner pain:

I seldom planned a story structure. Each story grew in my subconscious mind as it were. When it had grown enough, I had to give it physical form. (Chandrasekharan, Bhabani 5).

As per Bhattacharya, a novel must be worried about social truth, who's got the own concept of his on the objective as well as technique of composing a novel. On several events, he's expressed in terms that are specific what novel has intended for him and what he's attempted to achieve through this particular form. A novelist, for Bhattacharya, is an innovative writer, possessing a unique present for that development and differing from average females and men he's endowed with much more than normal sensitivity: "The creative writer has a well-developed sensitivity though this does not mean that he understands or shares all emotions. The things he witnesses, the things he experiences, are likely to move him more intensely than what may be called recollection at second hand" (Joshi, "An Evening with Bhabani," 395) and this unusual sensitivity have to be stirred by the strength of his of observation. A genuine artist can't occur in an ivory tower of his and revel in fancies that don't have any importance to human life on planet. On the flip side the observant eyes of his are keen on perceiving what's going on around him. He says, "I have not missed a single opportunity of observing incidents, happenings where I can gain something for the writer in me. Most of my characters have shaped themselves from real earth" (Joshi, "An Evening with Bhabani," 1969) The truly creative writers are driven by an urge to write which almost becomes an obsession with them. With Bhattacharya, it is not merely a question of writing; it is a compulsion to find an outlet for the living images in his subconscious. This inevitability of an artist's craving for expression is at the root of all art. While conversing with Sudhakar Joshi about art and literature and his own practice as a writer, he observes:

I hold that a novel must have a social purpose ... Art is not necessarily for art's sake. Purposeless art and literature which is much in vogue does not appear to be a sound judgment (Bhattacharya, 394).

The writer's purpose is the depiction of truth as he perceives it. It must be closely related to, and should be an exploration and revelation of, the basic truths of life in an artistic manner. In every novel, he depicts the social reality with vivid imagination and creativity, with a motive to draw the depth of the problems of casteism, female marginalization, hunger, famine etc. He depicts

the truth, not callously and impersonally, but in terms of life, making it vivid by using the method of dramatization:

Art must teach, but unobtrusively, by its vivid interpretation of life. Art must preach, but not only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. If that is propaganda, there is no need to eschew the word” (Sharma K, 32).

Truth for Bhattacharya seems to have a clear humanistic meaning. Like Socrates, the Renaissance thinkers, and modern existentialists, truth for Bhattacharya is man-centered (Crawford, "A Meditating Man," 43). The inner depths of the bitter realities of life should be explored by art, for art is to serve the society.

The post independent scenario calls forth a casteless society, perceived by the Constitution of India and by the popular imagination, however, the reality is frightening in its various manifestation. Bhattacharya mirrors contemporary reality in *So Many Hungers, Music for Mohini, A Goddess Named Gold, He Who Rides a Tiger, and He Who Rides a Tiger* delineates the sufferings of lower-caste people in a caste-ridden society against the backdrop of famine and hunger and the concomitant degradation of human values that dehumanizes man to an alarming extent.

Bhattacharya keeps the artist and propagandist in perfect equipoise. His bias against caste hierarchy and female exploitation manifests itself in *He Who Rides a Tiger*. “He is against exploitation - whether economic or the one based on caste hierarchy - and this comes out vividly in the protest of Kalo in the principal plot and in that of Biten in the ancillary plot (Sharma P, "Artist/Propagandist," 1982). Bhattacharya's fiction "does not simply convey life ... it reveals some kind of pattern in life. It brings significance" (Kettle, *An Introduction* 13) His achievement lies in realistic representation of life in its shades of black and white.

He Who Rides a Tiger is “essentially a crusade to challenge the very organization of society. Set in the times when the reservation of seats in the legislature for different communal and social groups was in the air, it records the inter-caste struggle within the human community” (Bhatnagar, *Readings in Indian English Literature* 119). Placed in its actual historical context, the novel recreates the nascent consciousness among the poor in general and 'untouchables' in particular, “because of numerous political developments: Macdonald's Communal Award (1932), its later modification through the Poona Pact, the floating of the Anti-Untouchability League and Gandhi's inspiring articles against the pernicious practices of exploitation of untouchables in the weekly, *Harijan* (1933 onwards) (Sarkar, *Modern India* 391-92).

Bhabani Bhattacharya provides the photo of Indian female full of vitality with higher ideals, providing a ray of expectation for humanity. Generally, his novels depict various types of alienated female characters, who appear to be at war with both the Society and the Self. Furthermore, in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Bhattacharya portrays caste female character Chandra Lekha to disclose the affirmative perspective of his of living.

The option of this name for a narrative which focuses on a female persona is, indeed, intriguing with a few possible interpretations. The visible imagery coming before eyes is the fact that of Kali, a Hindu goddess generally well known in Bengal, who trips a lion/tiger. She's proven to be ferocious and it is vehemently assertive against evil forces, distracters, and all dangers, an apt backdrop for the delineation of essential Chandra Lekha who presents a paradigmatic shift from the role of her as the caste "Other." The writer seems to champion the rights of females to seek and achieve the rightful places of theirs, and therefore over the usage of him, he seems to get a feeling of unity between women and men in the saga of theirs of battle against adversity. Chandra Lekha, the chief female character, loses her mother at birth and later suffers terrible tragedies on account of the catastrophic famine. She loves her father more than anything else in the world and he too cherishes his daughter and names her Chandra Lekha, the moon-tinted one, which no other Kamar could even think of. He sends her to the local English convent school even amidst the opposition of his fellow caste men wherein she is subjected to caste discrimination time and again.

Eventually when the fraud is detected, low caste people hail him as their brother and the outraged upholders of caste dynamics suffer in panic due to this subversive act. *He Who Rides a Tiger* is a legend of freedom, a grim satire on Hindu orthodoxy, surging with agitating emotions; a legend to inspire and awaken. Iyengar opines that the tempo of life in Calcutta - the complex of urban vices and urban sophistication - the pressure of mass movements and mass hysteria gives the novel a unique quality of its own.

This novel is based on an ancient saying *He Who Rides a Tiger cannot dismount.*" Critics like K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger in *Indian Writing in English* and M. K. Naik in *A History of Indian English Literature* call Kalo, the poor protagonist of *He Who Rides a Tiger* a cheat (Qtd. in Chattopadhyay, "Tiger as a Symbol," 141). Bhattacharya's use of Tiger as a symbol of protagonist Kalo's vehicle for onward voyage is true to E. M. Forster's standards: "Not completion. Not rounding off, but opening out" (Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* 39). Reviewing this novel, Orville Prescott of *New York Times* says that *He Who Rides a Tiger* is a skilful, entertaining and an illuminating fictional glimpse inside the corner of India.

Works Cited

1. Bhattacharya, Bhabani. *He Who Rides a Tiger*. London: Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1954. Print.
2. K. R. Chandrasekharan, *Bhattacharya*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann. Print.
3. Kettle, Arnold. *An Introduction to the English Novel*. I. London: Hutchinson, 1969. Print.
4. Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. London: Edward Arnold, 1927. Print.
5. Crawford, Cromwell. Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Meditating Man. *Perspectives on*
6. Bhabani Bhattacharya. Ed. Ramesh K. Srivastava. Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1982. Print.
7. Chattopadhyay Debasis. *Use of Tiger as a Symbol in He Who Rides a Tiger*. Labyrinth: Journal of Postmodern Studies. 2. July 2011. Print.
8. Bhatanagar, Vinita Dhondiyai. *Readings in Indian English Literature: Nation, Culture and Identity*. New Delhi: Harman, 2001. Print.
9. Sharma, K. K. "Bhabani Bhattacharya's Aesthetics." *Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya*. Print.
10. Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India: 1885-1947*. Delhi: Macmillan, 1983. Print.

