

Compromise and Mutual Understanding: The Conspicuous Lesson in Bhattacharya's "A Shadow from Ladakh"

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Abstract

In addition to hunger and freedom, compromise and mutual understanding, is another dominant theme in Bhattacharya's fiction. The novel 'Shadow From Ladakh' was written with the political fervour but it has also the conspicuous lesson of understanding and compromise, it was published in 1966. The title of the novel is suggestive of a popular proverb---'Coming events cast their shadows before them.' The novel is not against the menacing background of the Chinese attack on India in 1962. The shadow of Chinese aggression is to be felt everywhere in Ladakh and the same is cast throughout the length and breadth of India. The theme of the novel suggests the conflict of ideologies during the critical development of India as an independent and self reliant country of the world. The union of Bhaskar Roy and Sumita, the two different life styles and ideologies, is suggestive of the fact that such kind of ideological conflicts can be resolved through mutual understanding and compromise.

Keywords: Political fervour, proverb, conspicuous, menacing, aggression, ideologies, critical development.

INTRODUCTION

The novel, 'Shadow From Ladakh', deals with the central theme of India during the Chinese invasion of 1962. The main purpose of the novel is to present a contrast between rural and urban way of life. The novel emphatically pleads for a compromise and mutual understanding between the two ways of life as no one is complete and perfect in itself. The novel symbolically and suggestively advocates for a give and take between the spinning wheel and the spindle the two ways of life, the traditional and the modern. The novel also shows people's concern to preserve the freedom of the country and Indians as a race which believe in the universal brotherhood and tolerance. Through this novel, Bhattacharya has attempted at the union of two different ideologies of Gandhi and Nehru for the development of India as a strong, prosperous and healthy nation. An intensive analysis of the novel shows that the novelist has suggested a synthesis of the spinning wheel and the spindle --- Gandhi and Nehru for making India strong and developed. The novel also attempts at the synthesis of Gandhi's asceticism with Tagore's aestheticism for the welfare of its people.

CONFLICT OF IDEOLOGIES

This conflict of ideologies is developed through the two opposite character---- Bhashkar and Satyajit. The later events of the novel suggest that the two views and ideologies of life are to be united to lead a happy and contented life. Sumita a true Gandhian plans to marry Bhashkar, points out the meeting of the two diverse view points of life. The conflict of ideologies is symbolized in the novel by the clash between Gandhi gram and steel town. Satyajit is the leader of Gandhi gram. He is a true Gandhian and so believes in simple living and austere ways of life. He patterns the symbolic village Gandhi gram after the Gandhian values. His wife Saruchi is well educated beautiful lady who studied at Shanti Niketan and had mastered the refinement of Tagorian culture. The couple has a daughter named Sumita who is carefully trained by her father and mother.

Gandhi gram and satyajit represent Gandhiji's India but the crisis comes in when India is attacked by China in 1962 and India Government under the leadership of Nehru decides to meet strength with strength to deal with the new situation. Gandhian satyajit does not like this position and as he is a true disciple of Gandhiji, plans for a Peace March to deal with the situation. He marches to Ladakh to touch the hearts of the Chinese people and make them give up their aggressive intentions. He truly believes in the Gandhian principle of facing hatred with love. At all the three levels--- economic, personal and international, satyajit faces antagonism. The peace of the Gandhigram is disturbed and Gandhian economics is threatened by the new cry of industrialization especially when the steel town with its heavy machine and furnace blasts comes in the vicinity of Gandhi gram. Shadow From Ladakh is hovering all over India and in the new situation steel and its strength has attained new significance. Steel stands as the symbol of India's freedom since it is the core of all ornament and war fare. The America trained engineer Bhaskar Roy is the main force behind the steel town. Bhaskar Rao represents a multi dimensional opposition to satyajit and his ideology. His American education makes him believe in steel standing for mass production to cope with the growing population of India, Providing shield to protect new born nation from all kinds of foreign attacks like that of China. Bhaskar wants to expand his steel town at the cast of Gandhi

gram. Thus, the unavoidable conflict comes in and Satyajit and Bhashkar, representing the two ideologies of India come in opposition to each other. The Chinese invasion of 1962 justifies the stand of Bhaskar Rao and the new ideology. There can be no doubt that India needs industrialization to meet the demands of the growing population Bhaskar works and devote his time and energy to speed up the production just ---“To make four hundred million lives as a little more livable.”

At one point of time, Sumita misunderstood the plans of Bhaskar Rao and she is repelled by his deceit and his sinister design against her father and the Gandhigram. But later on, after her return from Delhi and her visits to various places in Delhi make her realize the meaning of modern life and its ways. Now she realizes the meaning of life in its full splendour and the significance of a modern woman in the affairs of present day life and economic development of the country. After her return from Delhi we get an enlightened Sumita who is more inclined to Western way of life and to Bhaskar Rao, the living symbol of modern day life and culture.

COMPROMISE AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN TWO DIVERSE IDEOLOGIES

Bhaskar falling in love with Sumita brings a synthesis or compromise of the two diverse ideologies. Bhaskar's attitude to satyajit and his idea undergoes a change. He ultimately decides not to annex Gandhi gram in the way he proposed. Bhaskar himself leads a procession of workmen from steel town to Gandhi gram to announce to victory of satyajit. Thus the crisis of the novel is resolved. Satyajit gains Gandhigram at the cost of Sumita who is at last free from the curse of anti-life and asceticism.

Thus, the two ways of life get close and they learn to co-exist as the story of the novel comes to an end. Bhaskar's marriage to Sumita is a symbolic marriage of steel town to Gandhi gram. While Bhaskar has changed his views of the Indian village, Satyajit also has changed himself in his thinking and ideology. The critic G P Sharma has rightly observed:

The novel ends with, “A happy Combination of Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.”

As a novelist, Bhattacharya is more concerned with the future of India, her social, religious, moral, economic and political resurrection. The moral of the story and its plot is to support the emergence of New India on the basis of a healthy and positive view of life from all kinds of worn out Traditions and old, obsolete view of life. Thus, in the new context, neither the Gandhian nor the Nehruvian ideology is perfect in itself, only a harmonious and perfect blend of the two is needed to solve the problems of present day India.

CONCLUSION

Thus working on the said aspect of the novel, Bhattacharya's thrust on mutual sharing, compromise and search for meeting point of conflicting ideologies appears to be a realistic approach for building of a progressive and value based Indian society and nation, and it also can serve as a guiding principle for societies beyond India. It was probably one of the reasons that paved way for the translation of his works in almost all the major languages of the world thus making him a writer of universal appeal and relevance.

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