



A Study of Multiple hunger aspects in the novels of Bhabhani

Bhattacharya “So many Hungers”

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Abstract : Bhabhani Bhattacharya deals with various forms of critical contemporary problems in a realistic manner. Bhattacharya illustrates the influence of the Western style of living on the Eastern which is the outcome of British rule in India. Indians were impressed by the materialistic charm of Westerners forgetting their rich traditions.

This novel depicts a lot of human hunger, food, love, affection, desire, money, name and renowned, political freedom, imperial expansion, dignity, respect for oneself and so on. The fundamental topic of the novel is everything interweaving. The title of the novel itself is extremely reasonable and suggests all people's hunger. Bengal and the human hunger for riches became famine, and many of these were the primary motives for the novel. Bhabhani Bhattacharya's novels have an extraordinary responsibility in depicting the social and political issues that prevailed after the Indian Independence. His novels were the results of his anger and aggression against the brutality of the British government as well as the inability of the Indians who failed to live in unity and discriminated against the people from oppressed classes or communities.

Key Words : Hungers, Human,

Introduction :

Bhabhani Bhattacharya is one of the most outstanding Indian novelists. Bhabhani Bhattacharya's first novel 'So Many Hungers' in 1947 deals with the theme of hunger and degradation that was set in Bengal. It has for its background the nationalist movement of the World War II. The novel is a fusion of two plots in the story. Devta and Rahoul are the followers of Gandhiji and are struggling for the freedom of the country against British. Thus, there is a conflict between the Eastern and the Western. One is of Samarendra Basu's family with young Rahoul as the principal character. The second is the story of the peasant family with the young girl Kajoli as the central character. They represent the freedom moments and the suffering of



famine. These two stories are joined by a common character Devesh Basu. His sons and grandsons are living in the city leading a luxurious city life. But, he is living a very simple life with the family of Kajoli at Baruni. Dr. Rahoul, Samendra Basu's first son, and astrophysics in the University of Calcutta obtains his D.Sc. degree from Cambridge. This Cambridge educated intellectual, busy in research, teaching, and study is upset by the war. He becomes a freedom fighter on Gandhian ideals.

Chandra Shekharan remarks about his role as a freedom fighter: "He is a staunch nationalist and he cannot forget the hypocrisy of the foreign rulers who talk about the four freedoms which, so far as India is concerned, do not include the freedom to be free". Novelist, here, portrays how the man, educated in the west and influenced by their ideas is still an Indian and willing to serve his motherland comes to India. Thus, the East wins over the West. Cambridge is often compared to a person by Rahoul's grandfather. Samendra Basu, a well-to-do lawyer is opposite to his father. He is a greedy person who is a black-marketeer and his only aim is to please his British rulers to collect Wealth. He collects rice and hoards it and sells it at a very high price. His trading concern has an ironic name " Cheap Rice Limited". Secondly, Bhattacharya portrays Kajoli's character as a highly idealized Indian woman heralded by Gandhian thought. She is the novelist's main focus and an incarnation of affirmation nobility and fullness. She inherits the traditional values and manners of India. She is not affected by modern values. According to Devta, "She has a legacy of manners as old as India. How could she give up her manners and proprieties to suit your new-fangled city ideas". The novelist here describes traditional and modern values. Novelist relates the traditional values with the East and modern values with the West. Village life is shown as traditional or rural India and city life is compared to the West because city life is much different from village life. The woman is shown as a symbol of sacrifice in the character of Kajoli. The image of a westernized society lady of the urban and sophisticated circle is seen in a lady who is nicknamed Madame Bareback.

Variegated Aspects of Hunger

Hunger has been Bhattacharya's continuing theme focus. In its many dimensions, he deals with it. No other British-Indian writer has had such an enormous and insightful human tragedy as Bhattacharya. The topic of hunger in their books, "*Mulk Raj Anand & Kamala Markandaya, is Coolie, Untouchable, Nectar in a Sieve, A Handful of rice.*" None of them, however, can stand out in its various features in Bhattacharya's portrayal. His famous novel "*So Many Hungers*" Is an excellent literature work that carries the author's depth. The novel addresses the hunger



in all aspects of people's appetite, money hunger, sex hunger, power-hungry, fame, woman's desire for her spouse, women's hunger, society's freedom, and so on.

The book *'So Many Hungers'* was released in 1947, the year of the American Declaration of Independence. A number of translations made it a bestseller. A dreadful indictment of the British Raj's sins, according to L. N. Gupta, led to the 1943 Bengal famine. This book explores the impact of World War II on India. Bengal was the Indian province that was most directly engaged in the War because of the persistent threat of Japanese air-bombs. War and starvation, which drank the blood of the poor, tore it apart from the ground up.

Chandrasekharan observation in Bhabani Bhattacharya in this regard is worth noting:

“So Many Hungers! Is a severe indictment both of the foreign?

Government for its apathy and neglect and of unprincipled

Indians who exploit the situation for their benefit and

Who are no better than the vultures and jackals ‘waiting for?

The flesh that dies’ and sometimes not even waiting till it dies.

The novelist’s righteous indignation, his sincerity, and his compassion

Are in evidence all through the novel. It undoubtedly presents an artistic success.”

(Chandrasekharan, 1974)⁵

Kajoli and her family are not alone in their hardship in their trip to Calcutta, but all those who go into the city for food and aid. On the journey, Kajoli is assaulted by sexually hungry troops that hopelessly bleed her. A jackal tries to devour Kajoli but her little brother Onu pushes it away somehow. The troops are transported to a hospital, and her life is thereby spared somehow. Her old mother and Onu are forced to live on the streets of the city by medicating. The city itself is facing the road of poverty, with increasing numbers of people going into town for food and work. Even officials do little to overcome the issue caused by man. Rahoul is the emblem of a passionate Indian working man, whereas in 1943, Kajoli depicts a Bengali peasant girl.

“While the hoarders, profiteers and black-marketers

Plied a thundering trade, authority was apathetic,

The wells of human pity seemed to have almost dried up and only

The jackals and vultures were in vigorous and jubilant action [7].”⁶



Hungry people sometimes consume what animals do not want. The animals are frequently the most powerful in their fight for sustenance than the feeble people who suffer. Lads struggle for food scrap with boys. Kajoli finds it tough to maintain his family under those conditions after being discharged from the hospital and even decides to go to a brothel. She confronts hunger again after Kajoli is thrown out of the hospital. Whoever offers a betel lady to be a prostitute for a nice money who also owns a brothel spells it? But the increasing pain of her hunger, especially of her mother, compels her to accept the offer of the woman:

Chandrasekharan states:

*“The sad tale of Kajoli is a pathetic record of what
Happened to More than two million men and women who became
Victims of a famine which was not an act of God, but which was
Brought about by the rapacity and selfishness of profiteers
And the indifference of a foreign Government [8].”⁷*

The novel's storyline is relatively straightforward but consistent, weaving the two primary strands in the novel well. The tale of Rahoul's family and of the family of farming girl Kajoli is nicely connected with the topics of the novel, namely the historical famine and the country's movement.

- **Multiple hunger aspects**

The novel is full of horrible scenes of hunger and exploitation. It is of the peasants, and of moral degradation of the rich landlords and the capitalists, and of indifference of the Government officials. Bhattacharya shows that hunger and exploitation cannot reduce the true human spirit through the behaviour of Devesh Basu. Sufferings can take them away from the moral values but only temporarily.

So Many Hungers also symbolizes the novelist's hunger for human values. The characters have shown full faith in the values of life. Rahoul is the central character of the novel. He believes that sufferings can purify human beings. The aim of Devata's life is the welfare of the people. In fact, he truly shows the ideals of noble life, its dignity and strength. The fight of man against hunger creates two types of images. Man is at his noblest or at his worst. The difficult situation of hungry, poor people expressed by Rahoul represents the difficulties of all the migrants:

*“Strange how much a human body could go through before life left at last. The first few days the man suffered most. He was mad with hunger. Then he grew listless. He laid himself down.
His mouth was too tired for food and he only wanted to be left alone. His eyes died. He*



wasted to a skeleton, using up whatever shreds of flesh he had anywhere on his body.
(153,154).”⁸

If there is any protagonist in this novel, it is hunger. All the characters represent various types of hungers. People hurt by bombs during those days are promptly taken to hospitals, but nobody bothers about those who are hurt terribly by hunger. When a soldier gives half a rupee to Onu, he is excited and thinks of buying cheap meals. But later he changes his mind and buys flowers for the Goddess. Rahoul is a victim of *So Many Hungers*. He shows his hunger for research and freedom, Kunal has hunger for adventures; Samarendra has hunger for money.

Manju is hungry for money. Devesh Basu, and Kajoli’s father and brother have shown hunger for freedom. Rahoul feels pity and sympathy for the poor people. He decides to work for the victims of hunger. Bhattacharya accuses the poor for their situation but he believes that their faith in God gives them courage to fight against hunger. That the father and son are poles apart is noticed when, during draught, Rahoul runs a free kitchen for the poor people. And on the other side, his father plans to sell rice. He goes into black market for that purpose. Rahoul expresses his agony:

“ . . . The empty stomach was due to no blight of nature, no failure of crops Rahoul knew. It was man-made scarcity, for the harvest had been fair, and even if the Army bought up big stocks, with rationing at the right level there could be food for all. But there was no rationing
(105).”⁹

So Many Hungers (1947), Bhattacharya's debut novel, realistically addresses the theme of poverty caused by the Bengal famine in the early 1940s. Hunger for food and hunger for sex has two meanings. Bhattacharya illustrates how the general people die of starvation because they lack food, and that the poor rural girl, Kajoli was raped by a sex-hungry soldier on the other side.

So much starvation! Food hunger is best said, it humanizes people. The hungry guys strive furiously for a bit of food. They disregarded their cultural and ethical ideals. The need of food forces a mother to eat, as her child lapses lifeless. Hunger also encourages a girl to reveal herself and her close ones naked to males for bits of food. The Writer portrays a picture of that condition of hunger in the novel:

*"Wave after wave of hunger-stricken masses surging
From the country side. A great many were in no fit state to*



*Consume solid food. They ate and died. To give them
Rice was to kill them." (So Many Hungers! p.286) ¹⁰*

This terrible vision of the callous thirst for riches is juxtaposed with this wealthy narrative of the man's hunger for sustenance. While the barns of greedy and selfish capitalists and dark marketers such as Shri Lakshmi Nathan and Samarendra Bose are filled with rice, countless others die for want. While Calcutta's restaurants are ill and helpless and dying for hunger, their lives and music are bubbling, their destitute in the neighbouring roads and sidewalks. At times the sad and hungry destitute stand above their physical illness and shoot a secret nucleus of sympathy, dignity and courage. A hungry child who has struggled against a dog to get a jam tin lying in the garbage holds out the prize that a young man, looking at him wistfully, can share. A farmer abuses the saintliness of the body to feed hungry people who call their mother. These views of wealth of human spirit contain hope for man's survival in the hands of nature and other beings, despite all the bludgeoning he has to undergo.

Conclusion:

In its many facets, the topic of hunger is explored. In terms of treating this topic on a scale, no other Indo-Anglian literature can offer its counterpart. In the novel, hunger refers to a hunger for food, the hunger of people for strength and pelf; the hunger of the woman for her husband's affection; the desire for independence. Like many of his previous works, this story also contains destitute individuals for some of their key characters. Like Mulk Raj Anand, the bumper was one of the main priorities of Bhattacharya. It is dramatic that the novel works. That is the outcome of the strains between the bureaucratic machinery's operational practice and, on the one hand, the wealthy traders and the innocent impoverished peasants. To demonstrate significant theme concerns, it skilfully combines the primary and subsidiary storylines. Its track is defined by time and events. He gives us a lacerating account of the naked horror of it all with "a pitiless precision and cumulative detail." People have nothing to eat, not even the roots of plants, let alone rice. Innumerable men and animals virtually die of starvation. Hunger eats them up. The theme of hunger for food intertwines with the theme of hunger for freedom. The Indian nationalist movement for freedom forms an integral part of the narrative. So Many Hungers! Also treats the theme of man's unsustainable hunger for money and sex. This is mainly illustrated by the characters of Samarendra Basu and Sir Abalabandhu. Samarendra Basu is already very rich but "he hungered to be still richer" In the story, Bhattacharya concentrated our attention on the economic situations of the farmers and the lack of sensitivity and education



was one of the primary reasons for this. There was also a sense of hunger for political freedom through the Devata and Rahoul characters by adopting the non-violent technique to fight for national political independence. Not in parts, but in its totality, the topic is needed for nourishment. Bhattacharya portrays the horrific images of Bengal's famine and reflects its physical and moral elements.

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