



About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>

Synthesis in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*

B. Bala Nagendra Prasad

Associate Professor of English,
AITS, Rajampet, Andhra Pradesh, India
&

Dr. V. B. Chithra

Assistant Professor of English,
JNTUA Anaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract:

Bhabani Bhattacharya focused upon the great Indian tradition of synthesis of diverse and differing aspects, perspectives and cultures in his novels. His novels creatively represent in miniature the theme of integration originated from the compromise between the diverse aspects of life. It is worth to mention that the essential theme of his fictional writings is that of integration: integration of the old and the new, of the real and the ideal, of faith and skepticism, of asceticism and aestheticism, of East and West. In *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*, the novelist attempts to bring about the integration of large-scale industrialization and the small-scale industrialization, the East and the West, Gandhian asceticism and Tagorean aestheticism, the old and the new values, village and city, India and China.

Keywords: synthesis; integration; asceticism; industrialization; Gandhian.

In its ordinary and broad sense, the term 'integration' may mean, as it does, merely the joining together of disparate things or ideas, but in relation to Bhattacharya's novels 'integration' does strictly mean the joining together and reconciliation of opposites, of opposed values, for achieving the goal of common good. On one hand, in Bhattacharya's novels, the reader comes face-to-face with orthodoxy and obscurantism and a number of other cramping phenomena that are the necessary concomitants of a tradition-bound society. On the other hand, one also encounters in them various forces that operate against long-entrenched socio-political, economic, religious and cultural norms.

The process of blending between two divergent ideals started in India during the British Empire. The cultural tradition of India, imbued with many socio-religious, economic and philosophical backgrounds, has an excellent integration. The impact of the colonial rule is reflected in life, literature and culture. Bhattacharya has witnessed the colonial and post-colonial situation in India. His writings have been greatly influenced by the political and social condition during the independent and post-independent India, which reflects a panoramic view of India's socio-cultural life. Bhattacharya, what Cromwell says, is a multi-cultural person who uniquely equipped to mediate between several groups in a culturally diverse world (11).

The synthesis of the traditional and modernity is the most noticeable feature of Bhattacharya's writings. K. R. Chandrasekharan observes:

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 past (XV).

Bhabani Bhattacharya's first novel, *So Many Hungers*, chiefly portrays the realistic picture of Indian rural life under the British rule and its subsequent emergence as the crux of the Indian freedom movement. The novel sets in a corner of Bengal. The peaceful village is suddenly thrown into a political revolution, deeply under the influence of Gandhian movement. It is noteworthy to mention in this context is that in the colonial rule corruption and greed slowly but steadily crept into the political system and placidity is mere deceptive façade. The presence of the West is not presented in the form of industrialization as in his novel, *Shadow from Ladakh*, but through the suppression imposed by the alien government, which operates perversely, and the rampant corruption in the public servants.

So Many Hungers presents the consequences of the East-West political encounter in so far as it impacted the attitudes of the people and their morals. Steady decadence set in in every walk of the Indian society. The obstinacy, ruthlessness and exploitation that were practiced by the police and the merchants like Samarendra Basu subsequently changed the traditions and customs practices by even women.

Bhattacharya's second novel, *Music for Mohini*, presents the conflicting characteristics of the Indian heritage and Western culture. The novel deals with the theme of synthesis in *Music for Mohini* at several levels of plot, characterization and view of life. R. S. Singh says, "The plot of the novel offers contrast between city and village, doctor and *vaidya*, education and superstition, selflessness and cooperation" (104).

In the earlier novels of Bhattacharya, the theme of synthesis is dealt with indirectly and secondarily. But in the latest novel, entitled *Shadow from Ladakh*, it is conspicuous and dominant from the beginning to the end of the narrative. Throughout the novel, the novelist attempts to bring about the integration of large-scale industrialization and the small-scale industrialization, the East and the West, Gandhian asceticism and Tagorean aestheticism, the old and the new values, village and city, India and China, etc. The concern of the novelist is the Tagore's lifelong quest, "Integration—that was the poet's lifelong quest: integration of the simple and the sophisticated; the ancient and the modern; city and village; East and West" (215).

The novel deals in detail with conflict and compromise between two contrary modes of life represented by Gandhigram established by Satyajit and Steeltown founded by Bhashkar. In the beginning, the towns are two poles apart, incapable of meeting each other. Satyajit, Gandhi's true follower in the novel, has built another village, Gandhigram, based on the principles of Gandhi's Sevagram. Self-sufficiency of the country is one of the fundamental aspects of Gandhian philosophy so is of the Gandhigram's. Gandhigram comes in direct conflict with Steeltown that aims at rapid industrialisation for the economic self-sufficiency of the nation through heavy industry.

Satyajit and Bhashkar both aim at the same end but their means are poles apart and sharply opposed to each other. Satyajit believes in what Gandhi said:

Mechanisation, was inevitable when there was dearth of labour. It became needless and an evil when there was a surplus of hands. The problem in India was not how to find leisure for the teeming millions in

its villages, but how to utilise their idle hours (29).

The Chinese aggression of 1962 created the desperate need for modern weapons to face the Chinese army. To produce more weapons, Steeltown needed expansion at the expense of Gandhigram. Expansion of Steeltown surely annihilates the Gandhigram, Satyajit and what he stands for. Bhashkar aims at maximum production of steel to safeguard country's freedom, peace and prosperity. He tries to convince Satyajit:

Steel means economic progress. Machines, tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom (30).

Gandhigram is built upon the ideal of selfless service and love. When men from Steeltown begin to measure the parts of Gandhigram with a metal tape, the residents of the village are upset. They felt that people of Steeltown will never understand the values for which Gandhigram stands for. Satyajit, their leader, intends to transform the heart of Chinese army with the weapon of non-violence.

Bhashkar is of the view that Gandhian philosophy of non-violence is not relevant to the modern age. At the time of Chinese aggression, the sovereignty of India will be at danger if the country continues sleep on the cosy bed of love and non-violence. He is bent upon quickening the process of producing more steel for the nation's survival. In Bhashkar's opinion, Satyajit's way of thinking is the way of dangerous delusion (91).

Bhashkar and Satyajit meet each other to express their different points of view. Bhashkar is dressed in the westernized way. He emphasizes the relevance of steel for India. Asserting that steel is the means to economic progress, he says that India can fight poverty and hunger only with machine tools. On the other hand, Satyajit wants to move forward from the point where Gandhi left off. He is opposed to the Western way of life.

The philosophy of love and non-violence, in Bhashkar's opinion, is acceptable if it does not make us coward. The weapon of love and non-violence can be worthy only when the country accumulates sufficient arsenal strength to fight against the enemy. India cannot escape from war by its blind acceptance of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. He wants to annex Gandhigram, not because he does not have any other scope of expansion but because he wants to debunk the irrelevant ideals preached by Gandhigram.

Gandhigram has to be dismantled and replaced by the center of social communion. But Bhashkar does not desire to annihilate Gandhigram but to induct into it the features of a modern city. He feels that the people of Gandhigram will ultimately be attracted towards the Steeltown type of life. To materialize his plan, Bhashkar starts building Meadow House Gandhigram's dooryard. Both the Gandhigram's residents and Steeltown people can visit the Meadow House. Satyajit and his followers are surprised to see the healthy attitude of reconciliation of Bhashkar. They do not know what to do because they expected a headlong clash.

The clash between Gandhigram and Steeltown represents the clash between ancient and modern, spiritualism and materialism. The conflict reaches its peak when the government allows Bhashkar to expand his project by annexing Gandhigram to produce arms and ammunitions speedily. As soon as Satyajit knows about this, he declares the Gandhian method of protest, fast unto death, to preserve Gandhigram and his Gandhian ideas. The novelist writes, “The Challenge is not just between Gandhigram and Steeltown. It is between two contrary thoughts, two contrary ways of life. The spinning wheel set against the steel mill” (343).

Bhattacharya, throughout the novel, tries to bridge the gulf between the old and the new, East and West, and the different cultures. The chief aim of the novel is to bring about integration. The novelist reasserts the Gandhian preaching that Indians should not only follow the ancient culture of their land but also enrich their old traditions with the experience of the new times. However, the alien elements should be adapted by the spirit of the soil. Narendra Pratap Singh rightly points out:

Our blind and irrational adherence to our glorious past, decayed tradition and culture is mainly responsible for retardation of progress and healthy social change. The novelist very clearly suggests that we may have respect for our traditional values and cultures but only to an extent. Our blind adherence to them would be dangerous and imperil our national liberty and prosperity (98).

But Satyajit thinks otherwise. He believes that there is no permanent gulf between the ways of life represented by Steeltown and Gandhigram. The two can be complementary and supplementary to each other. He remarks:

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 fully attained, Steeltown, decrepit and soulless, will have to seek new moorings. Then it will be Gandhigram’s turn to come forward (156).

Suruchi, the wife of Satyajit, is the first person to understand that neither the Gandhigram type of life nor the Steeltown mode of living deserves to be accepted or rejected totally. Owing to her thorough understanding of her husband, she knows that he does not completely discard Steeltown. Because he is aware of its significance. But she is disappointed to see that Bhashkar is not able to realize the importance of Gandhigram and its spiritual values for the fuller growth of human life and nation. Suruchi wants the integration of the two different ways of life and wishes that Bhashkar should realize the significance of Gandhigram:

He could not see values that lay beyond—values that Steeltown would do well to possess. The great city with its giant machines had something vital to gain from the small center of spiritual life. Productive power needed the balancing force of self-abnegation. Or else the rot of corruption would prevail. Materialism, the gospel of unlimited accumulation, could never be self-sufficient (273).

Suruchi is instrumental in putting the theory of cultural integration into practice.

She encourages Sumita's love with Bhashkar Roy because she knows that there can be no better blending of East and West, ancient and modern than the marriage of Sumita and Bhashkar. Sumita, the symbol of ancient India, needs brilliant engineers and technocrats like Bhashkar to fight poverty and famine. Bhashkar Roy, the symbol of modern technology, needs Sumita to make a controlled and judicious use of his scientific knowledge. Since knowledge without wisdom is dangerous and wisdom without knowledge is lame, the co-existence of knowledge and wisdom is inevitable to build a happy, peaceful and progressive nation.

The novelist shows how the gulf between Gandhigram and Steeltown, disappears gradually bringing about a true adjustment between them. The two contrary modes of ways of life come to terms with each other slowly. Bhashkar and Satyajit understand each other and this results in the ultimate integration of the two divergent ideas. Bireswar calls them phenomena and regards them as essential to each other in spite of their differences. He explains his views to Satyajit thus:

You and he, facing each other like night and day.....Night and day in the hour before the sun rises and in the hour of sunset. The eternal clash—light against dark-ness and darkness against light. Could we have one and not the other? Could we sleep if it is only light? Or waken if darkness is without end? You who think of yourself as the light, Satyajit, you are futile without Bhashkar. There's Bhashkar deep within you, Satyajit! And...there's you somewhere in Bhashkar, of that also I am sure (352).

As the novel ends, the crisis resulted from the assault on Gandhigram by the Steeltown is resolved. The people of Steeltown go to Gandhigram and announce that they do not have any opposition with the spinning wheel and that they are brothers of the men of the village. A large number of men and women go to Satyajit's house in procession and enquire about his health. They speak in friendly tone with the village folk. The people of Gandhigram cordially welcome them and show them the fields, small workshops, schools and the huts. As Bhattacharya writes:

There could be no easier intermingling... When the visitors had crossed the threshold of the homes, all barriers between city and village were gone. The slogan of brotherhood, enriched with emotional content, became real....The divisions were gone. Gandhigram was a frieze carved on one slab of rock. And it was rock that lived! And would make itself deathless through death! (352).

The love sprung between Bhashkar and Sumita also helps in pacifying the conflict between Steeltown and Gandhigram. Bhashkar is educated in the West. He has travelled widely in Europe. He understands only the body and mind as a westerner does. He is not for the soul and high morals. Naturally, he sometimes feels restless and finds it difficult to work continuously. At such moments, he would ask himself if he is a machine, a thing of steel. Apparently, he has a typically Westernized outlook on life.

On the other hand, Sumita is a typical Indian woman. She leads an ascetic's life just as her father. She has tremendous respect for Indian spiritual values. She belongs to

the India of the epic age. A true follower of her father, she is an out-and-out Gandhian. When she meets Bhashkar, the two opposite poles irresistibly attract each other. When people see them drawing near to each other, they believe that they will never marry because of a wide unbridgeable gap between their ways of life.

Sumita's marriage with Bhashkar is symbolic of the integration of two different cultures and ways of living. In spite of the differences between them, she is drawn towards Bhashkar and loves him and ultimately marries. Thus, Sumita becomes the bridge of cultural synthesis between Gandhigram and Steeltown, between village and city. This amalgamation of large-scale industrialisation and small-scale industry such as cottage industry is essential for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

Bhattacharya also spotlights the synthesis of Gandhian asceticism and Tagore's aestheticism. Satyajit is an amalgam of the two modes of thinking. He is a true Gandhian who believes in and practices simplicity of life, social service, village uplift, non-violence, truthfulness, fast as a means of penance and spiritual strength, rejection of materialism, abstinence, etc. The marriage between Satyajit and Suruchi is significant as it symbolizes the unification of asceticism and aestheticism. Satyajit, despite the powerful influence of Tagore on him, is a Gandhian.

On the other hand, Suruchi, devoted to her husband and to the vow of *brahmacharya* under his influence, is an embodiment of the aestheticism of Tagore. On the other hand, Satyajit has the essential Tagore in him. When he returns to India after getting higher education at Cambridge, he, under the influence of Tagore, becomes a teacher at Santiniketan. Tagore has impressed on him the belief that there are other values as vital as Gandhian ideals and that want of happiness but not want of riches is man's greater concern.

Satyajit feels that happiness is creative and has a source of riches within itself, and that it is fullness of life which makes man happy, not fullness of possessions (14). Even when Satyajit rejects aestheticism, the novelist cleverly shows the defeat of his asceticism by aestheticism, resulting in a healthy and happy synthesis of the two.

Bhattacharya's concept of compromise and integration finds a convincing expression in this novel. In Bhattacharya's opinion, synthesis means the acquiescence of life in its wholeness. It is not the denial of life in any form or the suppression of identity. His idea of synthesis is clearly embodied in his observations on the adjustment between Gandhigram and Steeltown.

Bhattacharya's swan song *A Dream in Hawaii* depicts a fascinating encounter of the East and the West cultures and life styles. It shows the reader the American society, plagued by the deep maladies of materialism. Despite all the development, Americans need a way out due to extreme stress on the body. Hawaii, which forms the locale of the novel, is befitting to present a synthesis of the old and new values of the East and the West.

Bhattacharya attempts to integrate the spiritual values of the Orient with those of the practical society in the United States. The novelist throws light on the increasing

sense of confusion of the people with the materialistic culture and their anxious search for inner peace. Kunjo Singh observed that, “*A Dream in Hawaii* deals with the Bourgeois value system, sex, Yoga, the Guru theme, mysticism and Materialism” (129).

In the beginning, the novelist tries to analyse the cultural values of India and the Island of Hawaii. He appeals for the significance and the need for the amalgamation of the two divergent cultures for having the best of both the cultures. The spiritualism of the East and the materialism of the West are to be blended for attaining fulfilment. Man always wavers between materialism and mysticism, myth and reality, mortality and immortality, desire and disillusionment, in life. The novelist artistically presents the ever-repelling poles of carnal desire and spiritual fulfilment.

The plot revolves around two main aspects- Yogananda aka Neeloy Mukherjee’s quest for spiritual realization in the West and his love for Devjani’s beauty. Yogananda’s perspective of relationship between art and religion and Stella Gregson’s thoughts over his quest for spiritual fulfilment have strong implications in the novel’s underlying themes. Yogananda is the mouthpiece of Bhattacharya as he, throughout the novel, stresses on the relevance for reconciliation between the East and the West.

Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer represent the Western malady. Walt Gregson, Frieda, Sylvia Koo, Alfred and Naomi consider Kamasutra as the best gospel for America, whereas Dr. Vincent Swift and Jennifer want to convert ‘The World Centre for Yogic Disciplines’ into a profitable business centre. They bring a Hatha Yogi from India against the wishes of Yogananda. Hatha Yogi is an astrologer and an exorcist. Swami Yogananda feels that the West is endangered by its self-induced venom called progress. On assessing the causes of the crisis, Swami Yogananda emphasizes the importance of *the Bhagvad Gita*. He appeals to the Westerners to live a life with purpose and strive hard for the true understanding of God.

Yogananda finds spiritual degeneration in American society and concludes that success in terms of materialism cannot fulfil the needs of the disenchanted soul. In this complex competitive world, the finer aspects of life are replaced by violence, perversions, and the use of drugs. Stella Gregson’s life is a standing example of this degradation in values. Her marriage with Walt Gregson is a failure. Her husband, Walt Gregson, wishes to write a book on the sexual habits of American women. Stella finds it very hard to digest his way of thinking. She tells him, “The bed, he believed was a key symbol for the new American, the American of the century’s seventh decade” (26).

Walt Gregson stands for the modern American way of thinking, which extols the materialistic prosperity. He has no faith in moral values of life. He advocates free sex and gets involved in several extramarital affairs. He wants to show himself to the world as a free human being. He advises his students to adopt his way of life. In spite of all this, he is not satisfied within and cannot find inner peace. He craves for something else, other than physical pleasure. As the novel progresses, he understands that entire American society is intrigued by this problem of self.

Dr. Vincent Swift is a realist and a down-to-earth visionary. He pleads for a synthesis between the conflicting values of life. Believing in give-and-take theory, he

pleads, he firmly considers that it is not justifiable to stick to one's ideas. He affirms that one must be pragmatic and compromise oneself to the values of life.

Bhabani Bhattacharya presents the binary opposition not only in the East-West encounter but also within the East and within the West. This conflict is multi-dimensional which depicts the social and spiritual ideas of the post-colonial life. Transference, displacement, and alienation engulf the post-colonial experiences of Indians settled or born abroad. These also have an impact on the Indians living in India due to the Western influence. The binary conflict presented by Bhattacharya involves 'movement' between two realms. The movement may not be experienced by the Indians abroad, but it is felt by the natives such as Yogananda who experiences alienation within the Indian culture due to interculturalization.

When Swami Yogananda says, "Our Ancient Philosophy is boldly modern in its own way. The West has read that same story in our ancient temple sculptures at Konarak, at Khajuraho!" (18). Stella feels that the East and the West are so readily coalesced (18) in him. Ironically, this coalescence goes counter to Yogananda's preaching of *dhyana* which leaves him confused. It is not the external East-West conflict but the inner turmoil of his own soul that disturbs Yogananda. This is the basic binary opposition.

The novel draws special attention to the spiritual desolation that is prevalent in the American society. Set against the mesmerizing scenic landscape of the Hawaii, the novel cites several examples to exhibit how the Westerners sought spiritual succor from the East.

Stella's frustration exemplifies the failure of marital bliss in the American society. Marriage has been simply reduced to dating and mating. Walt Gregson, her husband with his promiscuous habits harasses her. Their conjugal life is severely disturbed since Gregson believes only in the consummation of sexual passion and any restraint of this urge is considered abnormal. He does not accept the Eastern theory of restraint:

The right to enjoy sex-that's normal. Abstinence, societal or self-imposed that is abnormal. In our permissive society abstinence has no validity whatever... A fire is quenched by being starved, smothered out my question is: Whatever for? Why kill fires which are the very substance of life (57).

Stella Gregson, on her visit to India to do her research work, deciphers a new perspective of Vedanta from the lectures of Yogananda. She persuades him to visit Hawaii to deliver more such spiritual lectures. She feels that Yogananda set her inner life and she is indebted to him for this. She also realizes that Americans are in dire need of such spiritual support. She determines to be useful and helpful to others. Bhattacharya, through the character of Stella, obviously attempts to illustrate a cultural synthesis between her as a lady deeply rooted in the Western value system who moves over to accept an alien culture and philosophy.

Devjani has deep faith in the Indian moral values. She is pure, modest and simple to the core. She is utterly shocked to see her mother having an extra-marital affair. She loses her respect towards her mother in the stream of hatred. Her mother

remarks that self-denial is not the idea of life. A tremendous emptiness is noticed by Devjani within herself. She gets disgusted at the turn of the events and leaves for Benares to continue her studies. In the University, she finds *Guru* in Neeloy Mukherji. She begins to believe that he is cable of helping her in her spiritual crisis.

Devjani persuades Neeloy to renounce the world and lead a spiritual life for teaching *Vedanta* to the humanity. In fact, Devjani herself seeks refuge in his spiritual ideas to fill her inner vacuum. She discovers that “Within her was a hunger for the spiritual life” (82). Incidentally, she leaves for America, to join the East-West Centre, Honolulu, for her research work.

She observes that the contemporary American society is in a hopeless disorder in spite of being sophisticated technological society. American society is glamorous externally but stinking internally. The novelist writes, “A dead rat lies somewhere under its brightly carpeted floor, rotting away, the stench rising, filling our nostrils. The vomit comes to our throat” (28). Therefore, the West is willing to turn towards the East for values. The disenchanted Americans are pulled towards the spiritual ideas of the East in their desperate quest for mental peace. “Yellow-robed men from the East held out the bright promise of inner adjustment and peace” (49). Ironically, the American society is in the need of light from the East, while Devjani, born of that light, is out on finding what America can give.

Bhattacharya utilizes various characters to comment upon the American life style. The novelist observes widespread spiritual degeneration and sterility in a highly complex competitive world concluding that material success has not fulfilled the needs of the soul which grows increasingly disenchanted and craves for something better. The finer values of life are replaced by perversions, violence and indiscriminate use of drugs and intoxicants.

As an experiment, Walt Gregson sent his girlfriend Sylvia, dressed in Indian attire to seduce Yogananda but the plan failed. Walt realized his folly and had a desire to know the Swami better. The novelist has reiterated the fact that man ought be less satisfied with achievements in life and must indulge more in self-searching (Myles 140).

Bhattacharya condemns permissiveness in the Western society. If a woman feels liberated because she has sexual freedom then it is nothing but self-deception. His idea has been expressed through Mildred who says:

I speak as a woman. The so-called sexist revolution based on a superholy ideology! Personal fulfilments have no relevance. It's only the superholy ideology that matters, only that has meaning and value.... Here's the plain truth. Our sexual liberation does not give us the freedom to be free (132).

A sort of cultural synthesis has been advocated throughout the novel, *A Dream in Hawaii*. Swami Yogananda believes that much can be achieved in the realm of universal peace through a synthesis between the East and the West which would be the confluence between the ancient and the modern, between science and spiritualism. Yogananda had progressive views about life and his first message to the people of Hawaii was to accept all faiths and thereby to harmonise all beliefs.

In this sense, the East-West Centre at Hawaii becomes the veritable seat of cultural synthesis. Scholars from various parts of the world came to the Centre which could accommodate up to four hundred scholars at a time and where various cultures found a suitable meeting ground. Sr. Swift sees this harmony as a promising symbol of hope when he says:

One great glory of our Hawaii is its magnificent rainbow. Rising from housetops in the valley, spanning the entire curve of the sky, ending on housetops near Diamond Head; and sometimes the second parallel rainbow is equally brilliant! Seven brilliant colours building a symphony. Our World Centre will be a transcreation of that rainbow, though in a medium not of colours! (69).

Vivekananda sought God through meditation and he yearned to promote universal fellowship. Yogananda was in no way different from Swami Vivekananda who recognized and propagated India's historic role as a spiritual guide to the world. He desired a proper interaction with the other nations on the basis of equality without feeling the enigma of political bondage, abject poverty or technological insufficiency. One should have a strong personality. He advised the youth to imbibe in themselves 'life giving,' 'character building' ideas and insisted like Vivekananda that women should be educated but education should not be delinked religious and spiritual values which are indispensable ingredient of life in India.

Bhattacharya seems to endorse the ideas of Swami Vivekananda when he sketches the characters of Devjani and Nishi in the novel. Devjani is well educated, even goes to Harvard on an academic tour. Nishi too has become Americanized in many ways without giving up the Indian philosophical ideologies. On the other hand, Bhabani Bhattacharya portrays the plight of Sujata, an eighteen-year-old widow who is forced to lead a life of seclusion and austerity in Varanasi. She is uneducated and in the absence of proper engagement of her youthful energy she elopes with Anami. Devjani and Nishi are able to have more freedom to develop their personalities because they are educated, Sujata suffers due to lack of education. Hence, a merging of the two cultures—one progressive, the other well-rooted in the ancient tradition is necessary for the development of a balanced personality.

Swami Vivekananda was conscious of the gulf between the East and the West which is apparent from the following passage:

Your ancestors gave liberty to the soul and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and the society did not grow. The opposite is the case with the West...every liberty to society none to religion...the West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality (68).

Swami Yogananda shares the views of his philosophical mentor when he talks about cultural synthesis in *A Dream in Hawaii*. Dr. Vincent Swift recalls the speeches of Vivekananda and quotes from one of the lectures of the Swami:

....Swami Vivekananda proclaimed that universal religion must be accepted by all men while they retain their own faith and mode of worship. Diverse voices must co-mingle in one swelling chorus, one universal anthem (62).

Hence, in the centre at Hawaii the main objective was to bring about a social change by assimilation.

In the novel, another movement called the Hare Krishna Movement was founded by Swami Bhaktivedanta which was an answer to the American crisis. The followers practiced Bhakti-Yoga in order to realize the Divine. Gradually the movement spread to various parts of Europe, Australia and Africa. Bhattacharya locates the cause of popularity of Indian yogic systems in America when he writes:

Youth in America is very much more sensitive and receptive than the older folks.... There are many other routes to these important goals, including traditional psychotherapy. Meditation is another route and perhaps a more direct one (106).

The Western mind, deeply disenchanted by the American lifestyle frantically searched for ways to escape. Much of their brave experimentation had gone to waste. The Eastern ways of life was certainly an answer to their troubled psyche. The established Church failed being materialistic and money-minded like a self-satisfied society.

Swami Yogananda sheds a little of the ancient India in him and had absorbs a little of modern America, a proper way of harmonizing the diverse cultures believing that a world culture will be possible only when it is based on the 'broad spectrum of interchange.' The Western mind's inexorable need is relaxation which the Eastern man discovered centuries ago in meditative repose thereby providing self-knowledge and filling the void between man and the infinite.

Yogananda shows great faith in technology which no longer remains a challenge of the West alone. In fact, the whole human society is technology-based as this is necessary for the preservation of life. Yogananda also visualises a close affinity between science and nature propagating this concept as an essential cognizance of the East-West Centre at Hawaii.

A Dream in Hawaii indicates a departure from the pattern of Bhabani Bhattacharya's earlier novels. In this novel, the novelist does not limit himself to the cultural realm of India alone. His perspective becomes broader in his attempt to establish the utility of Eastern philosophy and though in the materialistic and spiritually sterile West.

Indian spiritual and ethical values attracted the people of the West. Swami Yogananda's experiences in Hawaii indicate how the two divergent ideals could be assimilated to bring about a social change. Hawaii, not supporting any one of the ideals, became the best meeting ground for the Orient and the Western. The novel ends with Yogananda coming back to India. He was disillusioned with life in Hawaii and this makes him return to India. He realizes that he either has to be Neeloy or Yogananda.

In the other angle, the novel is about the Indian life, social practices and their reactions, and the American social life of the present day. It demonstrates the Indian faith in spiritualism and in action free from desires for the fruit. Extra-sensory perception is shown to be the core of India's strength. Doing one's allotted work by leaving all its fruit to God is vividly delineated in the novel. It refers to the magnetic spiritual influence of the Indian Heritage. Vivekananda's *vedantic* concept of mind and

his interest in contemporary man are neatly discussed. The novel emphasizes the concept of transcendental meditation which originated in India but has swayed the lives of the Americans. The novel also refers importance of sex in the society. It compares attitudes of the Indians and Americans.

Thus, *A Dream in Hawaii* establishes a synthesis between the two different worlds. Swami Yogananda firmly believes that much can be achieved in realizing universal peace through a synthesis between the East and West, where one finds a conflict between the ancient and the modern, and science and spiritualism. Yogananda with his progressive views of life gives his first message to the people of Hawaii for accepting all faiths and for harmonizing all beliefs. In this sense, the East-West Centre at Hawaii becomes the veritable seat of cultural synthesis. Kunjo Singh rightly observes:

Bhattacharya is a man of interculturalism. The East-West Centre helps in growing up this interculturalism. The University of Hawaii with its motto 'Above all nations is humanity' influences in expanding his intercultural ideas. Bhattacharya is a multicultural person mediating between several groups in culturally diverse world. He is a mediating man bridging the East and the West and concerning with the synthesis of old and new (126).

The post-colonial Indian English novelists have dealt with this intellectual exploration describing both the Indian culture and the hybrid Indian culture on account of the Western influence. This interculturalism have been widely touched upon in the post-colonial times, the writers giving expression to cultural displacement and discontinuity.

Post-colonial writing in English attempts relocation of the self and retrieval of the native culture from foreign dominance. Whether it is a travelogue of a Western writer of Indian origin or Indian writer aiming to reach out to the Western readership, there is an interaction between the Eastern and Western sensibilities. The degree of cultural amalgamation depends upon the maturity of the sensibility of the writer. The question is whether the intellectual—writer of a travelogue, novelist, or philosopher—can rise above the limited sphere of his own specific culture and attain the universal level.

Works Cited:

- Bhattacharya, Bhabani. 1978. *A Dream in Hawaii*. New Delhi: The MacMillan India Ltd.
- . 1966. *Shadow from Ladakh*. New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books.
- Chandrasekharan, K. R. 1974. *Bhabani Bhattacharya*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Cromwell, Crawford. 1982. "Bhabani Bhattacharya: A Mediating Man." In *Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya*, by K. Ramesh Srivastava. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan.
- Myles, Anita. 2002. "Cultural Synthesis in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Dream in Hawaii*." In *The Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya*, by Monika Gupta. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers.
- Singh, Kh. Kunjo. 2002. *The Fiction of Bhattacharya*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers.

Singh, Narendra Pratap. 2003. "The Theme of Cultural Integration in Shadow from Ladakh." In *Akademi Awarded Novels in English-Millennium Responses*, by K. Mithilesh Pandey. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.

Singh, R. S. 1977. *Indian Novel in English*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann.

Vivekananda, Swami. 2014. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. 27 July.