

Daeshpora in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*: A Perspective

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of *Daeshpora* — encompassing diasporic displacement, identity conflict, and spiritual exile — within the socio-cultural narratives of Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*. It investigates how Bhattacharya constructs exile not only in geopolitical terms but also as a spiritual and cultural condition, illuminating the alienation of the individual in a modern, fractured world. Drawing on postcolonial theory, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's notions of hybridity and unhomeliness, the article interprets *Daeshpora* as a lens through which to understand Bhattacharya's nuanced portrayal of displacement and cultural reorientation.

Keywords: Daeshpora, diaspora, Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh*, *A Dream in Hawaii*, postcolonial theory, identity, exile, hybridity, cultural crisis.

Introduction

Diaspora is no longer restricted to geographical displacement; it has evolved into a multifaceted concept encompassing cultural, emotional, and spiritual estrangement. The term *Daeshpora*, an intensified variant of diaspora, signifies not merely the movement across borders but the condition of being uprooted from one's cultural moorings. In the literary oeuvre of Bhabani Bhattacharya, especially in *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978), this condition is vividly illustrated. Both novels deal with protagonists negotiating identity in transitional and often conflicting cultural spaces. Through the exploration of *Daeshpora*, Bhattacharya raises critical questions of belonging, spiritual loss, and ideological conflict. This article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these novels depict

Daeshpora in its varied manifestations, reflecting the socio-political and philosophical challenges of postcolonial India.

Daeshpora in *Shadow from Ladakh*

Shadow from Ladakh is set against the backdrop of the Sino-Indian war of 1962, but beyond the political conflict, the novel reflects the existential and cultural crisis facing a postcolonial nation. Satyajit, the protagonist, represents the idealistic spirit of Nehruvian India, believing in the possibility of industrial development harmonizing with Gandhian ethics. Yet, he is torn between these contradictory ideologies, emblematic of a deeper identity conflict. His internal dislocation reflects a *Daeshporic* identity, not defined by physical exile but by spiritual and cultural displacement. He is estranged from the values of the past, yet unable to fully commit to the ideals of modern industrialization (Bhattacharya, *Shadow* 47).

This identity crisis is mirrored in his relationship with his wife, Sumita, who remains more rooted in tradition. Their domestic tension echoes the broader national tension between tradition and modernity. Satyajit's struggle is thus not only political or professional but deeply personal. Bhattacharya crafts this character to reflect the middle-class Indian caught between the alluring promises of progress and the grounding force of inherited values.

Miss Wadia, the Parsi social worker, exemplifies another form of internal exile. Though rooted in Indian soil, her Western education and reformist zeal alienate her from traditional society. Her efforts to uplift children and engage in social reform reflect a desperate attempt to reconcile her fragmented identity. Her character becomes a metaphor for India's own journey—struggling to locate its soul amidst external influences and internal contradictions. Bhattacharya uses Miss Wadia to suggest that exile can be cultural, even within one's homeland (Bhattacharya, *Shadow* 92).

Moreover, the novel portrays the complexities of communal identity. Bhattacharya introduces characters of various ethnicities and religions, presenting Ladakh as a multicultural mosaic that is threatened by external aggression and internal confusion. This microcosmic setting becomes a powerful symbol of the *Daeshpora* condition—a nation searching for unity in diversity, grappling with inherited colonial scars, and striving to create a coherent national narrative.

Spiritual Displacement in *A Dream in Hawaii*

In *A Dream in Hawaii*, the theme of *Daeshpora* is more explicit. Dr. Vidyasagar, an Indian scholar of international repute, travels to Hawaii for a conference, but the trip becomes an odyssey of inner transformation. His journey represents more than academic pursuit; it is a metaphysical quest for identity. Despite his external success,

Vidyasagar experiences a deep sense of alienation and purposelessness. The Western world, represented by Hawaii, offers him prestige and comfort, yet he remains internally fragmented (Bhattacharya, *Dream* 28).

Vidyasagar's character is constructed to critique the alienation of the Indian intellectual in the diaspora. He is a man of science, reason, and education, but his soul is bereft of meaning. Hawaii, in this narrative, is more than a geographical space; it is a symbolic terrain of exile. Vidyasagar's encounter with the native healer signifies his confrontation with an alternative worldview—one that values spiritual connectedness over material gain. This encounter triggers a reassessment of his beliefs and identity. The novel suggests that the West's materialistic values cannot fulfill the spiritual void of the postcolonial subject. Vidyasagar's alienation is resolved not through return but through a synthesis of cultures—a new form of rootedness born from intercultural dialogue (Bhattacharya, *Dream* 119).

The symbolic use of place in this novel is particularly noteworthy. Hawaii becomes a dreamscape, a liminal zone where transformation is possible. The ocean, the native rituals, and the healer's philosophies contrast sharply with the sterile environments of Vidyasagar's academic life. Bhattacharya deliberately situates his protagonist in this cross-cultural space to evoke the psychic and philosophical upheaval that *Daeshpora* entails.

Postcolonial Theory and Daeshpora

The concept of *Daeshpora* in Bhattacharya's novels resonates with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" condition. Bhabha asserts that the postcolonial subject inhabits a liminal space—neither entirely within the colonizer's culture nor within the colonized tradition (Bhabha 13). This hybridity produces a sense of estrangement, which is evident in both Satyajit and Vidyasagar. Their identities are fractured, formed in the interstices of tradition and modernity, East and West.

Bhabha further notes that cultural translation is key to postcolonial identity. Both novels demonstrate this process: Satyajit tries to translate Gandhian ideals into industrial frameworks, while Vidyasagar attempts to integrate indigenous wisdom with rational modernity. These characters are *Daeshporic* because they live in the cracks between histories and cultures, never fully belonging to either. Their displacement is not remedied by return but by transformation—by redefining home in a transnational, spiritual, and philosophical context (Bhabha 37).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "epistemic violence" can also be applied here. Vidyasagar, in rejecting traditional spiritual knowledge, becomes a participant in a Western-dominated discourse that marginalizes non-Western epistemologies

(Spivak 294). His reawakening can thus be seen as a decolonizing act, reclaiming suppressed knowledge systems.

Critical Discourse and Literary Implication

Scholars like Salman Rushdie argue that diaspora allows for imaginative reconstruction of the homeland (Rushdie 10). Bhattacharya, however, does not romanticize such reconstruction; rather, he presents it as a painful, necessary evolution. His characters do not seek to recreate a lost home but to redefine what it means to belong. This forward-looking approach aligns with James Clifford's notion of diaspora as "a network of dwellings" rather than a singular point of origin (Clifford 308).

Bhattacharya's treatment of *Daeshpora* also critiques elitism within the Indian diaspora. Vidyasagar, despite his education, is spiritually barren. His transformation requires humility and openness to indigenous knowledge. Bhattacharya emphasizes that true belonging is achieved not through superiority but through empathy and ethical engagement with cultural difference.

Further, Bhattacharya's narratives are imbued with a deep ethical dimension. His protagonists are not simply seeking personal resolution but are involved in broader societal and philosophical struggles. The *Daeshpora* condition thus becomes a metaphor for the ethical dilemmas of modernity. Bhattacharya uses narrative to advocate for a spiritual and moral resurgence, a reclaiming of inner harmony amidst external chaos.

Conclusion

In *Shadow from Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*, Bhabani Bhattacharya explores *Daeshpora* as a complex interplay of identity, culture, and spirituality. His characters are not merely displaced individuals; they are symbolic of a broader postcolonial condition marked by cultural ambivalence and existential yearning. Through Satyajit and Vidyasagar, Bhattacharya portrays the fragmented self navigating multiple worlds, searching for harmony in a fractured landscape. His vision of *Daeshpora* challenges us to rethink diaspora not as exile but as a possibility for redefinition and growth. Through this lens, Bhattacharya's work emerges not just as literature of the nation, but as literature of human consciousness seeking reconciliation in a plural, global world.

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