

## **SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S SO MANY HUNGERS!**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bhabani Bhattacharya, (1910-1988), was an Indian Novelist, born in Bhagalpur, educated in Patna and in London. He is strongly influenced social realism with a social purpose. So his works mostly related to the social happenings.

'So Many Hungers!' (1947) deals with exploitation and greed set against the background of the Independence movement and the Bengal Famine of the early 1940s. The 'hungers' of the title are seen through the eyes of Kajoli, a destitute village girl. This novel associates with society as well as environment.

**KEYWORDS:** Bhabani Bhattacharya, Novel

### **INTRODUCTION**

Environment and society is inseparable. Now-a-days most of the writers pay attention on study and the analysis of the connection between society and environment. People are becoming conscious about the environment. Environmental balance is very important in this society. Many writers use nature as landscape and lively atmosphere. But very few writers focus on the dark side of environment. Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the writers who highlight the social plights due to environmental changes. In this technological world, human being destructs the nature knowingly as well as unknowingly.

The anthropocentric theory is the main cause for the destruction of environment. The term "Anthropocentrism" means that the man is superior to any other living beings in the world. So they don't care about other beings and they want to lead sophisticated life. But they forgot the destruction would return for them soon. Today, Earth is filled with pollution, Over population, famine, draught, diseases and so on.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, in his Novel 'So Many Hungers', dealt with famine which is the outcome of spoiling the prosperous environment. It depicts the background of the 1942-1943 man-made famine in Bengal, when during the war years, a few black marketers started hoarding rice. The period coincides with the Gandhian Satyagraha struggle which culminated in the Quit India Movement.

Hunger makes human beings inhuman. The starving men quarrel fiercely for a little bit of food. The savages of hunger compel a mother to eat food, while her child is lying dead in her lap. Indian peasants are always under the shadow of either a famine or a flood. Most of them are always the victims of natural calamities. They accept poverty and hunger as their destiny. But this story deals with the hunger which is an outcome of a man-made famine. It deals with specific period of famine when the poor farmers are finally reduced to hunger. Calcutta people are in the search of food and some of them meet tragic death.

The novel presents the story of two family. One is urban family of Samerendu Basu in Calcutta consists of his wife. Two sons Rahoul and Kinal, Rahoul's wife Manju and father Devesh. The other family is from a small village Jharana, which consisting of mother, her husband, her daughter Kajoli, two sons and the son-in-law Kishore. All the poor are depicted as the exploited ones but not all the rich are the exploiters. The stories of these two families run parallel till the end of the novel.

Samerenda, who is a lawyer by profession, looks at the war as an opportunity to make a fortune. He forms a trading company. He realizes that if he could corner even a fraction of Bengal's rice yield, he would be a millionaire. But his wife realizes that scarcity of food and essential commodities will make the life of the common people miserable.

On the other side of the novel, the condition in the countryside worsens day by day. The rice hunger swells with the time. The people start feeding themselves on the fish, crabs and green tree figs. Kajoli's family too leaves for Calcutta. One night Kajoli is raped by a soldier in meadows. Kajoli, who is pregnant, is seriously hurt. Like any other rustic girl her dreams are simple. She dreams about her happy married life. She marries a boy from the city, honouring the wish of her father. She enjoys a short period of her married life. She becomes a victim of poverty, hunger and exploitation. The dream of her married life shatters. She loses her husband in a brutal attack of the railway police. Onslaught of war and manmade scarcity of food make her homeless and turns her into a miserable destitute. Her pregnancy makes her life more gruesome. But even in dire poverty and hunger she remains a symbol of endurance. The virtuous girl cannot save her chastity in a sex assault by a sex hungry soldier for two reasons: firstly, as she is too weak to fight or run and secondly, as she feels guilty of forgetting her mother and brother.

'Hunger' is the protagonist of the novel. Towards the end of the story, Kajoli decides to sell herself for the sake of her mother and brother. She feels that the body once defiled is defiled. Atleast she can save her family and send them back to village.

The Indian traders from the cities nearby come to help the British with perfect planning. They know exactly when to go to their doors with the rice and buy their cattle and commodities. They are shrewd like jackals. They are cunning enough to draw everyone in their trap. Hunger uproots millions of peasants from their soil. The exploitation compels them to leave their birth places.

Bhattacharya wants to show that hunger is same in both places. The people who leave their birth places find it impossible to settle in the city. The same vultures and jackals of the countryside who feed themselves on the miseries of the people exist in the city. Hunger makes the destitutes dig the roots and snatch the green figs of trees in the countryside. Hunger makes the destitutes dig out the garbage cans for peels and stalks and rotten vegetables in the city. In the countryside they catch the fish and crabs to eat, in the city they are compelled to catch the rats to survive. In the countryside they search their food through jungles and meadows. The garbage cans become their food bowls in the city.

A number of characters symbolize so many hungers but the situation predominates in the novel and dwarfs all the characters. Most of the critics often mention that Bhattacharya's themes are entirely related to contemporary events and social realities. He writes on Indian problems but with a universal appeal. The main objective of his writing is to present the Indian Scenario with a view to change it. The innocent people are doomed to death. Even today there are so many hungers prevailing in the society but only the priorities changed. Bhabani Bhattacharya has presented the society as well as environment which are affected by man-made famine.