

# RE-ORIENTATION OF THE INDIAN SOCIAL VALUES FOR HAPPY AND HARMONIOUS LIFE: IN BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S "MUSIC FOR MOHINI"

**Dr. SHALINI VOHRA**

Professor, Department of English  
Dev Bhoomi Uttarakhand University, Dehradun

## Abstract

*Music for Mohini* is an important novel of Bhabani Bhattacharya, which represents the old and the new values of life in Indian Society. The novel, deals with Indian society, which is in the melting pot because of various conflicting ideologies, each being championed by one group or another. Here the novelist puts forward, the view that reconciliation between the contrary ideals and values new and old can lead to a happy and harmonious life. In order to bring out the virtues of moderation and integration, and to emphasize his major theme of blending, the modern and the conventional the novelist uses the dialectical method of contrast in depicting his characters. The major concern of the novelist is re-orientation of the social values in the changing society of the Modern time. For a healthy society, there is a need of the compromise of the values of the old & the new, to lead the harmonious music of the social and modern life. In *Music for Mohini*. He strongly expresses his intense disgust for the guilty and hypocrisy of Indian Social Life, with its castes, creeds, dead habits and customs its restrictive religious rites and practices". The present paper is a framework of the vision to create of a New India, which is free from all social evils, which helps to re-orientate the national life on a new social structure.

**Keywords:** conflicting ideologies, reconciliation, integration, harmonious, re-orientate

Bhabani Bhattacharya has used two sets of characters in the novel "Music for Mohini". The first set of the characters belong to the believer of Traditional values, they uphold the old established values of the past, the second group of characters is of Modern output. The novelist pleads for a change and deviation from the dead past in favour of the new and unconventional value pattern that suits the modern age. In this way the novelist juxtaposes different antagonistic characters in order to bring out their ideological conflict, and then finally leads them towards reconciliation so as to create a harmony in life. The novel has two parts and in the early part of the novel, the novelist has given the family of Mohini. The heroine of the novel. Her father is a professor, who is a devoted son of his mother. His old mother is an aged woman and has a great faith and regard for traditional established values of the past, but in spite

of great regard for his mother, the professor is a man of modern progressive ideas. Thus in the novel, Bhabani Bhattacharya has shown a conflict of ideas between Mohini's father and his grandmother. The professor is the man of modern output. He is highly educated and modern minded man. He is inspired by the norms and fashions of the modern times, though he regards also the best flowers of culture of the past but he is of the view that we should also accept and adhere to the modern scientific development.

Mohini was educated in a Christian convent school. Her father allows her to become a radio singer because as a man of modern outlook, he does not see any harm in making her a good radio singer. He has no objection in Mohini's going to a radio station and sings there, but on the other hand, the Old mother is a woman of orthodox ideas. She wants that the girl should be kept within the four walls. She

should also not been allowed to go in the market and to mix with the male gentry. The Old Mother is very much opposed to this wide publicity of her granddaughter. She is above seventy, conservative and rigid in outlook; she has a blind faith in orthodoxy and superstitions and is staunch supporter of the old and established moral values. The old woman does not like her son's ideas, which appear odds to her. When he does not pay heed to her. She threatens to renounce the world. The situation threatens to turn inflammable, but the professor handles it tactfully.

Mrs. R. Shanti in her article "Tradition and Progressiveness in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini" has rightly observed. "Mohini's father, the past, but in spite of great regard for his mother, the professor is a man of modern progressive ideas. Thus in the novel, Bhabani Bhattacharya has shown a conflict of ideas between Mohini's father and his grandmother. The professor is the man of modern output. He is highly educated and modern minded man. He is inspired by the norms and fashions of the modern times, though he regards also the best flowers of culture of the past but he is of the view that we should also accept and adhere to the modern scientific development. Mohini was educated in a Christian convent school. Her father allows her to become a radio singer because as a man of modern outlook, he does not see any harm in making her a good radio singer. The Old Mother is very much opposed to this wide publicity of her grand daughter. She is above seventy, conservative and rigid in outlook.

*Music for Mohini* reveals the conflict between the two cultures, the old and the new. But we also know that the best way to lead a happy life is the way of compromise, which the novelist presents in the novel. He shows the wise way of adjustment between the two opposite poles. There is more of a compromise than a violent confrontation. The tension

between the mother and the son is resolved by a compromise and the professor brings up his daughter in a modern way without discarding the basic traditional values of his mother. The synthesis of the old and the new is in a way to T.S. Eliot view in his famous essay entitled "Tradition and Individual Talent". "The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past." Similarly, there is a symphony of cultures in *Music for Mohini* seen in the perfect blend of tradition and modernity in the character of the heroine.

Bhabani Bhattacharya intends to expose the Indian society caught in the deadly mire of superstitious rituals, absolute customs and obscurantism. However, the widening gap between the old mother and Mohini is a bridge when Mohini's marriage is finally settled by the luck-signs, spotted by the bangle seller and the horoscope is matched. The novelist shows in his novel, that there are also some good people who give importance only to the qualities of girl and not of 48

The Professor is the man of modern outlook. He does not appreciate his mother's orthodox views. He is a man of open mind. He respects. India's traditional way of life, with an inter mixture of modernism He does not approve the objection raised by his mother when the old mother threatens him to leave the house and go away to Holy city or Benaras. He very respectfully gives her a glance and tries to convince her that she should try to understand the reality. In the modern age, the young children are not like puppets in die hands of their ciders. So she should leave her iron prejudice against modernism. She should try to understand the feelings and needs of the new generations also.

Jayadev, though educated in the city, belongs to a village. Mohini after marriage will have to live in the village. The old mother again ask her son that how their daughter, a city bred, can live in the village, but

the professor, again convinces her that Mohini is an intelligent girl and she knows how to adjust even in the village atmosphere. She could be her husband's true partner. Old Mother though, a woman of orthodox views, is not a woman completely of "Ironprejudice".

She yields herself to the wishes of her son. She is a mixture of opposite facts. At last she approves the marriage of Mohini with Jayadev.

Bhabani Bhattacharya has given some intermixed qualities of old mother in the novel. On the one hand she is a believer of Indian tradition, but on the other hand in some way, she also wants to enjoy the modern present movies. She is the symbol of our old orthodox life with an inter mixture of modernism. She fondly calls her son, 'Chiding', She is an old woman: she would not like Mohini to be sent to a convent school but desired that she might be trained at home and learn classical Sanskrit, the language of the God. She suggested that Heeralal should wear an amulet to ward off his weakness. She had fixed ideas and had iron prejudice against modernism. But all this, she enjoyed in seeing English pictures.

Mohini's father is a sincere father to her talented daughter. He wants to make her future bright, so he does not like to fill the happiness of her daughter on the altar of orthodox and useless traditional belief. He is a shield to save her from the evil eye. He fights Old Mother's objection at every step. He is very helpful to give the best education to his daughter. He determines to mould Mohini in a modern way. He has no faith in Horoscopes but even then, he regards some good and permissible customs of the old time.

He eventually sees the necessity for cultural synthesis of a horoscope a microscope. Mohini is married to Jayadev. She is a city bred and convent educated girl. She is very happy to have wise and well educated husband, but she is not happy that her life should be spent only in the village, but she is a

good Indian wife and she does not let feel her husband to realize that she is not happy in the village of her husband. She pretends as if she is interested in the village atmosphere and she also pretends to her husband that she is proud of being a mistress of the "Big house". She springs out of the shallow soil and becomes a trustee of an alien tradition. She wants to adjust herself in the village atmosphere leaving all the

Mohini is a very intelligent and sensible girl. God has blessed her not only with the physical charm and beauty but also with a sharp and intellectual mind. She adopts and adjusts herself easily with the village life. She also pleases her mother-in-law in every way. The old lady is orthodox woman and believes in superstitions. Mohini is not blessed with a child for some years after her marriage; she becomes very sad and takes the help of some orthodox religious people. She gets the advice, that if Mohini offers blood to the temple of the Goddess, she would be pregnant. Though Mohini is a woman of broad-mind and has full faith in science and true religion but to please her mother-in-law. She agrees to accompany her to die temple to offer her blood to please die old lady and the Goddess. Her mother-in-law is a superstitious lady and she believes the horoscope's prediction that Jayadev's life is in danger unless he begets an heir before his twenty eighth birthday. It is clear that in tradition, the evil and life negating aspect is the prevalence of superstitions and inhuman customs which Mohini's mother-in-law exemplifies. Mohini is forced to comply with her wishes in the fear of the impending danger to her husband's life.

She is even willing to give her blood to the Virgin Goddess as the mother says: Vow to the goddess of births that you'll give her a nose-ring set with pearls when she fulfills your wish. If the nose-ring is not enough men you must give her something more, something of yourself. You'll cut the skin of your

bosom and give her the blood in a lotus leaf bowl. I too shall give my heart's blood and pray for the gift of a grandson". She paused a grave status and then the words came with a knife edge "we'll visit the shrine in three months, if need be.

Mohini, a woman of scientific nature, does not believe the orthodox ideas of her mother-in-law. but she is a woman of adjustable nature. She wants harmony in the house. Therefore, she thinks it better to obey Her grandmother, at last, she yields to the mother's desire and her superstitions. Jayadev is a good scholar. He has faith in the superstitions. He is a great scholar and has read deeply the culture of India. When he comes to know that his orthodox mother has compelled Mohini to offer her blood to the Goddess, he is very much surprised, lie decides to save the life of his wife.

Jayadev is a true Indian scholar, lie has no hesitation to accept the best flower of learning from any window of the world. I le has never been a narrow minded man. He is the custodian of the values and pattern of Indian life. He is best union of the thoughts of the progressive, modern India as well as the Vedic culture of his country. When he sees that Mohini is under the pressure of her mother and agrees to offer her blood to the Goddess, he becomes sad; he knows well that his mother is a woman of orthodox ideas. She does not recognize the reality of life.

She also knows that Mohini is a true Indian woman who has been brought up in the true Indian culture. She has been influenced with the advice of her father and therefore she could not refuse the wishes of her mother-in-law.

His aim of life was to re-orientate the values and pattern of his country. He knows the need of the villagers in spite of his city education. Mohini is city bred, but she is also a very cooperative wife. She knows well, that it is her duty to co-operate her

husband in his work because he alone cannot do his vast work single-handedly. This realization gives Mohini thenecessary encouragement to participate in the great task ahead'. Jayadev shatters certain dead practices of the house and the villagers for the progress in life. The conflict in the house is resolved by his plans. He is the passive demonstrator of all reforms in Behula. Harindra, the friend of Jayadev, is also a man of open mind. He also stands for the profound union of the tradition and the modern views. He believes into his country's remote past and has also seen the crises of the present. He stands for synthesis between today and the past. He is a doctor by learning and professor. His father had been practicing the old style medicine in Behula for half a century. Being aware of die material benefits of Western medical Draining, he sends his son to studv in a western style medical school. His wish is to get his son into service in a city hospital and earn high salary.

Jayadev is not only a great scholar but he is also a great master of Behula village. He is a young man of modern liberal and progressive ideas, but as the master of the Big House and the guardian of the Behula village he respects the old traditional view of Behula villagers. Ihus he is the symbol and guardian of the old tradition of his country and on the other hand a man of modem progressive ideas. "No wonder ! And she, too, giggled briefly. "What would people say ?the master where's his dignity ? Nothing so unorthodox has happened in the past thousand years. It's no laughing matter, a shock for the Big House. There's a change in the air, Danger!" "Danger", he said "is just what we all need : of the safety of second-hand thoughts and living we're had enough." (148).

Life is music and it is the message of the novelist that we should enjoy it is a very purposeful way. Life of Mohini is music; she is not Only a talented radio

singer, but also a very successful housewife. The true quest of every woman is to adjust even in the adverse circumstances. The novelist gives his wise message, that "a synthesis is achieved in practice as well as in theory" .

The major concern of the novelist is to re-orientation of the social values in the changing society of the Modern time. According to Ghosh, S. "Music for Mohini", explores the conflict between traditional values and modernity in the novel, emphasizing the necessity of a balanced approach to social change. Sharma, R, highlights the role of female characters like Mohini in challenging and reshaping traditional social values for a more progressive society. Mishra discusses how Bhattacharya's novels, including "Music for Mohini," advocate for a synthesis of traditional and modern values to create a more harmonious society.

For a healthy society there is a need of the compromise of the values of the old & the new. to lead the harmonious music of the social and modern life. In Music for Mohini. he strongly expresses his intense disgust for the guilty and hypocrisy of Indian Social Life, with its castes, creeds, dead habits and customs its restrictive religious rites and practices".

His vision is the creation of a New India, which is free from all social evils, and he perceives the need to re-orientate the national life on a new social structure. These elements collectively illustrate Bhattacharya's vision of re-orienting Indian social values for a happy and harmonious life. His portrayal of the conflicts and eventual synthesis of these

values offers insights into the cultural and social transformations taking place in India during the period the novel is set.

The novelist has very successfully blended the two contrary values, the old and the new in this novel and thus Music for Mohini becomes virtually his plea to such a fusion in every sphere of life.

## References

1. Gupta, M. (2002) The Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharyaya. An article by R Shanti'. "Tradition and Progressiveness in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini". (Delhi. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
2. Bhattacharya, B. (1984) Music for Mohini, Delhi & Orient Paper backs, pp.16. All subsequent quotations of Music for Mohini are cited from this edition only.
3. Sorot, S. (1991) The Novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, New Delhi. Prestige Publishers. p.73.
4. Vinson, J. (1976) Contemporary Novelists, London : St James Press Ltd. p.136.
5. Iyengar, K.(2012) Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
6. Ghosh, S. (2001). "Tradition vs Modernity in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini.
7. Sharma, R. (2005). "The Role of Women in the Re-orientation of Indian Social Values in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Novels.
8. Mishra, P. (2010). "Cultural Synthesis in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Fiction.