

CORRUPTION IN THE FICTIONAL WORKS OF BHABANI BHATTACHARYA

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Bhabani Bhattacharya, a remarkable name in the history of English Literature, has touched all parts and spheres of the life of Indian people as poverty, corruption, ignorance, superstition, exploitation and their dumb- suffering in his heart- touching novels, ‘He Who Rides A Tiger, Music For Mohini, A Goddess Named Gold, Shadow From Ladakh’ etc. It would not be wrong to say that all his novels are filled with social concern. They deal with Indian social life. He has touched all the parts of India, rural as well as urban. The main mission of his fictional works is to reveal a lot of short- comings and social problems, prevailing in the society and people should realize their faults and should try their level best to remove them from Indian Society. Bhabani Bhattacharya firmly holds that the real goal of novel is to create awareness in society about its imperfections.

As a creative writer, Bhabani always delineates the social ills, miseries and realities in his novels with his sharp sensitivity and keenly discerning power. All the works of Bhabani Bhattacharya as a result, deal with the real life of people living in the so- called society of his times, ‘So Many Hungers’ speaks of the story of Kajoly but it is not only the story of a single girl Kajoli. Rather it is the real story of many Indian girls who had to suffer a lot because of their destiny. Besides, the novel also shows the real and true picture of politicians. In another novel, ‘He Who Rides A Tiger’ the novelist presents the real condition and true feelings of untouchables who were rejected in the society. It is the true picture of their sufferings. Still another novel entitled, ‘A Goddess Named Gold’ represents the true conditions of victims, tortured by money- leaders, Seths. Further still, ‘Music for Mohini’ deals with the real problems of India infected with superstitions and unreasonable customs. With the changing conditions of the country, a novel like ‘Shadow from Ladakh’ deals with the real and true panorama of the development of India. After giving a deep reading of his novels, it can be felt that Bhabani was fed up to observe the darkness of evils, he writes, “The evil one has made us eat filth. The evil one has doomed us for all our lives to come. He has made us eat filth..The Shaitan out of hell-pit...He has doomed us to suffering for life after life...The evil thing in human shape.” (Bhabani Bhattacharya, He Who Rides a Tiger, 240-41)

In his novels, Bhabani has shown that the corrupted person of the society had made their economic condition even stronger by exploiting the poor people. They knew very well how to get money from the small peasants. They followed the saying ‘let money sleep, let it work, let it breed, so it may increase.’ They considered the villagers as their personal assistants. These prudent men compelled them to work for them at very little amount. They made their field ploughed, sowed and cut the crop with the help of poor villagers without any payment. They became the masters of their land without caring for Nazul Land Rules. They took their thumb-

mark at the mutual testament that made them remain their servants and work for them in their whole life. They showed their undesirable option for them and the poor people had to endure their rude behavior. They exploited them the way they liked because money had become a mad hunger for the rich seth: “Flowing in great swollen streams it made private lakes for the rich who grew vastly richer. The poor grew proportionately poorer, gained such ruthless intensity.” (So Many Hungers, 147) The seth who pretended to be the guardian and benefactor of the poor Kisans proved, as a matter of fact, to be the real cause to make their condition even more miserable. Sometimes, he made the plea that by saying ‘no’ to them they had actually saved their money by lessening their necessities.

In some manner, Bhabani has portrayed the real picture of corrupted Pujaris who pretends to be the servants of God are minting money by cheating the people at the name of God. Though they led a simple life by putting on Kurta and Dhoti in saffron, pretending themselves detached from the materialistic world yet they were the masters of large properties and had good connections with the well-known people of the society. Mark in this respect, the following lines: “A hundred high placed guests were invited. They were sages and politicians, leaders of industry and trade, even a fair sprinkling of officials, the top layer. The temple precincts were jammed with parked cars. “(He Who Rides a Tiger, 112)

The condition of the pathetic tortured part of society was even worse and it is only because of the corrupted people. These poor people did not have any means of earning money. Some people had land but they did not have the tools to plough it. They had no food to feed them as well as the members of their family. When they were at the verge of starvation, their land and animals were snatched by the zamindars. Their life as well as their words depends on those zamindars. If they had wished to save these poor peasants, they could do so by giving them the money and the grain. The innocent people did not know the cunning policy of those zamindars who had ensnared them in loan. Mark how they came in their grip:

“Loans that was it. That would be the benefit. Meera would grant loans at a fair rate of interest. Loans were a part of day to day living, for evil times always came and even tidings of joy, the birth of a son or grandson, drew coal cash. Loans by themselves did not hurt much. They could be paid back when the harvest was sold. The trouble was that the crazy rate of interest made repayment hard or even impossible.” (A Goddess Named Gold, 53)

The poor kisans easily fell a prey to them. When they saw their children dying of hunger, they had to turn towards zamindar for borrowing money. If they came in their clutches, they as well as their progeny could not come out of them. Here is an example:

“Every man who migrated in distress received a cash gift from him. Five rupees, ten rupees, or even fifteen, depending on the acreage he had lost. There were no real Ground for such a gift. But the seth of Sonamitte was too soft in his dealings. That was his trouble. He had good need to watch himself and hold his softness subdued lest it overpower him, lest it hurt his son and heir. For one added to one’s property so it could be passed on as a worthy inheritance.” (A Goddess Named Gold, 132)

And the condition of these peasants was so distressing that they were unable to return the loan. They paid double the amount of the principal in terms of interest. But the zamindar’s threat was always looming large in their minds. To live and die under heavy debt was in store for them.

So was the destiny of their offspring. As a last resort, they had to work in the fields of zamindars on daily wages. Even then they could not get the food for their starving children:

“They must always be hungry save for a spell of two or three months in the year, when they even meals and a wage for field-work. The hundred million kisans of India must always be hunger. It is a rare gracious day to have the stomach full.” (The novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, 28)

They were really unlucky that they could not obtain mere Rote for the members of their family. They were yearning for bread whereas the corrupted people were enjoying fish, meat and wine. The children of the poor were crying for a draught of milk where as the wealthy were bathing the lord in milk.

There was corruption everywhere in the society. Really it is the example of the corrupted policies that a worthy and eligible man could not get a job as he had no money to offer in return of a suitable one. Money was thus a great factor of increasing injustice in the society. The Government posts, without any doubt, were safe for the people who paid well, so it was injustice for those people who being capable, were declared as unworthy for those jobs. Mark how Bhabani Bhattacharya ridicules this trickery through the following remark:

“A Government post had been advertised. Every applicant was sacked, as usual, to remit a fee of five rupees, which would not be refunded. There must have been a thousand applications. ‘And the selection had in effect been made before the fees poured in.’ Kunal laughed.” (So Many Hungers, 55)

Bhabani Bhattacharya expresses his outburst of anger against the exploiters and the Oppressors. He has presented, without any exaggeration, the man as he really is with all his short-comings and imperfections. He has sympathy and compassion for the tortured lot and as a result, he impeaches severely all those for inflicting inhumanity and cruelty upon man. It is interesting to give here Bhabani’s own opinion expressed elsewhere: “The most heroic character must have his feet on common earth; and the discarded villain, even more difficult to create, needs to be redeemed by the ‘human touch’. Otherwise credibility is lost. The willing suspension of disbelief, on reader’s part is withdrawn.” (Literature and social reality, 5)

According to the novelist, most of the people of the world are corrupted. Even doctors who are considered as the second God were also in the grip of corruption. There was no beating heart in their bodies. People were highly amazed to find out that the doctor was not a relief-giver, rather he came there for his profit as Kalo’s friend informed him: “This is a private job. The bodies go to the doctor’s house. Yes, friend, that man is a doctor.” (He Who Rides a Tiger, 46)

The cruel would not allow the dead even to rest in peace after his death. The heartless doctors needed skeletons of the dead bodies for dissection. They sent them to other countries and secured good price for them. They sold their parts of body. Now how the novelist puts it in one of his novels:

“Kalo was amazed. ‘Doctors care for the living. What use are those that cannot be helded “Healed?” He wants the bodies for the skeletons which will be shipped to far countries across the black water.’ “What for?” Kalo cried in bewilderment. “Skeleton! They fetch a good price, I have heard from the doctor’s servant. Skeltons are needed at schools of medicine. They fetch a good price.” (47)

Besides it, with the help of some characters, Bhabani has shown corruption in the shape of black- marketing also. The person like Sir Abalabandhu and Samarendra Bose represent such class of people busy with profiteering. Abalabandhu was the senior Director of Cheap Rice, Lid. He was responsible for spreading corruption in all the spheres. He was appointed to make arrangements for shifting rice to the public at lower- rates. It was his job to fix the price of rice- grains and find out those selfish members who were encouraging and flourishing the business of black- marketing. It was he who had stored the rice- grains and when there was the outburst crying for grains, he increased its price and sold it at double rates. He was assigned the duty of keeping an eye on the quota of rice, but by his wickedness, he himself earned huge money. Mark how Bhabani Bhattacharya expresses his loathing against him: “Sir Abalabandhu, the Board’s all powerful chair man. Everone knew that he had cornered great quantities of rice. As scarcity grew, as masses of people died of hunger, his margin of profit increased. Masses of people had to die so he could profit.” (125)

Likewise, Samarendra Bose’s only aim in life was to accumulate more and more money by fair or foul means. To quench his thirst for money he served his British masters and earned glamorous titles from them. The calamity of war appeared a veritable windfall to him and he did not let the opportunity slip. He joined hands with his capitalist friend, Sir Abalabandhu. It is quite interesting to note here what Srivastava, in this regard remarks,

“It is picture of a mad world in which rice and self-interest are flauntingly successful and corruption universally prevalent. The city of Calutta is thus a veritable inferno with its presiding deities like the greedy Samarendra Bose and the leering debauch and big businessman Sir Abalabandhu who fatten on the black market and shamelessly gloat over the sorry predicament of helpless and innocent destitute.” (Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya, 68)

Bhabani Bhattacharya gave a vivid picture of such sort of people as under the garb of nobleness were very mean at heart. He very competently and cleverly reveals their wickedness and insatiable thirst for wealth. They were, as a matter of fact, sucking the blood of their own brothers, only to fulfill their own will. But the novelist is very much optimistic about the better days ahead of the poor and destitute and that the reign of such mean people will be demolished in Doomsday.

His characters like Rahoul, Kalo, Mohini, Bashakar etc showed his optimistic approach to reform the society from all the dark shadow of corruption. Rahoul, though himself very rich and occupying high status, works very hard to make various strata in society came forward for the help of needy persons because everyone should enjoy human rights. With the co-operation and contribution of all India will be a strong union. Bhabani Bhattacharya has drawn and depicted India before his readers with a hope that they will leave no stone unturned to develop and shape their country well in the time to come. India will be a prosperous country oneday.

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