CHAPTER III

THEME
The second half of 19th century marked a flow of literary activity in almost different regional languages in India. This was due to the impact of western learning as well as material consciousness. The approach to literature in relation to life became more direct and realistic than what it was before. The trend was 'social realism', social awareness which found expressions in the writings of few pioneers. Fakirmohan was one among such pioneers in regional language i.e. Oriya.

Fakirmohan's contribution to Oriya literature, objectively saying, to the Indian literature came in with the publication of his famous novel Chha Mana Atha Guntha. This unique novel blazes the trial of social realism in Oriya fiction as well as in Indian fiction. It is remarkable in the sense that poverty and helplessness of the childless weaver couple have been vividly presented.

A writer is a product of his own age and as such he cannot ignore the reality. All great writers bear testimony to the fact. So, they are very much concerned about the suffering of their fellow men. In England Charles Dickens was moved by the callous neglect of the poor and the abandoned and for them he wrote novels which were very popular in those times. The three social novels of Fakirmohan are remarkable for their serious exploration of social reality. "Fakirmohan's world is made of the vigorous and the vital, the rude and the naked, the familiar and the real."  

The presence of evil is as clear as crystal in the fiction of Fakirmohan. Jatindra Mohan Mohanty writes, "The awareness of evil is more clearly seen in Fakirmohan’s novels and stories which are almost en-

tirely immersed in the realities of the contemporary society. The shift in civilization as well as the corroding nature of this shift and the extent to which it is affected the traditional village life and village-folk are seen with astounding clarity of vision".2

Chha Mana Atha Guntha (Six and One Third Acres) and Mamu (The Maternal Uncle) are his popular novels. The protagonists of both the novels suffer from hunger - hunger for land, money, influence, power and sex. Both the protagonists are highly ambitious and their ambition is accelerated by evil motives. "They are like dangerous worms in a blooming flower which cut through it and finally destroy it."3

Fakirmohan being a powerful writer, his novels serve as a model for many of his contemporaries and later writers in Oriya. According to Prof. Mohanty, he writes because of two obvious reasons:

The first for which Fakirmohan was largely responsible was to explore social problems and to aim at social reformation. The second was to project nationalist sentiments which were slowly maturing in the broader Indian scene at that time.4

One discovers feeling of bitterness against British rule in Fakirmohan's Chha Mana Atha Guntha. By analysing his two important novels, Chha Mana Atha Guntha and Mamu one finds the society and the values prevalent during Fakirmohan's time. "Faces and forms, shouts and whispers, grey, dark frames, inarticulate truth languishing like a mute-death-wish before a stunning agression of lies and machievellian crudities open up a world real and profound."5 If we place both the pro-

3. Idem.
tagonists on equal footing, the central theme to which the title of the novels comply with can best be interpreted in term of hunger - hunger for money, power, influence, land and sex.

Money becomes the master of the hero and he tries to cross the limits of power and wealth. In the process of hankering after wealth and power, he is isolated from his kith and kin, from his home as well as society till social justice prevails.

_Chha Mana Atha Guntha_ points our attention to the institution of money lending and how it spreads its net like a cob-web and brings disintegration in rural society. Ram Chandra Mangaraj is the protagonist of the famous novel _Chha Mana Atha Guntha_. He is born to a family so poor and wretched that his parents' identity remains unknown to others. As a matter of revenge for his unfortunate birth he takes it up as a challenge and promises to be rich by any means. His village is under the occupation of a Muslim landlord who is always preoccupied with wasting his time and money in foolish and harmful pleasure in distant Bengal. He never visits this village rather demands payment regularly to keep up his luxurious life. Mangaraj being a shrewd man manipulates the estate in his favour at an auction on payment of all arrear rent and thus outsts the owner from his possession. Not satisfied with this possession Mangaraj being crazy for more power and wealth starts acquiring land and other properties from every opportunity by fair means or foul. He rises to be the number one money lender in his area. "By his efforts, ambitions and value-free choices he has become rich."\(^6\) Fakirmohan gives a full length description of zamidari estate. He describes:

Fattepur Sarsand is the name of Mangaraj's zamindari estate. He uses to pay Rs.5000-00 as land revenue. The estate has 28 batis rent-free and 15 batis half-rented lands Seven manas of the rent -free land is claimed by a co-sharer who made an appeal in the court. The running capi-

---

6. P. K. Mohanty, "Fakirmohan and Social Realism", p.3.
tal of Mangaraj is about 15 to 40 thousand rupees. But this amount is unduly magnified. Actually it is not more than 15 thousand rupees, as he pays income-tax for that amount. There is however, no record of the paddy landing business since the last twenty years. In the granary the quantity of paddy stock as recorded by the stock-keeper, amounts to 2071 mounds, 36 seers and 2 chhataks.

Not being content with the material gain which he has amasculated through illegal means his unhappy soul still pines for acquiring more land from innocent people who live within his territorial state. The land is the one certain value in his life and to possess more by hook or crook, as if is his only dream.

Saria and Bhagia, an innocent weaver couple lives in Mangaraj's village. They are issueless but have six acres and eight decimals of most fertile land in the village. Besides this land the object of Saria's great love and devotion is a black and lovely cow called Neta. This six acres and eight decimals of most fertile and combined piece of paddy land doesn't go unnoticed from the hawk's eyes of Mangaraj. Champa, a notorious woman is Mangaraj's 'maid servant' as well as 'conscience-keeper'.

In order to bring this innocent couple under his control and annex their fertile land into his own Mangaraj engages this evil woman to fulfil his ambition. She rouses hopes in the heart of the innocent and childless Saria if her husband would build up a small temple to the village deity (who was lying under a banyan tree). Champa succeeds in her evil design and traps the innocent couple easily. They mortgage their six acres and eight decimals of land to obtain money required for the construction of the temple. Very soon Mangaraj asks for the repayment of the loan. Neta, the near and dear little cow of Saria is forcibly taken away by

Mangaraj towards payment of interest alone. As a kind of protest against such illegality and injustice done to her and her husband. Sā'ia goes to Mangaraj’s palace and lays down on his verandah lying on the back side of the palace. Saria refuses to eat anything and fasts unto death. The untimely death of Saria due to starvation produces no impact on the cruel and hard-hearted Mangaraj.

Grabbing land by hook or crook is the sole objective of Mangaraj. He is obsessed by the intention of acquiring more and more land because, it is the only means of satisfying his hunger. ‘Ram’ is a divine name which stands for agreement (of feeling, interests, opinions etc.), prosperity and tranquility. But ironically ‘Ram’ is the protagonist of this novel. In fact, of all forms of hunger for money, land, power and sex—have been accentuated through out the book. Therefore C. Paul Verghese is not unjustified when he says, “One of the common themes of Indian novels both in English and in regional languages is the theme of hunger”.¹

Fakirmohan Senapati himself has observed how the villages in Orissa, also in India lay groaning under utter poverty, despair and distress. He has also noticed how the life blood of the simple, innocent, illiterate and poor farmers are being sucked by different parasites like the newly emergent middle class, land-lords and money-lenders. Fakirmohan had the experiences of people of such categories and such experiences obviously had added feathers to his cap. Such wealth of experiences have enriched his mind and attracted him to write about them. Fakirmohan himself thinks that it is not only his mission but moral responsibility as well to drag the attention of innumerable readers on many a wrong, injury and injustice which are being exercised time and again on those poor, simple, innocent and unfortunate folk of Orissa.

Mangaraj's hunger for land continues like an unending stream. He does not hesitate even to exploit his kith and kin to increase the quantity of land which thrilling him with victory and joy. Fakirmohan describes in the following words when he says:

Once his cousin brother Shyama Malla went to town, and there he took onion and cauliflower with his bad companions. Mangaraj came to know all these. Shyama would have been excommunicated completely for the act of taking onion. But it was the good nature of Mangaraj who accepted only 15 manas of land from Shyama's parental property and let him live a normal life.

The head ploughman of Mangaraj once informs him that a few portion of his land has not yet been planted and lying vacant because of shortage of seedling. Mangaraj at once comes out to look into matter. While inspecting the paddy field his greedy eyes fall upon the thickly growth of Shyama's paddy field. Mangaraj like a veteran cultivator exhorts Shyama, "You know nothing of cultivation. Will there be any crop if you plant it so thickly? No space is there for the plant to breathe! Root out. Remove half!"  

Shyama prostrated before Mangaraj with all humility and requested him to spare his seedlings but his request produced no effect upon the hard-hearted soul of Mangaraj. Rather he rebuked Shyama by calling him his brother-in-law and angrily uprooted his entire seedling from the field. Mangaraj said thus:

It matters very little! How ever, you will know the effect at the time of repaying my debt with interest.

Such was the relation between a tenant and a zamindar. G.N. Agnihotri is right to comment on the relation that existed between the
peasant and the zamindar during pre-independent days in India:

The landlord and his tenant in India are natural enemies, because the interest of the two are always conflicting. The tenant therefore has always to keep his landlord and his agents in good humour. Without the timely financial aid of the money-lender and the blessing and patronage of the priest he would simply be thrown into wolves of hunger and social boycott. No doubt it proves untimely very costly to the peasant, sometimes even life-long indebtedness and serfdom to the Seth and priest, but it was indispensable in the pre-independence set-up of things, so long as social reforms and economic reforms did not become a reality in Indian villages. 12

The most perceptible form of this relationship is the indebtedness which results in the transfer of land from the poverty-stricken farmers to the money-lender. The money-lender may not be a landlord or zamindar. But he is the symbol of corruption, oppression and evil.

Chha Mana Atha Guntha focuses on man's insatiable hunger for sex-life and revenge too. The life of Mangaraj is a burning illustration of this kind. He indulges in amorous act with his minion, Champa and Kumari Marua. "His treatment of his wife, the Saantani is inhuman, as one can easily see, but his relation with Champa and Marua is quite human," 13 The number of females who are presented like a procession in Ch. V proves that Mangaraj is a frail human being who is morally weak and he has tremendous weakness for woman. The appetite of Mangaraj for this kind of pleasure is maintained by Marua and Champa privately for some years. "Therefore we find Champa and Mangaraj mingling their voices as they mingle their lips and lip-deep sympathies in defence of property, but they can never mingle their hearts." 14

14. Ibid., p.XII.
across large number of maid servants who work in Mangaraj's house, most of whom are widows. Fakirmohan describes:

Some of these domestics are lean elderly widows, some are buxom young widows, some are child widows, yet some are casual widows and some are widows by temperament and some by choice. They remain like birds of various species flocking into one tree.... All the din and bustle in the mansion and all the squatting and screaming which is heard ceaselessly in the apartments till midnight are the one unmistakable manifestation of the gentility and the feminine grace of these diligent domestics.15

The midnight conversation between Mangaraj and Champa is evident from the description in Chapter-IV of the text:

At this time of the night, in the bedroom of Mangaraj, two persons were taking. They were deeply whispering with each other. One was Mangaraj himself, the other Champa squatting with her hands, resting on the cot of Mangaraj. Both of them were very close to each other. A brass lamp stand was placed on the floor and an earthen lamp was dimly burning in it.16

The midnight discourse between the two establishes the protagonist's concupiscence, i.e., his hunger for bodily pleasure.

The police brings out the sensational story of the sexual relation of Mangaraj with Kumari Marua. Again it is followed by the abduction of the same girl by Babaji Lolita Das, the holy scoundrel.

Mr. Mangaraj is a religious fraud. His show of being a religious man is quite superficial as known from his fasting on the Ekadasi day and the good number of food he takes at night to break his fasting and

satisfy his hunger. It is better known from the following description:

We have to reckon with the fact that on a certain Ekadasi afternoon the Samanta's servant, barber Jaga while tattling in a care-free frame of mind, indiscreetly blurted out that it is the habit of the family at the dusk of every Ekadasi day to keep in the bedroom of fasting devotee one seer of milk, some quantity of parched corn cleared of husk, loaf sugar and ripe plantains in order to bring about a ritual breaking of his fast at an hour of his own choice in the night so that he might find himself physically fit for the next fast.17

The quantity of food items consumed by the hungry stomach of Mangaraj reveals his deceitful behaviour and the gap between the apparent and reality.

Since Mangaraj is a rogue and scoundrel, his disquiet soul is always after revenge against his adversary. The very word 'death' does not mean anything for him. He is prepared to go to any extent to satisfy his hunger for revenge. "A writer can never destroy the Angel in the house, because all the angels owe their immortality entirely to literature and literary imagination. But men of property can destroy them, because it is by destroying them that the killers actually prove themselves to be real men of property,"18 observes Narasimha Das. Fakirmohan describes that Mangaraj's family and Bagha Singha's family are at dagger's drawn and rivalry exists between them due to some reason or other. Mangaraj is very shrewd and litigant and fond of litigation. A traditionally scheduled caste people called 'Damas' were great supporters of Bagha Singh family. But some of them were arrested and imprisoned being convicted of theft. The 'Damas' are very simple and innocent people but they couldn't escape from the spider-net of Mangaraj. In order to fulfil his grudge against them and satisfy his thirst for revenge Mangaraj had to spend lot of money. Finally the very conspiracy

18. Ibid., p.XIII.
of Mangaraj acted boomerang for him. As Fakirmohan tells:

Several inmates in the jail bore a grudge against Mangaraj who had been responsible for their misfortune. Now that Mr. Mangaraj was one of them, they missed no opportunity of abusing and beating him. Out of sheer vengeance they even went so far as to kick him and also slap him in the face as he worked. 19

It is a strange coincidence that "Bhagia and Mangaraj faced each other in the jail. Bhagia who was falsely victimized by Mangaraj rushed at Mr. Mangaraj and bit off he nose."20 Before this the house of Bagha singh was burnt down to ashes by Mangaraj through Champa, his concubine and marred the tranquility that prevailed supreme in their house.

The treatment of hunger for filial love and affection has been significantly dealt with in this book in Chapter X and XII.

God whose will is mysterious has given this fond couple nothing to pet and fondle and treasure as the seal of their marriage. Futile pining for motherhood has led Saria to pitiful artifices and fanciful consolations, she has learnt to pin all her tenderness and affection of the material stamp upon a fond pet which has been living with her like a sweet child. This imperfect solace of her unfulfilled longing is a milch cow which the languishing weaver-wife tremulously calls with tears in her eyes, her own sweet daughter "Neta". 21

Face is the index of heart. Being issueless Saria’s melancholic disposition is manifested through her silent gesture. She once saw a new born child sucking at the breast of a mother, she at once returned without any talk.

We notice that from the next day onward she is very serious about periodic fasting and visits ‘Mother Mangala’ regularly and worship her. “It has often been observed that if a little child toddles up to Saria’s door step from some neighbour’s house while she is working the spinning wheel or winding the thread round the big wooden spool, she involuntarily stops the work because her hands suddenly become limp and her eyes become filled with blinding tears”.22

When Champa comes to know about Saria’s many longings for a child she starts operating her device to entrap Saria into her net. She skilfully manipulates her childlessness and promises that she will surely reduce her unhappiness. Just to get rid of this public disgrace of barrenness and being issueless innocent Saria, submits finally to Champa’s mischievous and harmful proposition.

In the novel Chha Mana Atha Guntha there is a clear reference to death based on hunger. The session Judge’s verdict on the death of Saria holds good to this testimony:

...............I believe, has led Saria to die of starvation and serious mental disorder.23

There is also another reference to hunger in Ch.xxII. Mansingha, the eminent critic on Fakirmohan observes:

Musing for long in hunger and exhaustion, Govinda resolved on a way out of his vexations. He took out his sharp razor out of his barber’s kit, went inside the dark inn and murdered sleeping Champa without much difficulties.24

The novel, as pointed out earlier focuses on man’s great hunger for money and wealth. Fakirmohan equally portrays a woman character.

24. Mayadhar Mansimha, Fakirmohan Senapati, p.68.
Champa for whom money is the heaven. When she acquires it, she thinks that she has conquered the world. The lust for money and wealth never allows the breeding of true friendship or fellowship between two hearts. When greed is the driving force, there can be no union of true hearts. All this is reflected in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*. The very tears of Champa for Mangaraj at the time of his arrest and taken away by police are nothing but crocodile tears. Taking the advantage of Mangaraj’s absence in jail Champa obtains the keys from his master when he is being led away by police. She proceeds to an unknown place after collecting all the jewels and money she can carry with a barber called Govinda as her companion and partner of the loot.

It is also reflected that the loyalty of Govinda to Champa is based on his hunger for gold, silver and paddy fields which ignited in his mind the idea of murder (in Ch.xx)

There are some minor characters in this novel who are after money, power and possession. For example, Gobara Jena, the village Chowkidar is a liar who very often tells lies. The purpose behind his telling lies is to obtain money and influence over other men. Lolita Das, the mendicant is also after money and sex. The priest of the goddess Mangala in Ch. VII, the police constable Gopi Singh in Ch.xx and advocate Ram Ram Lala who can do and undo anything and everything for sake of property and money. "The glimpses of these scoundrels in the book are a roaring festival of rascaling". 25 Fakirmohan describes in Ch.xx about the emerging lawyer class who exploit the clients for sake of money. Advocate Ram Ram Lala is a representative of this class. The constable Gopi Singh comes forward to advise Mangaraj when he is under the custody of police. The author describes:

> Put money in thy purse and put words on the tongue. If your money is out, you may hope to be out of this trap. If you expect

old Cuttack to let you live, you must understand that it expects from you a heavy ransom in return. Fair enough, I should say: Here in Cuttack babies suck money and not milk from their mothers' teats. Be a realist in this hard money-making world.26

In the materialistic world except all other characters one who pines for the well-being and happiness of others with her insatiable hunger is 'Saantani'. She is full of sacrifice and self denial. She is indeed a true representative of the ancient womanhood of India. She is just like an Angel in the house. Fakirmohan describes:

Her heart is the foundation of love and sympathy and pity simply because it remains mysteriously untouched by money, conquest and dominion in spite of the almost irresistible danger of contamination that surrounds it in her husband's home.27

She is very much devoted to her husband in her services to him. She never takes her meal until the guests and other members of the family are fed. She doesn't hesitate even to nurse a maid-servant when she suffers from illness. Even beggars are properly looked after by her. She gives rice to the needy and hungry villagers without the knowledge of her husband. She is always admired and respected by all in the village. Her heart is full of sympathy for the poor villagers and many indebted poor cultivators are relieved of the burden of greater interest due to her interference. Sibu Pandit speaks high of her qualities in glowing terms. "The mistress is an incarnation of heavenly virtues like love, affection, devotion and charity".28 "The Saantani keeps to her room in the mansion and does not speak to any one. No one seeks her out except the hungry and the destitute".29 narrates Fakirmohan. When she sees the suffering of oth-

27. Ibid, p.XII.
ers she breaks down into tears. This proves how the Saantani's hunger for the happiness of others is genuine and unparallel.

The virtuous qualities of Saantani have hardly any place in the dwelling abode of Mangaraj as it is dominated by greed. She has hunger neither for money nor for any material gain. The two characters, Saantani and Champa are contrast to each other and Champa's hunger for money has been well narrated by Fakirmohan.

Fakirmohan's other famous novel Mamu (1913) also deals with the theme of hunger. "Mamu covers the sociological phase in the new cities of Orissa in the second half of the last century, paralleling the little satanic world of petty village men and women bent on acquisition of money and power through unscrupulous manipulation as revealed in Chha Mana Atha Guntha", in Mamu "Phakir Mohan has dealt with the corruption of the petty officialdom, which was then emerging as an influential class in Orissan society".

In Mamu Fakirmohan transfers his attention to a different kind of social tyranny. Here the centre of gravity is transferred from the village to the town and the town is put forward as a breeder of evil and corruption. In Mamu it is not the village zamindar but the villain is a mean and inferior bureaucrat. He is a nazir and symbol of parasitic existence of service class. Natabar Das, the Nazir lowers himself so low in order to obtain money, influence and power over other people. Nazir Natabar Das belongs to middle class family. This middle class has not been able to see much of the world due to its peculiar process of its origin. This class is almost like a parasite ready to devour the fruits of some body else labour. Fakirmohan presents Natabar's philosophy in very clear words:

Natabar Das's strong belief is that the ultimate aim of man

is to earn money and to preserve it. The intelligent alone can earn money and is worshiped in the society. Money never drops from the sky like rain-fall. One has to extract from others by hook or crook.\textsuperscript{32}

Natabars's hunger is always after money and more power. In fact his greatest ambition is to snatch away his nephew's kingdom and become a king. The people whom he exploits are the members of his family as well as his relation. The greed for money makes him so blind that he becomes a devil and devoid of conscience. He is cruel and deceptive and as such disowns his mother and ruins his sister. He goes to extent of preventing his widowed sister from enjoying her legal and rightful property. "All the people of Orissa are traditionally patrilineal, the male descendants in-heriting their parents' property".\textsuperscript{33} But Natabar Das deprives the children of his widowed sister of their legal inheritance. Despite taking over the possession of her entire property his hunger for money and wealth remain unfilled.

Chandamani, Natabar's sister has been married to a young, educated, generous zamindar Pratap Udit Malla Uttar Ray by name. Mr. Uttar Ray breathed his last after a few years of his marriage. In accordance with the prevailing norms the estate should go to the court-of-wards. But Natabar very cunningly forges the signature of his sister and manipulates the appointment in his favour. As such he becomes the guardian to his nephew in charge of managing the estate. He exploits the poor farmers and misappropriates the wealth of his widowed sister. When his nephew wins a scholarship and comes to Cuttack for higher studies he does not take care of him properly. He is blinded by money as well as power. He does not care for his innocent sister and her two children who are hopeless and helpless. He has illicit-relation with a concubine, called Chitrakala; who has been working as a maid-servant in Natabar's

\textsuperscript{32} Fakirmohan Granthabali, p.114, trans. by the researcher.
\textsuperscript{33} EYE TO ORISSA, p.39.
residence at Cuttack prior to his marriage. Though his amorous relation with her has not been properly dealt with yet it is well understood from the description of the author.

Bisakha is the wife of Natabar Das. She is issueless and always anxious to be blessed with a child. Her childlessness is fully exploited by Chitrakala to her advantage. Chitrakala has free access to Natabar's family and is accepted as their well wisher. She convinces Bisakha that she will make her a mother. Chitrakala is very shrewd and hoodwinks Bisakha Dei in no time.

Prabhudayal Bhagat is another character in this novel who is always after doing mischief to others. He wants to satisfy his hunger by doing so. He steals the government cash from the treasury and is responsible for Natabar Das being put to great humiliation and suffering. He is surrounded by Raghab and Chitrakala and wins their confidence. He steals a sum of rupees five thousand with the support of Raghab and Chitrakala and leaves them after stealing. Prabhudayal's Father was quite well-to-do and wanted that his son should become a man in his life. Prabhu Dayal's father once had to court as a witness. He come to know that lawyers were earning lot of money because they were well trained in English. He was thus determined to give English education to his son who would become a magistrate or a lawyer in future. Fakirmohan describes:

If Prabhudayal would learn English he would be a Sahib or at least a lawyer....for whom I would earn money ? Now the old man's conviction is, let all my resources be spent and my Prabhu become a man.\(^\text{34}\)

But the hunger of his father for the prosperity of his son remains unfulfilled till the end of his life. Thus Mamu reflects the filial hunger - the

\(^{34}\) Fakirmohan Granthabali, p.181, trans. by the researcher.
hunger of an old father pining for the material success of his only son.

Pratap Udit Malla Uttar Ray, though not a prominent character in this novel yet his hunger for the well-being of his subjects is quite conspicuous in the text. Fakirmohan describes:

Uttar Ray was religious, took utmost care of his subjects and was very kind-hearted. Any one who had heard of his pleasant conversation would never forget him through out his life. No one has ever discovered if any one who had asked for anything returned empty handed. He stood by his subjects during their distress.

This shows how dearly he loves his subjects just like his sons and daughters. The welfare of his kingdom as well as subjects is his main concern.

Chandamani is the beloved wife of Pratap Udit Malla Uttar Ray. She is always after love and affection from her husband. Like Saantani in Chha Mana Atha Guntha she is an incarnation of womanly virtues. Saraswati Dei too has the hunger for the betterment of her niece, Chandamani. Soon after Chandamani’s marriage Saraswati Dei at once proceeds to Chandamani’s father-in-law house to look into the com­forts of her conjugal life. After the passing away of Pratap Udit Malla Uttar Ray she consoles Chandamani during her distress.

Naru Babu, the son of Chandamani has a different kind of hun­ger. He is determined to get English education at Cuttack as it was the passion of youth at that time. This very hunger of Naru babu was just like a bolt from the blue which upset the charm and joy of the family.

Sadhu Sahu, the merchant is another character in the text. His

hunger for leading a sacred and pious life has been dealt with in Chpt.XXXV of the text. Though he is rich he is very religious. His conjugal life is very happy. He never wants to put others into trouble. He is very simple and helpful when the barber Haribolia meets him on behalf of Saraswati Dei and Chandamani to advance some money to them in exchange of gold ornaments, Sadhu Sahu returns the ornaments and helps them unhesitatingly. He is different from other business men and ever prepared to extend his help to those who are really in need and distress.

Haribolia is a inferior character in Mamu. His hunger is to create joy and laughter in others. Being a barber he performs his duties very faithfully in the society where he lives. Very often he utters the word 'Haribola' which creates laughter in others. Thus his hunger to keep others in good humour is satisfied.

In Mamu one comes across the hunger of a village astrologer who prescribes one black-sheep, certain amount of rice, green-gram and pure gold as a remedial measure to neutralise the evil influence of Mars as it occupies the 8th position in Chandamani’s horoscope, the daughter of Dasarathi Das. This very prescription by the village astrologer reveals his hunger for material gain and success. In villages, astrologer, palmist and priest take the upper hand and exploit the simple, innocent, superstitious and credulous people of the village. According to Dr. Kunja Behari Dash, "The narrow-minded village priest is a parasite who in the name of religion misguides the mass. He is responsible for the continuity of many of the superstitions." 36

Pryaschitta is the last novel of Fakirmohan in which the theme of hunger is vividly presented. One finds feudal competition as well as caste rivalry. Fakirmohan presents the picture of long-standing rivalry.

that exists between an old aristocrat and an upstart and self-generated aristocrat. Their long drawn process of litigation and involvement drift them away into their loss of property. Their rivalry comes to an end when the beloved daughter of the new aristocrat dies prematurely. The two rivals forget their differences and are united. Their hunger for so called status and social dignity and supremacy ends there.

The very first paragraph of Prayashchitta begins with hunger - the hunger generated out of man's ego which has invited various complication and litigation. One finds two communities of Karan caste are at dagger's drawn and arch enemy of each other. Both of the parties are equally powerful, fabulously rich and ego centric. "They would rather die but not submit. The boundary of two zamidars are adjacent to each other. One needn't go far off in search of a dispute". 37

Baishnab Charan Pattanaik, son of late Bishalaksha Pattanaik is the head of the village Chandanpur as well as Karan caste. Being head of his community he takes this as his credit and suffers from ego which gives birth to his hunger creating more enemities and bitterness against his adversary Sankarshan Mohanty. Sankarshan Mohanty has no family background of his own but he is now the richest man of his community. He now spends money lavishly just to win the support of as many men as possible. His hunger is to be united with the main stream of Karan caste. He wants to achieve this by any means. The popularity of Mr. Mohanty increases like anything. This causes envy in the heart of Mr. Pattanaik because he always wants to retain his social stand as the chief of his community. The supporters of Mr. Mohanty and Mr. Pattanaik become intolerant when they come across each other. Therefore litigation brings more cases to the court and the hunger of the two is to see the downfall of each other. Sankarshan Mohanty being inferior caste spreads his net to capture Gobinda Chandra, the only son of Mr. Pattanaik as his son-

37. Fakirmohan Granthabali, p.409, trans. by the researcher.
in-law. The consequence is that Gobinda fails to escape from the trap and is compelled to marry Indumati, the beautiful and only daughter of Sankarshan Mohanty without his parents' knowledge.

After few days of his marriage once he comes from Cuttack to his father-in-law's house without any information and knocks at the door of his beloved wife at midnight. His newly wedded wife in fear shouts loudly, 'thief', 'thief'. In the darkness of the night her husband is mistaken to be a thief and is beaten by the watchman. Saita, his most faithful servant recognises his master and takes him to Cuttack for treatment. Indumati thinks that she is responsible for the misfortune of her husband and takes revenge upon herself by jumping into the river. Gobinda's mother too dies brooding seriously over her beloved son. Both Mr. Pattanaik and Mr. Mohanty repent for their misdeeds and are united with each other by forgetting their differences. They abandon their vast landed property and live a hermit's life at Benaras. Gobinda is too united with his father and father-in-law and accepting their advice returns to his native place and handles the zamindari of two estates and lead a very pious and sacred life dedicating himself to the welfare of his people.

Prayashchitta also reflects the hunger of a mother to be blessed with a son. The pattanaik couple are without any son. Therefore Saantani, wife of Mr. Pattanaik has observed and performed, several religious rites before their family deity Govinda chandra in order that she will be blessed with a son. The "son is named Govindachandra after the name of the deity." Another hunger of the mother for her beloved son Govindachandra remains unfulfilled till the last breath of her life. She has been brooding over the marriage of his only son. She has no second thought except the marriage of his son --- how to bring a beautiful and virtuous daughter-in-law into the house. This hunger of the mother could not be

38. Fakirmohan Granthabali, p.412, trans. by the researcher.
materialised as the son married elsewhere without her knowledge.

Saita, the barber is an old servant of Baishnab Charan Pattanaik. He has a hunger to serve his master wholeheartedly. His intention is to keep his master in good humour and happy under any circumstances. He is highly devoted to Govindachandra and even prepared to sacrifice his life for his master. When Govindachandra is beaten at his father-in-law's house he takes him to Cuttack and spends every pie he had saved for his master's treatment. He is very very happy to see that his master is getting round slowly. When Gobindachandra abandons his home and accepts the life of an ascetic he too leaves his home and goes out in search of his master. He is an exceptional character whose concern for his master is much more than anything else. He is just like the character Adam in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Adam's loyalty and devotion to Orlando and his father is well known in Shakesperian comedy. He is a relic of the ancient feudal times who has lived by its values all his life.

To quote Shakespeare:

**Orlando**: O good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world,
When service sweat for duty, not for meed!
Thou art not for the fashion of these times,
Where none will sweat but for promotion,
And having that do choke their service up
Even with the having; go it is not so with thee. 39

**Adam**: Master, go on; and I will follow thee
To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty. 40

As Adam is to Orlando, Saita is to Gobindachandra.

Mr. Pattanaik's hunger for his son's English education and social recognition has been described in the text. Although he knows nothing about


English language yet he has a passion for educating his son and sends him to Cuttack for English education.

**Pryaschitta** also deals with man's hunger for love - the basic hunger which governs the life of man and woman. In this connection Chapter 33 is particularly significant. Soon after his marriage is over Gobindachandra returns to Cuttack to prosecute his studies. Gobinda is a young man with poetic potentiality in him. Rajib lochan writes a letter in the form of a poem cunningly and obtains the signature of Indumati and sends the letter to Gobinda. Gobinda is overjoyed to receive the letter from his sweet-heart, his beloved wife. His love sickness increases and his hungry heart pines for being united with his newly wedded Indumati.

Gobinda too receives news about the illness of his mother. He makes up his mind to meet his wife first in stead of his mother. He at once sets out for his father-in-law's house. The river is full to its brim and darkness has already set in. The boatman is not prepared to row the boat in such inhospiteable condition. Gobinda is so passionate to meet his wife that he requests the boatman to carry him immediately to the other side of the river. His intense desire is that he would walk up to his father-in-law's palace in cover of darkness and give a pleasant surprise to his beloved wife. Fakirmahon tells that having crossed the ferry Gobinda loses his patience and becomes restless and looks at the abode of his wife again and again.

Rajiblochan is the nephew of Sankarshan Mohanty. Through him Mr. Mohanty strives to satisfy his hunger of revenge against Mr. Pattanaik. His hunger would be satisfied only when his daughter Indumati would marry Gobinda, the son of Mr. Pattnaik the chief of the Karan community. Now Rajib Lochan bribes Sadananda, the so called nephew of Mr. Pattnaik in order to mould Gobinda marry Indumati. Dr. J. V.
Boulton tells us about the cunning design of Sadananda:

Sadananda then tried to project into Gobinda's mind an image of himself as a reformer and patriot, whose every act would benefit society and his fellow-country men. Caste divisions were at the root of their nation's political subjection. Marriage to Indumati would be a blow for social equality and a step towards political freedom. It would end this ruinous litigation which was beggaring his father and Sankarsana Mohanty, and burdening their helpless tenants. 41

Sadananda tries to convince Gobinda that a son is not morally bound to marry according to the choice of his father. In order to satisfy his hunger of materialising this object he further convinces Gobinda that an educated wife alone can satisfy the needs of an educated husband and the decision of Gobinda is final. Gobinda is fully convinced and thus in accordance with his choice and choice of his friends the marriage is solemnised with Indumati without the knowledge of his parents.

Even after the marriage of Gobinda with Indumati, the hunger of Sadananda is not satisfied. He wants to harm Gobinda more. He does not inform Gobinda about the illness of his mother in time rather he induces him to proceed to his father-in-law's house. This brings about nothing but tragic consequences which follow thereafter.

We too come across a type of hunger - the hunger to reform the society is well perceptible in Prysaschitta. The educated young men are carried away with the idea of social reform. Kamallochan injects into the mind of his friends the idea of social reformation. He puts forth his hunger convincingly. According to Kamallochan the educated youth is quite sensible and should fight against all types of superstitions and transform the society. To reform the society is not a simple task. At the outset obstacles would come but they should go ahead with their noble objectives leaving behind all criticism.

Having passed matriculation, Sadananda and Gobinda proceed to Cuttack to prosecute their higher studies. They come in contact with Rajiblochan. The very hunger to reform the society drive the educated youth for which they organise meetings intermittently. Their chief objective is to see the upkeep of the Oriya language as well as literature. To fight against caste system which is nothing but an obstacle towards the contemporary economy established during the British rule in India as also to the national unity which is so vital to win national freedom is another objective. Mayadhar Mansinha describes about the prevailing situation and the importance of Govinda—the key role he is to play towards social reformation:

The boy was handsome and sincerely interested in intellectual pursuits, though not very brilliant. As he entered college, he was accepted by his undergraduate friends as a budding poet also, as was looked upon as one of the hopes, not only of his family, but even of the Oriya people as a whole. These early batches of Orissa’s undergraduates, to which Gobinda Chandra belonged, were pretty enthusiastic about national problems, like social reform. They had their ‘discussion clubs’ (alochana sabha) in which young, handsome, poetic and aristocratic Gobind Chandra shone as a sort of cynosure.

Gobinda now makes up his mind to marry Indumati and is prepared to make an end to family dispute as well as caste distinction that exists between his father and would be father-in-law. Speaking of the spirit of the educated Indians of the time A. R. Desai tells us:

The spread of democratic ideas such as individual liberty kindled urges to revolt against caste distinctions and inequalities among the educated Indians. Anti-caste movements were born out of this ferment and slowly gathered strength through main pillar of caste, endogamy, remained invulnerable.

---

42. Mayadhar Mansingh, Fakirmohan Senapati, p.71.
When Indumati comes to know that her dear husband has been branded as a thief by the public she curses herself and thinks that she is responsible for the misfortune of her husband. The hunger of committing suicide drives her throughout the day. At night she commits suicide by drowning herself in the river which is flowing near the palace.

Prayaschitta also reflects the spiritual hunger of man. After the untimely death of his beloved daughter Indumati, Sankarshan Mohanty relinquishes his zamidary soon and embraces the life of an ascetic. He moves to different pilgrim centres of India for spiritual solace. At Vrindaban he meets his enemy Mr. Pattanaik who too is leading the life of an ascetic or Sadhu. Sankarshana Mohanty falls down at the feet of Mr. Pattanaik and begs forgiveness for his bad deeds. He now puts up himself in the cottage where Mr. Pattanaik knows as ‘Bada Vairagi’ (senior ascetic) is staying. He is devoted to worship of Lord Krishna and surrenders himself completely to Him. Mr. Madhu and Mr. Pattanaik have realised that communion with God is the source and nourishing force of spiritual life. Man should be in tune with God. Out of tune man is nothing. It is only the realisation of God or transcendal consciousness which alone can put an end to all the ills of life and rebirth.

The intercaste marriage of Gobinda with Indumati, the daughter of his adversary is a terrible blow to Gobinda’s mother. She dies of shock. Such a tragedy becomes quite unbearable from Mr. Pattanaik. He realises that his ego is responsible for this tragedy. He abandons his estate and moves around for spiritual cravings. Gobinda considering himself to be the root cause of the misfortune of his wife as well as his mother goes out on a religious tour and at last reaches Vrindaban where he meets his father and father-in-law who are leading the sacred life of a Sanyasi. He discovers that his father and father-in-law are no more worldly. They have already left worldly life and are now perfect Sanyasis. To realize God has been their spiritual hunger. To quote D.S. Sharma “Blessed are
those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. More blessed are those who hunger and thirst after the presence of God."

One finds that the search for the salvation of the soul has been the pre-occupation of these two sanyasis who are now acknowledged as Bada Vairagi and Sana Vairagi i.e. elder sanyasi and younger sanyasi respectively.

The theme of hunger is visibly present in some of the stories of Fakirmohan. ‘Dak Munsi’ (The Post Master) depicts the filial hunger of Hari Singh, a postal peon who suffers due to ill-treatment and misbehaviour of his son. The only hunger of Hari Singh is to see his son Gopal become a post master in a village post-office. Therefore despite financial constraints he never wants his Gopal to drop his school education. When the post master informs Hari Singh about his retirement, Hari Singh becomes impatient and hopeless presuming that his hunger would never be fulfilled. He is so much upset that he is unable to sleep. His joy knows no bounds when he finds that his application for extension of service is granted by his higher authority: His heart dances with joy and thanks God for his mercy. He looks forward to the day when his Gopal would turn out to be a Sahib or postmaster Babu and his misfortune would be ended.

To realize his ambition Hari Singh takes great pain to educate his son. To his good luck the son is appointed sub-postmaster in Makrampur village with a salary of twenty rupees per month soon after passing minor examination. Hari Singh now remembers his wife that she should have survived to see with her own eyes the son becoming a Sahib. His long cherished desire is now fulfilled. But after few months the son starts misbehaving with his father and finally drives him out of his house throwing him into a most wretched and miserable condition. Hari Singh returns to his village and spends the rest of his life there.

'Patent Medicine' is Fakirmohan's another popular short story. The hero of this story is Chandramani Pattanaik whose hunger for drugs, drinks and womanisation have been revealed here. His wife Sulochana is a very strict lady on moral consideration and highly devoted to her husband. But Chandramani Pattanaik being addicted to opium and alcohol wants to be away from the clutch of his wife in order that he would enjoy those things to his heart's content. Once he cleverly manages to escape from the notice of his wife and being overdrunk returns home late night. In such an alcoholic state of mind he tells very ill of his wife and due to her strictness how his long suppressed hunger was not being fulfilled and this single opportunity in a single day fulfils his two months' thirst. The following lines give evidence to the fulfilment of his hunger for liquor and lady love.

"..........I have been in love with this little lady over three years. She had not forgotten her my friendship. She sent for me the moment she set foot at Cuttack............. She was overjoyed to see me. She had got everything ready. Ganja; opium, the hooka, everything ready. ..................

I ate my fill. A wonderful time!"45

'Birei Bishal' is Fakirmohan's another story which reveals man's insatiable hunger for money. Raghab Patra has a fourteen years old daughter, Kamali whom he wants to give in marriage on condition that the would be son-in-law must pay him one thousand cash in advance. He has no second thought besides this condition. The very statement of Raghab Patra to Mr. Mishra who has been mediating on behalf of Birei tells, "I am telling you frankly, the bride's price is one thousand rupees cash, and I shall not take one rupee less."46

45. FAKIRMOHAN GRANTHABALI. p.514, trans. the researcher.
46. Ibid., p. 560, trans. by the researcher.
When Mr. Mishra requests Birei to be liberal and reduce the price to five hundred rupees Patra turns a deaf ear and repeats, "It is no use continuing this discussion Mishra. If you have thousand to offer, say this. If not, take your route." Kamali has weakness for Birei. When she threatens her father that she will drown herself in the tank Raghab Patra at once reveals his monetary desire before his daughter, "I have fed and brought you up for 14 years and you say that you will drown yourself in the water. Die! Let me see how you will die. Before you die you just give me my 500 rupees which I have already spent towards your food and clothing for the last fourteen years. After that you can die if you so desire. I have no objection." It is due to hunger for money that he is ready to dispose his young daughter Kamali in marriage even to a pretty old man. He is not prepared to accept any explanation or advice about the harmful consequence such marriage with wide difference of age is likely to bring. For him money is the only consideration. At last the marriage is settled with Birei. To his utter dismay, on the wedding day Kamali takes away all her father's hoarding to her father-in-law's house leaving her father to rot with his fate.

'Madha Mahantinka Karya Suna' is another story in which the theme of 'hunger' is vividly presented. Madha Mohanty is a very greedy man who dies of hunger i.e. hunger for money. He has a daughter whom he wants to dispose of in marriage even to a very old man who would give him minimum seven hundred rupees. The marriage is at last settled. When he hears the sound of the marriage drums he at once rushes to the gate to realize the amount from the groom. While walking hurriedly his head dashes against the door and after few days he breathes his last. In 'Savya Jamindar' (civilized landlord) Fakirmohan has displayed
the insatiable hunger of man which is the root cause of destroying one self. Rajiblochan’s thoughts and ideas have been influenced by English education and therefore he considers himself different from others. He has started criticizing some of the practices which have been traditionally accepted at home. The English education fills “his head with an insatiable appetite for discussion and argument.” Due to his extravagant habits and his hunger for implementing abstract ideals at home as well as in the society, though he is a moneyed man he is reduced to nothing. The theme of hunger also continues in the story ‘Dhulia Baba’ (The Dusty Fakir) The rural folk by nature are simple and credulous. When they find any baba or sadhu they prostrate before him and seek his blessing. Their hunger finds its best expression in this story. Fakirmohan narrates thus:

Next day, people streamed to the temple in hundreds from morning till evening. One was suffering from diseases, another had lost a bullock, a third had a case in the law court and so on. Many barren women had also sent their offerings to be placed before the sacred feet of the Mahanta with the hope of being blessed with children.

Thus so many people have so many hungers. The Baba is not a real Sadhu or Mahanta but a fake one. While cheating the public he falls unconsciously into the fire and breathes his last.

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s first novel So Many Hungers! which primarily deals with the theme of hunger tells us a shocking and frightening tale of pangs of sufferings of the working class of people of rural Bengal who were thrown out of their own environments, and were put to trials and tribulations caused by the Bengal famine of 1943. The peculiarity of this famine is that it was caused not by any natural calamity but by the Denial Policy of Rice of the British Government, This famine of 1943

49. J. V. Boulton, PHAKIRAMOHANA AND HIS LIFE AND PROSE FICTION, p.333.
surpassed all other previous famines of Bengal. It was caused by the cold blooded policy of British rulers at a period of the second World War when the Allied Forces were being defeated at the hands of the Japanese and the Germans. Many books have been written against this background but Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hungers!* surpasses them all in the vivid delineation of the untold sufferings of the peasant class of people of rural Bengal. According to Harish Raizada, “Bhabani Bhattacharya’s finest novel *So Many Hungers!* (1947) is one of the finest piece of creative writing born out of the agonised torment of body and spirit endured by the sacred soil of Bengal during the hideous famine years and the early stages of second world war.”  

It is primarily devoted to man’s hunger for food, though it also closely analyses man’s other urges. It is a story not only about so many hungry people but also about so many types of human hunger. The ‘*So Many Hungers!*’ of the title are those for political freedom (in case of India), for imperial expansion (in case of axis power), for money (in case of the capitalists who create an artificial food scarcity by hoarding rice), for food (in case of starved Bengali poor), for sex (in the particular case of the sex-starved soldier who rapes the destitute rustic girl Kajoli and in general, of those who frequent the Calcutta brothels, now unusually well-stocked with needy starvelings), for human dignity and self-respect (in case of Kajoli, who rejects the brothel), and hunger as spiritual weapon employed by the freedom-fighters who go on a hunger strike in jail. In the opinion of M.K. Naik:

> The novelist has succeeded best in dealing with the hunger for food, and the scenes-depicting the havoc wrought by the famine among the rural poor in Bengal, constitute some of the finest examples of social realism in Indian English fiction.

---


The novel begins with Rohoul's hunger for a new world order based on eternal moral values and higher ideas. Though a scientist, he is essentially a man of ideals. He is haunted by the desire to see the coming of a new epoch to be determined by higher values and ideas. This is the reason why he becomes unhappy and uncomfortable when he discovers that the Allies during world war II are fighting for victory only, and not for values and ideals. Like his grand-father Devata, he acts under the "the passion of the soul". To him nothing is more precious in life than this. Rohoul and his ideal, Devata, are an embodiment of man's hunger for the world of permanent values ensuring a happier life for the common people. Both of them are dedicated to this noble cause with unflinching faith despite odd circumstances. Like him Rohoul is possessed with the desire to create a new enlightened world order out of a world in ruins. Being a visionary, he also longs to achieve cosmic light and mental peace by transcending ordinary day-to-day life. His own unique hungers make him not aware of the ordinary hunger for food or freedom. But he is worried about the common people. He reflects:

Why could he not escape from the oppressive darkness of Bengal fare into cosmic light? That was his true concern. Not the people's hunger for food or freedom, for he had his own separate hunger. His own hunger was his true concern. Why had he lost his intellectual poise?...... He knew in his spirit the hungers of his people. And they were his hungers, too. 

Indeed Rohoul has a strong feeling for "all humanity", and has an insatiable "hunger for a happier life" for the common man. He has unshakable faith in the lofty values of life, and measures everything and every matter with the 'finer values'. When a man-made famine sweeps over Bengal, he is one of those very few persons who most willingly and

55. Ibid., p.176.
freely offers the help of suffering humanity. While his father, Samarendra is a mean profiteer partly responsible for the famine, he unhesitatingly brings helpless and hungry pregnant woman to his home and helps them in every possible manner.

More than Rohoul, Devata, who is more than seventy years old lives amidst the villagers at Baruni far from the affluent life of his son and grandsons in Calcutta. He finds the illiterate and nearly uncivilized rustics essentially good, having unfailing trust in human values. He says to Rohoul, "...... I am proud of my people. They are not bright and knowing and civilized like you city-breds, but they are good people. Centuries of hardship and strain have not destroyed their faith in human values." He has become one with the poor village people whose welfare is the primary aim of his life. He has not only the hunger for ideal life but also represents it with all its dignity, courage and grandeur. That is why he imparts strength and hope to everyone who happens to come in contact with him. Rohoul always looks forward to meeting him so as to get strength and hope. Even Kunal, Rohoul’s younger brother has a thirst for basic human values. Without caring for his parents, he goes to world War II to play his part in the great event. He talks to his elder brother about doing good to a fellow being. He tells him that one of the noblest acts a man can do is to help a man to solve his food problem. He himself does such an act by resigning his post, so that some one else might have a chance to get it.

The novel mainly focuses on man’s great hunger for food. Bhattacharya artistically portrays hunger for food as the most fundamental reality of human life. The book points a detailed and graphic picture of the Bengal famine of 1943 which is a heart-rending scene of starvation and death. Every where in the villages of Bengal people are undergoing terrible pangs of starvation. This tragedy in its own way is very much

56. So Many Hungers I, p.22.
painful and touching. People have nothing to eat, not even the roots of plants. Innumerable men and animals die of starvation. Hunger actually eats them up. The writer gives a very detailed, graphic and moving picture of this hunger and the heavy loss of human lives resulting from it. Famine shows such distressing pictures of human sufferings as men have never witnessed before. Hungry children cry themselves to death. Millions are uprooted. Leaving their homes and relations with deep agony they go to the big city of Calcutta just to see their hopes for a better life. Bhattacharya describes:

Streams of desperate men ventured out of their ancestral homes in search of food hanging on the foot board of railway train, riding on the sub-baked roofs. But the police threw up barriers. Then the men trekked the meadows and roads, ten thousand village streams flowing city-wards.57

Ironically the city where people go has never grown any corn. It has consumed the corn products of the villages. Horrible scenes are common place things. The mothers kill their own children for want of milk and food, the hungry infants are seen sucking the breast of their dead mothers. The mothers sell their daughters and even send them to brothels for the sake of food without understanding the full impact of their actions.

People know no other word except food, but there is no food for their hunger. There are sights which make man’s blood freeze with horror:

The jackal had eaten the woman’s left armpit and breast, and a part of the ribs. She was breathing still, her eyes wide open but vacant.58

Corpses and vultures are visible every-where in Bengal. Vulture-eaten dead bodies keep company of famished uprooted humanity, moving sorefoot towards Calcutta in the hope of getting food. To Kajoli and

57. So Many Hungers!, p.114.
58. Ibid., p.193.
other starving people life has shed its young dreams. All that Bengal has yielded and all the hidden roots of earth have been plucked clean, boiled and eaten away. Inspite of all this, there is no word in the Government circle or among the wealthy about the enormous hunger and terrible devastation of the peasants. Mr. M. S. Venkataramani observes:

The failure of the British-controlled Government of India to formulate adequate plans to meet the crisis, the unhelpful attitude of the provisional Government having surplus stocks the ineptitude of the Govt. of Bengal to concert effective measures of relief following the natural calamities and the insensitivity of many Indians to the suffering of their own brethren -- these tragic developments were evident for all to see. No Indian can look back on this period of ethical and moral breakdown without experiencing a sense of shame and horror. 59

Kajoli in a state of extreme hunger eats the entire bread which she by chance gets from a soldier. Without thinking for a minute about her hungry mother and brother. And when the soldier's hand creeps down, to her breast, she is "still drugged with eating". 60 She doesn't know what is going to happen to her asexual act resulting in painful abortion. However, the two satisfy the hungers of each other for the time being the soldier pacifies Kajoli's fearful hunger for food, while he satisfies his long standing hunger for a sexual intercourse with a woman. Thus one suffers from the need to satisfy hunger for bread and the other takes advantage of that situation to satisfy his hunger for sex. The irony of the situation is that we do not find her protesting or rebelling against such social injustice. In accordance with Gandhian thought, "A starving man thinks first of satisfying his hunger before anything else. He will sell his liberty and all for the sake of getting a morsel of food. Such is the position of millions of the people of India. For them, liberty, God and all such

60. So Many Hungers I, p. 149.
words are merely letters put together without the slightest meaning". Like Kajoli and others, ten million peasants grow under unbearable hunger, while rice is being moved out of Bengal. Though there are provisions for, many cannot be fed. Many of them are not fit to eat solid food and need a special diet and glucose. So when they take ordinary food, they die. Many die of the excitement, which they can not bear. Some die of at the sight of food at free kitchen in Calcutta. The destitute have to find out banana skins in the piles to eat lest hunger should eat them up. Consequently most of them suffer from dysentry. The roads and streets are dirty and unhygienic. The hospitals are already full to the capacity with patients, and hence many of them cannot be admitted into them. Even peels and rotten vegetables are not available to the unfortunate villagers. Some of them catch and eat even rats. The destitute*, says the novelist, "became a race apart insensitive, sub-human". Many pregnant woman die of hunger before they can give birth to their little ones. There is in this novel an extremely pathetic description of such a young woman lying dead near Rohoul's house.

Hunger makes human beings inhuman, and quite often the starving men quarrel fiercely for a little bit of food. The ravages of hunger compel a mother to eat food, while her child is lying dead in her lap. Hunger also drives a young girl to show herself naked to men for the sake of getting food for herself and her near and dear ones. People hurt by bombs during these days, are promptly taken to hospitals, but nobody bothers about those who are hurt terribly by hunger.

Bhattacharya vividly describes the agony of the hunger driven people who many times explore those garbage cans which are their 'food-bowls' out of which they pick before the 'city's scavenger folk' come

with their vans. Sometimes they pick at night because of less competition, and fight among one another like animals, over a dust-bin.

Bhabani Bhattacharya presents the theme of hunger for food, not in fragments, but in its wholeness. He not only describes the gruesome scenes of famine in Bengal, but also delineates its physical and moral aspects in depth. Rohoul reflects on the physical side of the famine thus:

Death would claim two millions, perhaps three millions more would escape by the skin of their teeth, but they would never be strong again, especially the children and the rickety babies who had so little succour, who had been exposed much to sun and rain. A physically shattered race would grow up in the ninety thousand villages of Bengal. That was the physical aspect of the story.\(^\text{63}\)

Bhattacharya brings out, in detail, the inner degradation, the moral implications of human hunger for food. When hunger bites people harder "the finer feelings began to be deadened."\(^\text{64}\) For example, a starving mother continues to eat food at a free kitchen, even though her child dies in her lap. Then there is another example of depravity caused by hunger. A destitute woman gets some handful of rice after strenuous efforts through out the day. When at sunset she lights fire and is about to take rice along with her three children, a hungry man pounces on her and runs away with the grain. Again, hunger debases, even the younger brother of Kajoli, who has grown under the idealism of Devata. He is a noble young boy free from selfishness. He is always in the habit of sharing even his best possessions with his friends. "But hunger had debased his warm, innocent spirit. He had become a hoarder. He hoarded for himself and his sister and mother the wild green figs on tree-tops which none but he could reach."\(^\text{65}\)

63. *So Many Hungers!*, p. 189.
64. Idem.
Bhattacharya also unmistakably reveals the essential goodness and nobility of the hungry people. Their moral uprightness, dedication to ideals and unselfishness have been amply shown. For instance, even the young boy, Onu faces the famine heroically, and also inspires others to do so. When there is nothing to eat in the villages, he is determined to collect a lot of figs so as to save his and his friend's near blood relations from living on roots and herbs. The starving old mother of Kajoli is an embodiment of compassion, unselfishness, strength and hopes. Then she comes across a starving young woman with no milk in her breast for her dying child. She not only gives her cow to save her infant's life but also gives her possible encouragement, help and hope. Again there is an aged villager too weak to walk, and still he holds out his carc of free food to Rohoul with the request that he should not be refused the pleasure of seeing a more needy person eating his share.

The author has clearly shown the cause of the famine. He has shown how simple village people are made victims of such untold suffering by the man-made calamity. After going through the novel the reader knows it fully well that three factors are responsible for Bengal famine the nefarious profit motive of the profiteers like Sri Abalabandhu, Samarendra Basu and others who hoard foodgrains for making money and thus create artificial scarcity, the World War II which causes destruction of crops and the urgent need for foodgrains for future, and the utter indifference of the British Government because of fast spreading National movement. The last factor is the most important one showing it as the cause of the Quit India movement:

"Quit"; cried all India "you have done us some good along with much evil. For the good you've done, you have been paid in full. The accounts have been settled. Now for God's sake, quit"66

Man's insatiable hunger for money and sex-life is also revealed in So Many Hungers! The life of Sri Abalabandhu is the burning example

66. So Many Hungers!, p 212.
of this kind. He is a curious character. He is the senior Director of Cheap, Rice, Ltd. and is the master of corruption. He is the architect behind the huge storing of foodgrains. He has come to Bengal from another province and has accumulated a great deal of wealth. He is in the good book of the British Government and has been bestowed with extraordinary honours. He is not satisfied although he is endowed with two fold blessing of wealth and honour. More than money and titles he is obsessed by sex:

The man had a curious complex, however. He took an odd pleasure in relating the sex adventures of a person he called my friend, under the thin disguise of my friend, so Samarendra and others felt sure, even if they had no evidence in support of their belief, he expressed his own shameless perversion, an innate morbid streak.67

He shamelessly describes, in detail, his friend's various sexual acts with different young girls. His most favourite conversation being a girl's first sexual act with a man. He himself is also very particular about indulging in the sexual act with a young virgin. Although he is as old as fifty he takes a lot of care of his appearance to look young. He spends money lavishly for his sexual pleasure with destitute maids. He is devoid of social conscience. He is of the opinion that brothels have become big business and that there is a fine balance between demand and supply in this sphere of life. His hunger for more riches and sexual appetite is evidently reflected in all his actions and conversations. The moneyed people have a propensity for poor starving girls coming straight from villages.

Similarly, Mr. Samarendra Basu is an epitome of man's never ending desire for wealth and titles. His soul aim in life is to amass money at any cost, and he does not feel in the least for the suffering of the common people. He is one of those businessmen who accumulates

67. So Many Hungers, p 181.
wealth and goes on purchasing lands and things. "Rich, he hungered to be still richer." He has grown to be the richest man and has been honoured with the title C.I.E. His hunger for money continues even up to his old age. He has desire to offer his children all kind of material pleasure.

World War II provides him the golden opportunity to exploit the situation to his best advantage. He invests his all in share market and becomes rich in no time but due to his hunger for money he goes a step further. He starts the "Bengal Rice Company" with some like-minded men and thus depriving the common people of rice helps foreign rulers indirectly in creating the artificial famine and making millions homeless and throwing them into hunger and death.

So Many Hungers! depicts India's hunger for political freedom also. The Quit India movement of 1942 which is a part of Indian National Movement forms an integral part of the narrative. The novel refers to Jawaharlal Nehru's trial in Gorakhpur prison. His statement during the trial is cyclostyled and circulated. The statement emphatically brings out India nationalism, determined to achieve complete independence for the country. It is stressed that the British Empire, however mighty and proud, will not be able to suppress the freedom loving millions in India. Also it reflects that nothing is more powerful than the elemental urges of freedom, food and security which preoccupy the vast masses of India. The novel ends with brilliant remarks about freedom and its possible dawn in India in the near future.

So Many Hungers! deals with the basic hungers which control the lives of men and women. We notice a beautiful exchange of ideas between Kishore, the husband and Kajoli, the wife. The newly married couple in midst of their sweet exchange of words discuss the fundamental hungers of man and women. Kishore recites few lines from a

68. So Many Hungers!, p 184.
city song which means that man is a bundle of hungers who can never be complacent till he breathes his last:

I know, I know, beloved
Not in this life will hungers be sated
I know, I know, beloved. 69

Kishore points out that man is always possessed with many hungers, such as, his rice should be heavy on the stalk, he might appear tall in the eyes of his kith and kin, etc. Kajoli also states her view from the standpoint of a lady:

"Women, wed, has no hungers left to be filled. It is not so with man."
"Woman, wed, has one big hunger for home--no other. Little hungers make part of the big home hunger, they belong to it as the spoke belong to the cart-wheel. Woman, she has one big wheel of hunger. Man is a single spoke in that cart-wheel-nah, may be he is the axle. And..." 70

Hunger strike- that is, self-imposed hunger-is another variety of hunger delineated in this novel. Due to the impact of Gandahiji the Indians fight for freedom of the country and take resort to hunger-strike. When Bengal is solely affected by all-pervasive starvation, the patriots mad with the urge for freedom, resort to hunger strike. Dadu, who is a prisoner in Dehradun jail-house, launches a hunger strike. His fasting unto death creates a sensation through out India because of advertisement in the newspaper. He is the inspiring force for Kajoli and hundred others."....She saw him in jail-house in the garb of convict, wielding his body's hunger like a sword, strong as ever, and true and deathless" 71

69. So Many Hungers!, p 95.
70. Ibid., p. p. 95-96.
71. Ibid., p 205.
Bhabani Bhattacharya is an eye-witness to the Quit India Movement of 1942 and the Bengal famine of 1943. Therefore he has been able to present us an authentic record of all that happened.

This novel has got more appeal to the readers because the causes of great famine-striken people are drawn more elaborately and more realistically. It may be said without reservation that the author of So Many Hungers! has painted in a lucid and eloquent language a true and vivid picture of the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 which is not at all imaginative. Imagination, if there be any, is only in the location of the place, or in the name of the characters. So Many Hungers! is indeed a valuable record of that Great Famine created by the British for the perpetuation of their rule over this part of India.

Thus the novel reflects that author does not deal with surface or superficial realism but goes deeper in order to bring out the significance of particular dramatic situation.

He Who Rides A Tiger, having the same background of famine and the World War II as the earlier novel, deals mainly with the theme of hunger. The novel throw light on the darkest chapter in the history of Bengal—"A plague took the land in its grip, the plague of hunger in the wake of war, 1943." The profit mongers are behind the artificial famine. The Government has turned a deaf ear to the activities of the money makers. The food stuffs hidden away, with the result that the markets are empty. The cultivators have also fallen victim to starvation. Foodgrain is being sold in the market five times the old rate. The peasants sell their land under compulsion, weavers sell their looms, artisans sell their


tools and fishermen their boats. The foreigners and urban Indian pur­
chase the grain for the poor peasant and reduce Jharana to a "hungry

town" and its fleeting residents to starving paupers begging for a fist­
ful of foodgrains. The destitutes move to the city.on foot boards and cry
out, "Hungry we die ..Give us a few grains of food, Baba.... give us a
ride for the great city." Scenes of hunger comparable to those of So
Many Hungers I abound in the book. Men and women die of hunger; a
few sell their household articles for food. Some women take to prostitu­
tion. A little boy eats a dry crust of bread from a dustbin. Hunger comes
as a curse. It causes innumerable miseries to the destitutes. It also
comes as a golden opportunity to the rich to make money. B-10 refers
to two types of hunger:

Two great hungers had struck the land of Bengal in the
wake of war; the hunger of the masses of the people up­
rooted from their old earth and turned into beggars and
the hunger of the all owning few for pleasure and more
pleasure, a raging fever of the times. Uprooted women with
their own kind of hunger had to soothe the other hunger
had to cool the raging pleasure---fever with their bodies.

Kolo, a blacksmith of Jharana town, is one of the millions of starv­
ing people who go to the city in quest of food. He is the hero of the novel.
Driven by hunger and despair, he leaves his village and dear daughter
Chandra Lekha to try his luck in the big city of Calcutta so that she may
never "have to fear hunger". Ironically, it is during period of his life
that he is famous for eating much and is proud of his appetite. He can
eat more than fifty mangoes and would empty a big bowl of curds at a
time. But now he has to live without food for the whole day.

74. Bhabani Bhattacharya, He Who Rides A Tiger (Delhi : Hind Pocket Books, 1954),
p.18.
76. Ibid., p.54.
While travelling on the foot board, he carries a small quantity of rice which happens to fall down in the dust and is eaten up by the hungry people. After sometime Kalo too feels hungry and "a grauding in his own belly, which was hard to bear. He had never been so hungry in his life." 78 When he is about to fall he sees a man travelling first-class having bunch of bananas and is immediately arrested by the police. Five days later, he confesses in the court. "I was hungry, sir. A madness came upon me. It was because I thought I had to eat or I would die. A madness came upon me. I had to live." 79 He gets three months imprisonment with hard labour. Meanwhile, Chandra Lekha also sells most of the essentials of the house, including the bed mattresses and her memorial medal. Unlike Kajoli who is in the end was willing to take to prostitution, Lekha is brought to harlot-house by deception. Kalo's chance-discovery of his daughter in the harlot-house turns him against the unjust society. Then he arranges "Shiva's coming" with the help of two seers of grams and avenges himself on the people.

While this incident could have been an act of individual remonstrance, the processions of destitutes shouting, "Food ! Food ! We demand food for the hungry!" 80 are signs of collective protest. Bhattacharya refers to such processions:

```
Food : Food : Food for the hungry : The
Cry filled the air of the great city.
Something had seized the people so that
Their apathy was broken. 81
```

The rich offer milk to the temples and the river Ganges for their happiness and prosperity and never cared for the suffering humanity. When they are told that mother Ganga will be insulted if milk were poured

78. He Who Rides A Tiger, p.p. 31-32
79. Ibid, p.34.
81. Ibid., p.167.
into waters, while children die of hunger on the river bank, one of the richmen objects, "What absurd talk! Tens of thousands have died of hunger. What difference would a few more or a few less make? The issue at stake is bigger than these useless lives." they are absolutely indifferent by the procession of the hungry men crying out" we demand food for the hungry, 'food for all ' 'work for all ' Jail for the rice profiteers'. Insipe of large scale arrest and beatings by the police, these demonstrations continue. So many heart-rending scenes of hunger are witnessed everyday. There is a pathetic tale of Obhijit, a distitute lost child, who is adopted by Lekha and her father.

We also observe, hunger, not only separates Kalo from his family, profession and native place but also throws him into prison and makes him serve at a harlot's house where he meet his daughter, too. It makes him non-believe in God, good and truth and drives him close to evil and falsehood. Towards the close of the narrative, he proclaims:

......I am a Kamar from afar. Hunger drove me from my native earth. Hunger took me to jail. From there I walked into hell itself. I saw the face of evil... Nothing is as true as falseness; The more true you become. The rest of the answer is, evil is to be faced and fought with its own knives.

Man's burning hunger for worldly pleasures, wealth and financial profits is also dealt with in this book. Money which is brighter than sunshine and sweeter than honey is all important for them because it is the only means of satisfying their hunger for pleasure. Sir Abalabandhu is one such person in this novel. "Infact of all forms of hunger, these

82. He Who Rides A Tiger, p.130
83. Ibid., p.155.
84. Ibid., p.227.
two-hunger for food and hunger for pleasure-have been repeated and accentuated throughout the book.  

The moral and spiritual values of man are adversely affected by hunger. People's faith in God and religion is shaken. Vishwanath cannot understand why his grandchild, Minu, dies of starvation. He questions Kalo, "only tell me why did my little grandchild have to die of hunger? Would you blame a three-year-old girl for not having faith?"  

Both Kalo and Vishwanath are unable to revive their faith in God. Hunger makes the sufferer a rebel protesting against God and Society. In the company of Vishwanath and Biten, the germs of a rebel and disbeliever in Kalo grow very strong and is ready to take revenge upon God and man. The miserable life of Ratandas of Shivpur village fills Kalo with questions such as these "would the god bring back to him one of his kin, a son, a daughter, or their mother? Just one, for he dared not ask for more. Would not the God take pity on a man who was close to the end of his day?"

Remorse and torture caused by hunger for food fills both father and daughter with the burning desire to avenge upon society and social laws. Kalo, assumes another name, Mangal Adhikari in disguise and took revenge against those who were responsible for creating famine. This fills him with a sense of victory when he says to his daughter "Not only will we never again starve but we are having our revenge." He explains to Lekha "... Let them pray to the false God. Let them seek benediction from a Kamar. Let their proud women, limbs draped in jewels and chastity bow down to a girl who had almost fallen?"

87. Ibid., p.126.
88. Ibid., P231.
89. Ibid., p.95.
The elimination of caste, even its consciousness is one of the intangible benefits of hunger. In Bhattacharya's novels, the hungry destitutes are unmindful of caste or creed; they live, work and demand food together. Kalo says to Motichand that like a hungry chamar or untouchable boy, "even a hungry Brahmin boy would eat from garbage can." Thousand of hungry people eat together at charity kitchens, unmindful of their caste and creed, thus completely ignoring the caste-ridden society.

The suggestive title of the novel, *He Who Rides A Tiger* can also be interpreted in relation to the theme of hunger. K.K. Sharma co-serves:

To sit and ride on the tiger’s back implies man’s quest for riding on hunger. Just as the tiger is a ferocious animal and unhesitatingly kills man, so is hunger. Kalo and Lekha, two principal characters in the novel, suffer terribly on account of hunger and lose their home, place, profession, morals and goodness. Hence, they decide to ride the tiger symbolising relentless hunger.

The author writes "Lekha sat with him on the tiger’s back and they must ride on." Bhattacharya also uses the device of contrast to highlight the problem of hunger. It is quite common for Bhattacharya to present two scenes of hunger for food and hunger for wealth side by side. Kajoli, Onu and mother suffer from hunger for food, Sir Abalabandhu and Samarendra Basu have the hunger for money. The two worlds of luxury and poverty exist side by side.

Some critics have expressed doubts over the authenticity of description of hunger by Bhattacharya. Paul Verghese thinks that Bhattacharya's portrayal of hunger and famine is cheap and exaggerated whereas K.R. Chandrasekharan feels that "most of the situations depicted in the novel So Many Hungers! are true to life in the country even at normal times not to speak of a time of unusual hardship." Dorothy Blair Shimmer feels that Bhattacharya's "fictional representation was based on fact—personal observation or news accounts of actual incidents."

Music For Mohini. Bhabani Bhattacharya's second novel, was first published in 1952. Its subject matter and background are of course different from that of the first novel. It is a woman-dominated novel and we come across different kinds of hungers painted by the novelist. The basic hunger related to man-woman relationship is of obvious concern. We notice a young girl's hunger for a lover and a young man's hunger for a bride of his choice; a newly wedded woman's sincere desire to offer worship to her husband; a young wife's hunger for glimpse of her husband's face and for his constant company; a newly wedded woman's deep yearnings while she is going to her husband's house for the first time. There is also intellectual hunger for knowledge. Besides a robust visionary preoccupation with a new world order a man's hunger for food; a father's earnest wish for a suitable groom for his daughter and many other vague and strange hungers of human beings.

In the earliest part of the novel, as the story unfolds itself at Mohini's parental home, her father, the Professor is shown in conflict with his Old Mother. Mohini's father is a highly educated and modern-minded man. He is very hopeful about the future of his daughter and prepares her accordingly. He is inspired by the norms and fashions of the modern times.

93. K.R. Chandrasekharan, p.32.
94. Dorothy Blair Shimmer, p.29.
To materialise the future of his daughter he admits his daughter to a Convent school and allows her to become a radio singer much against the will of his Old Mother. He does not see any harm in Mohini's songs being recorded and sold in the open market. As the Professor is a man of modern ideas he naturally wants to marry his daughter to an educated, urban-bred and cultured boy. He rejects outright two proposals because the former party demands a heavy dowry and the latter one comprises the uncultured lot who examine Mohini physically as if she were an article for sale at an auction. Then there arrives a third party. This time the prospective groom comes with his friends. All of them are bright young men, good mannered, gracious and courteous. Having seen the girl they approve her. The Professor appreciates the boy wholeheartedly and agrees to marry Mohini to him. The pursuit of a suitable groom for his daughter and its fulfilment is well revealed by Bhattacharya when he "A good match" he admitted, for he had heard of this brilliant scholar, he had even seen him once or twice at the university."

"A good match from every point of view.................."\textsuperscript{95}

But the Old Mother doesn't like the match. Bhattacharya describes the discord as follows:

..............He is not the right sort for our Mohini, He and his friends have no respect for elders. They smoke cigarettes in your presence did not they ?

Old Mother's face was a picture of rage. Her eyelids flickered and her gentle mouth stiffened.

'send me away to the Holy city. I won't have no mouthful of your food, or let water pass my lips.'\textsuperscript{96}

As a consequence of this difference of outlook the issue of marriage is left unsettled and Mohini remains unwed. The difference be-

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Music for Mohini}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p.44.
tween the mother and the son are, however, soon after resolved when Jayadev appears on the scene and is found to be the most suitable groom for Mohini. He is accepted not only by the Professor and Old Mother, but also by Mohini herself as he is a great scholar and master of Behula village.

The first reference to hunger we find as used by Bhattacharya when the Professor protests against his mother on the issue of her unwillingness to send Mohini to a Convent school. The Professor protests thus:

First of all, let me go hungry, I will have to stand up right for three full hours- just try it lecturing boys till my tongue aches, all on an almost empty stomach. Let this be my lot. God! 97

It is not uncommon for any young man or woman that each has an innate hunger for a lover and feels happy when it is genuinely fulfilled. Mohini is the central character in the novel. She has been portrayed realistically in as much as she is very restless in her early youth. We notice a lot of reflection about her restless youth. She feels restless to know that her class-mate Reba gets love letters intermittently from her several lovers, the lovers being Mony, Pankaj, Borun, Sukumar, Premananda and others. The author describes:

"A life without love, Mohini mused with an unaware smile, a life without love is like jasmine without scent....". 98

"She felt happy, though somewhere in her was a secret ache because no man sent her love letters" 99

Mohini is full of sympathy for her teacher, Miss Sen. Though she has completed more than twenty nine years of her age she is still a

97. Music For Mohini, p.17.
98. Ibid., p.20.
spinster. During her life time, perhaps, she has never listened to any word of love from any one. She discovers a love letter in her class and demands the whole class to tell the culprit whom it is addressed. Prior to that it travelled from seat to seat. How the young girls are more interested in love letters rather than their class-room lecture is beautifully described by Bhattacharya.

"With an arch, meaningful glance she had given it to the girl next to her, and Shanti had put it between the leaves of her book while she read and re-read it with great absorption. Then she passed it on. From hand to hand the pink sheet travelled." 100

When none of the girl students claims for the love letter, Miss Sen firmly puts it in her black hand bag. Mohini thinks that it would soothe her love-hungry heart. "Perhaps she would read that letter again in the privacy of her room and enjoy the sweet words. Well, let her hungry heart have its fill." 101 No one ever wrote any love-letter to Mohini. Therefore she wishes that she, too must read the words of love addressed to her school friends. When she discovers that even fourteen-year-old Bidu, the cook woman's daughter has some one to admire her and please her heart, she feels deeply pained. She thinks herself to be "empty, funeral needless." 102 As a result when opportunity knocks at her door to become a singer on All India Radio due to her sweet and mellifluous tone, she gives vent to the folk-song of her liking. And this folk-song in nothing but the reflection of religious lyric as of the lovelorn heart of a maid is reflected in the following lines:

Lives and lives have I beheld His grace, and the eyes are not soothed,

100. Music For Mohini, p.22.
102. Ibid, p.25.
Ages and ages have I held Him to my breast,
And the heart is not cooled .... 103

Just as the maidens like Bindu, Reba, Mohini and others pine for their lovers so also an unmarried young man like Harindra deeply yearns to have a maiden of his choice. Being a doctor, he is charmed by the beauty of Sudha. But it is 'caste' that stands as an impediment on his path of love. Sudha is Brahmin by caste. To marry her is to violate the age-old social custom and tradition and to invite curse to him-self. She once suffered from typhoid and got rid of this disease under the medical treatment of Haridra. In course of treatment he falls in love with Sudha. He feels an urge which he is unable to control and so frequents to her residence. The love-hungry-heart of Sudha for Harindra is well revealed in the following description:

One day, when she had fully recovered, and he had no reason to visit her as a doctor anymore, she had cried out in dismay. "So soon am I well? If only the fever" ----. She had cut her sentence short and hung her head in shame. 104

When Harindra goes to meet Sudha he listens to the dull chattering of her uncle, "while the one for whom his eyes hungered was hid by the walls." 105 He realizes that inter-caste marriages are quite common in cities, but the villagers of Behula will never tolerate this and they will treat this to be a sacrilege. Though, sometimes such kinds of thought droops his spirit, his irrepressible hunger for her remains uncontrolled. Bhattacharya describes his hunger for marrying the girl." He would marry the girl he needed, needed with the deep hunger of his spirit. Let Behula do what it could. His heart swelled, and he felt a swift surge of power. He would break Behula." 106

103. Music For Mohini, p.120.
104. Ibid., p.161.
106. Idem.
Being a non-Brahmin, his love-hungry heart at once transforms him into a revolutionary spirit and he wants to bring out a metamorphosis in the society. “Harindra is the only character who represents 'New Free India, strong because he was aware after dark ages because he hated all chains' and by circumstances as well as temperament he was cut out for a rebel. On professional level he was opposed to his father's traditional Ayurvedic system, and on personal level he was ready for inter-caste marriage with Sudha who, though called 'Saturns Eyesore, was a real supporter of his views. Harindra is active and dynamic.”

Harindra, the young medical practitioner is visionary and revolutionary. The author represents Harindra's thoughts in the following language:

“He would break Behula. In this fight with reaction he was not alone. He was much more than Harindra.”

Mohini after having married to Jayadev comes to Behula as the new mistress of the Big House. Her hungry heart is full of love for her husband, and she wants to be admired and loved by him in turn:

“Why would he not lift his eyes and take notice when she had made herself pretty for him? One evening while he sat writing in the lamp light, the elsewhere look on his face, there was a burning in her for his admiration. ....She put on a sari of blue Benaras silk with a silver thread work, and adorned herself with pearl bangles, necklace, earrings and a gleaming tiara. She wore kajal and lip rouge. Her face a lighted lamp of gold, illumined the mirror. And the words that tongue could never shape lay in her heart and lent their tenderness to her face: I hunger for thy love.”

109. Ibid., p. 124.
The novel also reflects a maiden's hunger to sacrifice herself religiously to her husband-lover. Jayadev's married sister is two years older than Jayadev. After she has seen Mohini as a suitable bride for her brother, Mohini is possessed with a desire to be lovely. Her longing for beauty is well expressed in the following lines:

All at once she had a great desire to be lovely till this hour she had not doubted her beauty and it was as though her body longed to be a gift, fit for offering.\textsuperscript{110}

Bhabani Bhattacharya paints in her the necessary requisites of a Hindu maiden embodying the "ancient hunger to offer worship"\textsuperscript{111} to her lord. On the nuptial day Mohini offers her heart to the stranger, her unknown husband as any other Hindu maiden used to do on such a day. And then the hunger to see the face of her husband dominates her." Long had she been preoccupied with his looks and hungry for a glimpse of his face......\textsuperscript{112} Like any other newly married woman she sees dreams of love of her newly wedded husband. She wishes to surrender herself whole-heartedly to him. Her very desire is to exhibit and offer him all her gifts. In addition to all these, she has an irresistible hunger for his physical company. Bhattacharya remarks:

The simple fact that you were married to him acted upon you as a living force, so that you were hungry for his physical presence, your limbs warmed with a new yearning and you felt a tremulous need for his eager response.\textsuperscript{113}

Mohini, however, after her marriage finds herself out of place in the Big House of Behula. She is unhappy because Jayadev cannot provide her much physical joy due to his noble ideals and intellectual hunger. Her heart beats for his love and she longs for it more and more.

\begin{itemize}
  \item [110.] \textit{Music For Mohini}, pp.54-55.
  \item [111.] Ibid., p.55.
  \item [112.] Ibid., p.63.
  \item [113.] Ibid., p.73.
\end{itemize}
Whenever she beholds her beautiful counterance in the mirror she is overwhelmed with joy and experiences an urge for her husband's love which remain inexpressible even for the tongue.

Love is always not one sided. It is also reciprocal. A newly married man has also an urge for his newly married young wife. Though an idealist and visionary, in spite of his several engagements Jayadev is sometimes very much upset by his hunger for the physical company of his winsome wife. When Mohini informs him about her sacrificing blood to goddess, Jayadev prevents it in time and saves her from a great ordeal. On their way back, the ladies carry the palanquin and a hunger for her entire being overwhelms him:

```
".............he had seen the changing grace of her face.
.................................................................
.................................................................
He started ahead at the palanquin fast bearing her away and he felt a hunger for her face and her voice for her smile, her fragrance and warmth." 114
```

The novel also explores another kind of hunger i.e. intellectual thirst for knowledge, philosophical and social. The soul remains dissatisfied till it is fulfilled. Jayadev who is a visionary and an idealist, expects his wife to be different from an ordinary young woman with basic physical needs and requirements. Jayadev is gentle and essentially a scholar. "Even within three days of their marriage Mohini discovers that Jayadev is not what she would desire a husband to be. The study of ancient lore has given Jayadev an idea---which he wants to put into practice---that he and Mohini could be like Yajnavalka, an ancient sage and his intellectual wife Maitreyi. As a result of this, he expects his wife to share in his scholarly pursuits. Repeatedly he tells Mohini that he would like her to be saintly Maitreyi as long as he is engaged in his schol-

arly work and that she could become his dear Mohini as soon as the work is over."

Like Gargi and Maitreyi he needs the constant co-operation of his dear wife in his intellectual hunger for knowledge. Bhattacharya describes:

The Vedic woman lived a thousand years before the start of the Christian era. She was no household drudge, no decorative being, but an intellectual, striding beside man in a tireless quest for knowledge.

Then Jayadev, eyes still on his book had longed for another glimpse of Mohini who had some mystic resemblance— the idea came upon him in a flash—to Maitreyi. That semblance enchanted him.

Though in the beginning she is little frustrated in her ambition to lead a glamorous life she doesn’t give vent to her dissatisfaction. She is resilient by nature and soon overcomes her dejection. She endeavours to rise to the expectation of her husband, and even starts taking lessons from him in Sanskrit. Even Jayadev, when he comes to her comes as a teacher not as an ardent lover he seeks from her inspiration and the co-operation of a Maitreyi to attain his goal. Though she is fatigued with these ‘tiresome’ lessons, she is not disheartened. She realizes that her married life can be peaceful and meaningful only if she adjusts herself to the wishes of her husband. She shares his ideals and renders him positive help in his programme of social reconstruction. Keeping this in view, she starts giving afternoon lessons to the village women. This idea is liked not only by Jayadev but also by the women of Behula.

The author describes:

It was an exciting idea, and it worked. The class assembled in the cool shade of a great banyan in the garden...

...she read aloud passages from books and short stories from magazines. She showed her pupils pictures. Through all this material she revealed, as best as she could, the nature of life. And she revealed the face of the motherland. How she loves this work! 117

The hungry heart of Mohini to support her husband for social transformation is partially fulfilled. Thus Mohini not only comes closer to Jayadev, but also rescues the backward, ignorant and illiterate rural women from the darkness of orthodox living and shows them a glimpse of the modern times. The novelist observes:

So around the conservative code of the village, Mohini built something of the city-in spirit. Rooplekha, if she knew, would have been amazed. But it was give-and-take. The wall of isolation breached, the grateful women took her into their hearts. 118

The village women identify the young mistress of the Big House with themselves. By identifying herself with the women of the village, she brings the Big House closer to the ordinary houses of Behula. Mohini thus tries to prove worthy of her husband and establishes deep communion with him. Bhattacharya describes this communion by making Jayadev sit on the very tree-perch on which Mohini used to sit daily. It is a symbolic act, suggesting a union of being. The novelist describes:

Her eyes sharpened on his face. She was unsure of what, precisely, he meant, and then her feelings eased. Her look was bright with joy. 119

118. Ibid., pp.151-152.
119. Ibid., pp.147-148.
Mohini has her hunger to be helpful to her husband in every way. Moreover, she is such a devoted wife that despite her being a product of the new age that discards all blind faith and superstitions, she agrees to give her heart’s blood to the Virgin Goddess “with grace, if not with faith” in order to save Jayadev’s life and please her mother-in-law. Jayadev, too, realizes her devotion and love to him. Awakened to her peril he rushes to save her from making sacrifice. In these moments, there is a spiritual communication and true harmony between them:

His mind was with his wife torturing herself. For his sake His heart ached for Mohini His work completed, his mind free, he would be back with Mohini and nothing would come between them.

At first, of course, Mohini finds life at the Big House almost unbearable. As she has been brought up in an altogether different type of environment. She has to struggle hard before she is able to accommodate herself comfortably at Behula. She spends time meditating, communing with trees and pond but nothing quenches her thirst for life as much as the small child Rajan’s nearness whom she adopts as her brother to pour her heart upon. She longs to go back to her father to the city to sing for the radio. She feels “a little involved and therefore happy when asked to participate in the village uplift and social reconstruction work.” Owing to her mother-in-law’s sternness and old-world spirit, Mohini sometimes feels sore about her behaviour, but with the passage of time she begins to realize that the mother is not completely devoid of basic human qualities, compassion and sacrifice. She therefore de-

120. *Music For Mohini*, p.166.
121. Ibid., p.178.
velops a great love and sympathy for the old lady.

Jayadev is "a well educated forward looking young man with a genuine zeal for bringing about certain reforms in the society." He is gentle no doubt. "His clean-cut mouth and chin reflect the firmness of his purpose." He has a hunger for higher knowledge with a view to bringing about a new world order. He is wedded to some ideals, lofty ideas and some set of values for the purpose of improving life as if he is the incarnation of a disquiet soul. He is always hungry for the 'new dawn'. Jayadev's hunger will be satisfied "only when he learns that life cannot be postponed, even when one is engaged in the pursuit of ideas, however scholarly they be."  

Jayadev is the hero of the novel. As an exponent and ardent practitioner of social reform he tries to build a new order in India. "He is deeply concerned about his country's social freedom, finds his village Behula and its big House to which he belongs, symbolic of his country with its social petrification caused by centuries of blind faith and iron traditions." After receiving higher education he decides to live in village. He has a definite aim because of his hunger for social freedom and believes that his aim will be materialised only if he lives in the village. He says that he wants to make Behula a socially model village and it will be an example for the whole of Bengal. When he takes on himself the task of building a new society he has to fight with many antagonistic forces, especially his mother who stands for traditional values. The concrete steps he takes in this direction includes his rejec-

123. H.G.S. ARULANDRAM, p.28.
125. H.G.S. Aruladram, p.28.
tion of a university job. To reinforce his strength he calls his doctor friend Harindra to help him in his task. With his help he is ready to perform what he calls, 'a social operation'. They fight against superstition, ignorance and disease and gradually overcome the scorn of the people.

The final success comes to Jayadev when he stands face to face with his mother and refuses to allow his wife, Mohini to pour blood from her breast at the feet of the Virgin Goddess for a son. He will not let his wife be a victim of his mother's misguided faith in the horoscope. This is a sign that son's progressive attitude has at last defeated the mother's orthodoxy. Jayadev does not want to be a spiritless copy of ancient Hindu Man. "He aims at bringing out the true meaning of ancient thought exactly the same way Gandhi wanted to clear the misinterpretation of Hindu religion."127

Jayadev along with group of other enlightened youth of the village wants to bring about regeneration. They want to popularise widow remarriage and condemn child marriage. Jayadev pleads that an old man cannot marry unless he chooses a widow. The next item on his social programme is that no girl under sixteen should be married. Their aim is partially fulfilled when they succeed in preventing the seventy years old money-lender's fourth marriage with young Paru and ask him to marry a widow instead. Other noble ideas which they cherish for are to eradicate untouchability, ignorance and superstition.

The greatest hunger of the Old Mother is for a grandson. It is understood from the chief benediction that she invokes on Mohini when she arrives at the house is that she should have offspring. This steadfast desire to ensure the continuation of the family heritage drives her to demand Mohini to offer blood to goddess as a prayer for a son.

Besides these, Bhattacharya is so much hunted by man's hunger for food that in Music for Mohini, we find allusion to food several times. Heeralal is the younger brother of Mohini. While going to her mother-in-law's house for the first time she suffers from hunger and tells Heeralal, "I am so hungry." The brother feels sympathetic towards his sister because "hunger was a form of suffering he could understand." Mohini feels hungry even on her marriage day because a bride was not to touch food till the marriage was over -- that was the practice. Finding his daughter hungry on the happy day of her life the Professor, her father hates this practice and objects against it in the strongest possible term. When Mohini enters the threshold of her mother-in-law's house Jayadev's sister invokes the blessing of Goddess Lakshmi upon her sister-in-law. She touches the bride's right hand with a pot of freshly cooked rice, meaning "Let the hungry ever receive out of thy mercy."  The mother-in-law too feels her hunger and says, "You must be hungry and have your noon meal". "The 'hungry girl' Mohini is uncomfortable because of waving lamps and trays in her face!"

We come across the allusion to the Bengal famine of 1943 which has produced a far reaching consequence in the village Behula. Jayadev, the hero and the protagonist with his spiritual zeal and nobler spirit helps the village to escape from starvation. Jayadev calls for volunteer workers and builds a thousand palm-leaf shacks for the destitutes in the open meadow. He gives free meal to the hungry mass. When his barns are empty he takes out all his money in the banks and brings grain from the black-marketeers and hoarders in cities. Such a man-made hun-

128. Music For Mohini, p.81.
129. Idem.
130. Music For Mohini, p.60.
131. Ibid, p.82.
133. Ibid, p.84.
ger is responsible for "the living skeletons of men, women and children with dead eyes and balloon bellies, tottering from street to street, lying down exhausted." The famine cannot do much havoc in Behula and passes away. "The Big House had become more than ever a legend."

The need for economic freedom is emphasized by the novelist. Jayadev understands this fact that social slaveries are deeply rooted in economic bondage and hence society can never march forward without economic freedom. What is absolute need for man-- is food. The famine teaches him that a hungry man cannot be free in spirit.

The devotee's prayer for the blessing of God, childless woman's steadfast desire for a child, the wife pining for her husband or husband pining for his wife and the hungry man's crying for a mouthful of food-- these various kinds of hungers find their best expression through the following folk-song sung by a cartman:

You say the name of Hari on the hundred beads of rosary
And hope to attain Him,
Oh, delusion!
The barrier woman's cries for a child,
The lone spouse cries for a mate,
The hungry cry for a morsel.
All these cryings, full throated, passionate,
mixed together ------

A Goddess Named Gold (1960) is another novel of Bhattacharya "It is significantly original in many respects due to well-considered thematic decision. The originality of the novel lies in the fact that despite apparent improbability of described events, the book is profoundly plau-

134. Music For Mohini, p.123.
135. Idem.
A Goddess Named Gold presents a critique of materialistic values which are enveloping post-independence India. Not like so many hunters! and He Who Rides a Tiger, A Goddess Named Gold does not concentrate upon hunger for food, but on other types of hunger --- hunger for gold, miracle, spiritual experience etc. The title is also indicative of man's intense desire for gold, power and possessions. The quest for gold by man is repeatedly dealt with in this book. Of course, simultaneously it is frequently satirized. Gold is nothing but a form of wealth and property. The book also reveals man's greed, his lust for money pursued unscrupulously for attaining greater purchasing power and higher social status. "It has become the most venerated goddess, worshipped mostly by the greedy and the selfish and has thus weakened our society by jeopardizing the social harmony and by defiling human relationships." Gold has become the measuring rod for judging one's power and greatness. Bhattacharya writes, "A man's worth was best stated in terms of his gold."

A mad race has started since 15th August 1947. A mystic value has been set on the yellow metal, so that there is a game for men to play. The very suggestion that comes out is Gold which alone governs the earth, especially in the present India. The very possession of Gold makes one a real master.

The Seth is a great merchant of the village, Sonamitti. He is the real incarnation of love for gold. He is always mad after gold and wealth. Business is business for him and he has no fellow feeling at all. He is...

ceaselessly busy with multiplying his profit and acquiring wealth in all possible manner. "He, like all possessors of gold, represents an impersonal force born of the lust for private possession." He is mentioned as 'Sethji' in stead of being referred to by his personal name, Samsundar. It is the combination of Shyam and Sundar meaning black and beautiful. As opposed to it, Samsundar, the Seth who poses to be beautiful externally is all black inside. He is a devil who exhibits himself as a demigod, his mind being a big workshop of evil. Lakshmi, his own wife, who knows him more than any one else, says of her husband "He is a monster." He had earned bad reputation through his own attempts of exploitation of the poor, the whole village being "neck-deep in debt to him and tethered to his stiff rate of interest." If one takes a loan from the Seth one would be surprised to see the loan doubled itself in twelve months and a year's interest is charged in advance as soon as the loan is advanced. He is so much indifferent that he does not hesitate to remind even his wife of the humbler status of her parents and their heavy indebtedness. The people of Sonamitti are fully convinced of his hard-heartedness. They have realized, "Words will melt a ripe coconut, but not the Seth's heart in its cast-iron shell."

The Seth is a materialist out and out. To him "silver in his hand had more meaning than a halo about his head." it seems as if his hunger for material possession is unbounded and he is dedicated to the goddess named gold. The Seth wished "the new wealth out of a habit, the habit of getting rich, richer" and "making money was his duty as it

140. Ramesh K. Srivastava, Perspective on Bhabani Bhattacharya, p.155.
141. A Goddess Named Gold, p.43.
142. Ibid., p.9.
143. Ibid., p.34.
144. Ibid., p.194.
were", which "alone gave his life its meaning and value."\(^{145}\) Out of his passion for accumulating wealth he knows the trick of covering the market" by watching his betters during the rice-famine in Bengal four years before", when "three million men and women had to die so that there could be thirty new millionaires."\(^{146}\) "A self-interested man that he was, the Seth used to advocate the principle of Laissezfaire which guarantees full freedom to every individual to amass wealth for himself and for his successors."\(^{147}\) The philosophy of the Seth is as clear as crystal. Bhattacharya narrates thus:

Go your way, friend, and I shall go mine. Do what you must, brother, and I shall do likewise. Every one has to water his own plants. Each for himself. The immutable law of living."\(^{148}\)

The business of the Seth and his exploits seem to be very much realistic. He had a network of shops in the rural areas and the "Gay Peacock House" the urban area was remarkable success for him. Besides, he involved himself in the election business not for sake of prestige but "for a flat ten percent from the contractor, the shark of sharks who would anyhow make his bagful of profit."\(^{150}\) The Seth wants to combine in him the powers of two Seths—the capitalist and the politician. The Seth decides to contest the election to the District Board which is to come off as soon as the country is free. The sale of the saris, therefore, is not an act of kindness but a calculated step in self-aggrandisement."\(^{151}\) His sole aim is to gain power and influence in or-

---

146. Ibid., p.31.
150. Ibid, p.35.
151. K.R. Chandrasekhran, p.89.
der to make money. Among the calculated and elaborately staged 'acts of kindness' arranged by the Seth is the distribution of sweets to all the urchins employed by him for his election campaign. The ambition of the Seth is to become a deputy minister. Thus his political hunger is combined with his material hunger. Even the capitalist system in free India is described as a python which devours everything. The political Seth with a Gandhi cap on his head is nothing but a cheat and the cap itself is a deceit. The many sided hunger of different robbers come up in free India. The author describes thus:

There was the money-Seth, of course, to whom freedom meant a chance to seize fields of trade vacated by the aliens. Then the Seth of politics, ready to dupe the people with the power of his glib tongue. The official Seth, a man of arrogance ready to change masters without a change of mentality, human chattel open to the best offer. The Seth of religion with gods for sale. The Seth with a Gandhi cap on his head and the cap itself a deceit. And several others on the list.

Interestingly enough when the Seth comes to know that Meera, one of the village girls is gifted with the power of turning copper on her body into gold by the help of the amulet provided to her by the minstrel, her grand-father, he never hesitates to spend money left and right on her in order to acquire more and more gold. Being realistic in the description of what has been happening in free India the author presents a connivance between the capitalist and the politician, both mixed together in one in the Seth. The temptation for gold is well described by the author.

Realizing that "gold has the last word" on this earth the Seth watches Meera "with his enormous hunger" and tries his utmost to acquire as much gold as possible by means of her magic amulet.

153. Ibid., p.83.
154. Ibid., p.242.
theme of hunger further projects the activities of the Seth and other activities are centered on the netting of his own cobweb in which he could catch more and more of innocent creature for gratifying his hunger for gold. The Seth discovers a natural logic in the working of the spider. He cunningly applies the popular theory of survival of the fittest for the justification of crooked deeds of his won and many others like him. At one place he says thus:

Your house of business is safe from my attack. Carry on. Try the fool. Fatten on their meat.  

This is the true of the Seth and the class to which he belongs.

We come across different schemes of the Seth and his aspiration for turning base metal into gold. Meera, the key figure in the novel, innocently makes a dig at persons like the Seth when she remarks, "This is copper, Grandpapa. With a gold wash it looks good enough. Hard to understand why people hanker for pure gold or at least silver."

But the truth is that innumerable people are possessed with the hunger for gold. As pointed out in the novel "The gold hunger once awakened, will not be denied. The people of Sonamitti know it pretty well that Meera "has less hunger for riches than everyone else in this village" and that she "will bid everyone share in the riches, if they ever come."

The irony lies in the name of Lakshmi who happens to be the wife of the Seth. She is a lady with an exception who never attaches any importance to gold like any other common lady of the society. She is a virtuous lady and the embodiment of love for all. The grand father's remark on her is worth-mentioning, "There is no gift as precious as your

156. Ibid, p.74.
157. Ibid, p.221.
158. Ibid, p.228.
love."\(^{159}\) She is against her husband because of his greed, money mindedness and unsympathetic attitude towards the poor.

Bhattacharya also establishes his belief that the hunger for gold by man is not the be all and end all of life and should not be always treated with importance. It is just a means or a support by which other desires can be fulfilled. When the country is threatened by famine and the people suffer from starvation it helps the people to escape from its cruel hands. It also enables the old men and women to go out for religious tours to sacred places. In this respect Meera's discussion with Sohanlal, the Seth's driver is worth quoting, "Gold in itself has no value. Gold is a strip of field released from bonds. Gold is a new straw thatch on the walls of mud hut. It is the rag-woman's escape from hunger and the Old Father's wish for a pilgrimage to Holy Benares."\(^{160}\) The Five elders of the village of Sonamitti remark that gold does a lot of good to the villagers by helping them to meet their requirements. Rajaram describes the need of "little gold in man when he says," Even we aged ones have a hunger in us ... \(^{161}\)

The Seth has his hunger of revenge against Meera's grand-father whom he takes to be his enemy. He wants to punish Meera by seizing her piece of land which has been mortgaged to him. He threatens to evict old Father and his family from their ancestral home.

The author knows the noble intention of the wise villagers- how they have a burning desire to keep the safety of India from hard-core exploiters and profiteers like the Seth. The wise men of village Sonamitti realize that mere gold is not enough to safeguard the country from hungry and helpless people. Importance lies not in gold but to free the

\(^{159}\) A Goddess Named Gold, p.74.
\(^{160}\) Ibid., p.175.
\(^{161}\) Ibid., p.205
people from the clutches of these Seths. The real victory will be gained in fighting against such battles. This is perhaps the right way India should march in order to safe herself from all types of suffering and hungers. The grand-father explains:

Listen, Meera, with your gold you will save this village. You will save the seven Villages. But there are eight hundred thousand others. Each has a Seth of its own. Each Seth waits to snatch the new power from the people. You cannot have gold enough to save all India! ..........................................................

"It is the fight with the Seths that will save India, not a miracle, not armfuls of gold. You did have your share in the fight, a big share." 162

Bhattacharya warns against the evils of profiteering and poverty, which if not completely eradicated, may defeat the very purpose of freedom, lead to many more hungers. With the freedom in sight, people have to work with solidarity and faith to ameliorate their lot and make their country prosperous. They may also have to be on their guard against the hungry rich men who may exploit freedom for their own selfish ends. When the women go against the Seth he becomes very vindictive. He decides to bar women from attending the cinema show. Meera’s hunger for revenge is evident when she proposes to take revenge by drawing away the spectators to her grand-father’s recital based on true Gandhian spirit. The Grand-Father suggests them not to fight malice with malice and one wrong with another but to be very calm.

The Grand-Father is “a homeless, ever wandering minstrel” 163 who does not live only for himself or his kith and kin but his hunger is for the welfare of the whole mankind. The minstrel is a Gandhian idealist who wants better life conditions for the masses in the country. He has an ardent wish “to wipe every tear from every eye.” 164

163. Ibid, p.115.
164. Ibid., p.75.
Such a pious hunger as envisaged by Gandhiji is reflected through the character of the Grand Father. He refers to Gandhiji's definition of freedom as a state of mind and explains that the idea of freedom is not merely political freedom or economic freedom, but freedom of mind. "For this purpose the elimination of unpatriotic exploiters like the Seth has become essential." The wise villagers have the hunger to save Indians from wolfish exploiters and profiteers like the Seth. The people of Sonamitti know it well that mere gold is not enough to save the hungry and helpless villagers; what is more important is to take action against the Seths by which the expedition against 'want' can finally be successful. We are introduced to a group of women who call themselves 'Cowhouse Five' because they meet regularly in the unused cowshed, attached to Lakshmi's house. Although they belong to different economic backgrounds, they share common allegiance as all of them are ardent nationalists and have been in jail for participating in the 'Quit India Movement'. "Trained thoroughly in 'Satyagraha' they assemble to evolve a method of fighting Laxmi's husband, Seth Shamsundar, for his open, unabased exploitation of the current scarcity of cloth."

The gentle son of Old Father is so much roused by righteous indignation that he attempts to murder the Seth. His hunger of murder, however, is to walk towards the Seth's house in the small hours of morning with a sickle in his hand.

Two more forms of hungers have also been portrayed by Bhattacharya in this novel; They are: hunger for miracles and hunger for spiritual experiences. The villagers being innocent and uneducated have faith in superstitions and are very much anxious to observe the strange capacity of Meera's magical amulet. Irrespective of good or bad consequences their souls pine for the miracle to take place. The author de-

165. Mrs. Sudarsan Sharma, p.105.
166. Ibid., p.106.
Awe-struck eyes saw that vision and tongues dried up as the unexpected menace took clear shape, but after a long minute a whispered comment came, "We hunger for the miracle, whatever else may follow, good or bad." 167

The other kind of hunger is also visible in young Meera, the ideal grand-daughter of the great soul the minstrel. We notice that she responds to the lunacy for gold. It is, of course, not for herself but for the freedom of the land of the village-folk from the evil mongers as also for their general welfare and development. Bold in spirit she is always against the Seth who exploits the poor people, and launches a successful campaign forcing him to sell cloth at fair price. It appears that she is hankering after wealth of position but she is clear in her own mind that she has accepted the amulet only out of a desire to do good to others. 168 Since magic in rural India takes precedence over mundane affairs, she presently finds herself the center of every body's attention: a kind of ad-hoc golden calf, on whom the village eagerly hangs its hopes and split personality. 169 When she is much worried about exhibiting the miracle by means of the touchstone there is distinctly visible in her the queer hunger something higher.

Besides all such hungers, the Seth's hunger for sex is evident from the following description of Bhattacharya:

".......... but he caught hold of her breast under the jacket. She wriggled, but his fingers clutched tightly. His caress grew imperative in its demand. While she shook her head from side to side but even while she shrank from his touch, she was yielding to his need, and in a while she closed her eyes with a deep sigh and lay still." 170

168. K.R. Chandrasekharan, pp.96-95.
Thus Meera at last yields to the need of her husband. There are occasional references to hunger here and there in the text. i.e. Sohanlal asks grandma, "will you give me something to eat? The day's excitements have made me very hungry." 171

Thus we find that among different types of hungers, the principal hunger is gold. It is as if God reigns in heaven and gold on earth, especially in modern India if one possesses gold one becomes the hero of the society. Attraction for gold in the modern Indian society has produced a disease in the body-politics of the nation. "The lust for gold is at the root of all treacherous betrayals of the national cause as well as of the profanation of charity and goodness." 172 It is of course the economic exploitation perpetuated by the colonial system that colours novelist's point of view. This explains his focus on the theme of hunger.

In this novel Bhattacharya portrays hungers of different forms by different strata of people living in the society. His treatment of the theme of hunger is very much striking. He again and again stresses his firm conviction that irrespective of social status all men and women, young or old are obsessed by hunger of one kind or another. The elderly person of Sonamitti village repeats this idea again and again:

"We have a hunger in us, dear brother." 173

Among all types of hunger dealt in this novel the hunger for gold is nicely brought out by the novelist.

Like the earlier four novels, Shadow from Ladakh (1966) is also concerned with the theme of hunger. It does not emphasize on external

hungers like those for food, wealth and sex as we find this treatment in the earlier novels of the author. These kinds of hunger, however, find their treatment occasionally in the text. But more emphasis has been laid on man's hunger for idealism and moral greatness. The text exhaustively deals with this hunger. The novel does not side track fully the basic hunger for food and there are many allusions to it. In addition to these, it precipitates on man's essential want of a woman and vice versa, not for the push drive for sex but for man's innate and healthy hunger for the women in her wholeness.

The ordinary men and women living in this world are more concerned with their daily bread and butter than with anything else. Their preoccupation is always with the hunger for food. The very reference to hunger for food we notice when the lady delegate from China commenting on India says to Suruchi, "Her people are beggars who live on scraps of alms thrown as aid." She means to say that India is a wretched country inhabited by beggars who are always hungry for food, their hunger, to some extent is satisfied with the aid that comes from abroad. Bireswar is not a major character in the novel. However, when he narrates about the Peking of today, the capital city of modern China and the early revolutionary struggle, he says:

............... it failed to give the common man what he needed above all else, an acre of earth to till a bowl of rice to eat....... Hunger raised as before. 175

Like So Many Hungers!, He who Rides A Tiger, A Goddess Named Gold, Shadow From Ladakh makes a massive attack against the persons responsible for creating shortage of food and artificial famine. Bires who was foreign trained, modern in outlook, capable of practical wis-

174. Shadow from Ladakh, p.177.
dom and in love with India says to Satyajit about his friend Jhunjhunia:

My friend Jhunjhunia, a big businessman. He deals in wheat. Every time he makes a fortune by a shady transaction—it may mean hangings for a thousand men and women—he comes to Rajghat with flowers. In the bygone days of empire he used to take his flowers to a temple.¹⁷⁶

In fact, there are allusions to the ravages of hunger and unemployment here and there in the text, the biggest problem the country faces with is unemployment and to solve this is a herculean task for the Government. So many educated young men and women are without employment and are hungry for jobs. Unemployment getting more and more concentrated day by day deepens the problem of hunger for food for the public.

Bhaskar Roy is a prominent character in the novel. He has been in America for the last twelve years, he has 'absorbed America with all his senses.'¹⁷⁷ He fulfils his hunger in all possible manner without hesitation. Bhattacharya describes, "He absorbed much of the human scene. He drank hard with the men. He dated with the women."¹⁷⁸ But however he makes up his mind to quit America because at an embassy party in Washington he meets a visiting minister from India talking about the problem of famine. The minister described thus:

You see, ours is a problem of sheer survival. We are on the edge of a precipice and we stand dizzied. Mind you, this is not just a figure of speech. Any day we may go hurtling to our doom—literally. ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ................ ...............
Though in the words of the minister Bhaskar Roy has 'lived, long in a paradise' and has 'earned a lot of money' and has 'enjoyed complete safety' yet after listening to the remarks on India's problem of survival from the minister he avoids all his propensity for America and returns to his motherland all at once. The spirit that mother and motherland are superior to heaven drives him forward.

Bhaskar Roy is now very much worried about the problem of famine. Living in "the massive concrete-and-glass structure named steelhouse" he is the Chief Engineer of Lohapur steel company. He has been trained in America, just to satisfy himself he dresses in the western way and is fond of wine and women. He lives in steel-town and is votary of steel. If a few hands become idle or if a village has to be uprooted, it does not matter for him. To Bhaskar steel is not an end in itself; it is a means to obtain higher ends. Bhaskar thinks that first of all it is essential for India to develop heavy industry, that only India will be able to defend her boarders and can preserve the political freedom of the country. To fight against the problem of hunger, poverty and famine, steel is highly essential for India. The America educated Chief Engineer Bhaskar Roy is talking to Satyajit, the apostle of Gandhian philosophy:

"And steel is the core of all armament .......... steel means economic progress. Machine tools tractors, big industrial plant, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger." 

Mr. Bhaskar Roy is very much optimistic and thinks that steel is the only means by which India can prosper. For him, steel is similar to life and can put an end to poverty and hunger. His theory is if production of steel increases it will definitely decrease hunger and human life will be

180. Shadow from Ladakh, p.34.
181. Ibid., p.30.
better. There is logic behind his statement when he says, "The babies would not eat steel. But steel was the spine of the economy, steel was food and clothing and dwelling. Steel was culture and art and ritual. And steel was soon to be the honour of people, the shield of their freedom."  

There are various reference to 'hunger' in the text. Mrs. Mehra, the private secretary to Mr. Bhaskar Roy learns from the cook Ramlal that her boss has taken only two or three spoons of tomato soup and half a piece of toast and therefore he is feeling hungry.

Hunger in the form of strike has been used in the text as a matter of "protest against the Government's decision to let steel town swallow the village." Satyajit is a very important character in the novel. "Since he does not get the support from the minister in Delhi, Satyajit chooses the path of individual resistance and goes on hunger strike as a sign of protest against the evacuation of Gandhigram" There is also religious hunger-strike with the strike of labourers.

Satyajit's hunger for marriage is revealed from the following description.

"Ruchi", he spoke at last using that abbreviation of her name for the first time. "Ruchi.........will.....you.....marry me ?

His concern for her was no secret, any way. Will you marry me, Ruchi ? He repeated softly. "I.....You..........." The stuttering voice stopped. "Yes Indeed you, Ruchi."

At that moment he took her hand in his large fist.

182. Shadow from Ladakh, p.37.
183. K.R. Chandrasekhran, p.113.
185. Shadow from Ladakh, p.17.
When Suruchi says that she belongs to a different caste, Satyajit Sen tries to convince her that "caste has no meaning here in Santiniketan" and he will speak to Tagore in this regard. "He will take the poet's approval for granted." Suruchi's hunger for love and sex gets more precipitated after her marriage.

"Love grew in her heart in the days and months after her marriage." "She took her hand led it on her breasts. With quick determined fingers she unbuttoned her jacket and thrust her breasts against his large hands. He came to life instantly. He crushed her in his arm. He drew her to his room, to bed. He overwhelmed her with his demand." Thus Satyajit responds to the urge of his wife and fulfils her sexual hunger and there by fulfils his own hunger also. According to Dr.(Mrs.) Sudarshan Sharma, "Bhabani Bhattacharya has been very careful in depicting even Satyajit as a mere mortal likely to be tempted by the weakness of the flesh."

Besides these the greatest hunger for a married woman is motherhood. The earnest desire of Suruchi is to attain motherhood is revealed in the following line thus:

Suruchi struggled to remain passive while the mother in her clutched at those moments as hungrily as the woman.

Besides one daughter Suruchi has the hunger of being blessed with two sons. The opinion of R. S. Singh in regard to Suruchi's hunger

---

186. Shadow from Ladakh, p.17.
188. Shadow from Ladakh, p.19.
190. Mrs. Sudarsan Sharma, p.115.
for motherhood is stated as follows:

How strongly she had felt many a time the urge to have two sons in her arms! She spoke of it one day to Sunita after her return from Moscow; and another night stole into her husband’s room with a secret desire to fulfil her unfulfilled dreams. But it was not possible for her to regain that zest which she had lost to the “ideal life” of Satyajit.  

When she learns that she is no longer going to be blessed with children, she is heart broken. Over and again she nurses a desperate hope in her heart until she knows the truth and then grieves. She feels despondent for her unborn sons whom she has named Ajay and Sanjay. Her unfulfilled hunger for sons finds its expression when she unhesitatingly tells her daughter, Sumita to produce children. She advises her:

---remember this:

When you marry, make up your mind to have many children. Let nothing stand in your way. Nothing.”

This novel as has been discussed earlier, highlights one very important variety of human hunger - the male’s quest for the female and vice versa. Bhaskar Roy being the chief Engineer of a great factory is at times exhausted with work, boredom and frustration. Like any other man in this world he is also in need of a sweet heart whom he can rely so much for his solace. He is very much upset to learn that his sweet-heart, Sumita has been selected to represent a Peace Mission to Ladakh. He feels helpless and longs to be “submerged in Rupa”, a beautiful, warm and loving woman with whom he is quite familiar. She, too, like Bhaskar, is westernized. Rupa is “Eve rather than Mary, seductress rather than

193. Shadow from Ladakh, p.25.
194. Ibid, p.128.
mother. 

“She looks after herself properly, is always fashionably dressed and prefers European blouse with deep low neck to an Indian Saree. Rupa desires to fascinate Bhaskar.”

Suruchi has great regards to the principles of Satyajit. She knows a woman’s needs and the fact that what she has suffered should not be suffered by her daughter Sumita and hence encourages her advances towards Bhaskar. Sumita who leads an ascetic life being influenced by her ascetic father begins to have an acute inner urge for the male in Bhaskar. Their hunger for each other is well marked in the following description of a scene:

He left the room, closing the door behind him, but Sumita did not start taking off her wet clothes. She sat like a piece of stone................................................... He said in astonishment “You are still in wet clothes! Then did you call me? And in his eyes, as they lay fastened on her, the hunger returned.

Not for sex alone, man loves a woman in her wholeness. Even a man like Bireswar who is in the habit of making love without serious intention surrenders himself completely to young and beautiful Suruchi in the opinion of R.S. Singh, “Suruchi attracted his attention and appealed to him as the right woman to love and live with. Not that he had not known English women as Bhaskar had known American women, it was a different matter altogether.”

Bireswar has never taken women seriously until he has the unbelievable broken experience of love: Bireswar, admits, “For the first time I found myself in love! In love with a woman in her entirety --- not just her face, her shape, her voice ...Well, I was in love with all that, and in addition with the invisible, the inner-

197. Shadow from Ladakh, p.147.
most..... I had never before imagined such an absurdity could happen to me, of all people. I became lost in Suruchi.²⁰⁰

Satyajit tries to adopt the idea of brahmacharya in thought and action. He and his wife, Suruchi are unable to enjoy themselves and their physical hunger remain unfulfilled due to the vow made by Satyajit. Hence they suffer occasionally. They try to suppress the basic need of their body but are unable to get rid of it. Therefore they are very much upset by the overwhelming surge with themselves. Satyajit is a very busy man. For him it is not difficult at all to maintain celibacy and observe asceticism peacefully. But Suruchi usually pines for the man-woman relationship. Being the mother of a grown up daughter, she is rather unhappy about her daughter who leads the life of a forced spinster, destroying the spontaneous flow and fertility of life.

Shadow from Ladakh emphasizes more on the internal hungers which lie hidden in people. It also dramatically describes the physical hungers. The life of Bhaskar Roy gives evidence to the findings of the author:

Yet, behind all that, there, had always been a quest of which he was half aware, a quest he had not tried to analyze, understand. It was only after his return to India that, in retrospect he had seen what he had wanted. Values that could out live moments. Values that could assuage some hidden hunger in him. In those years abroad he had submerged his restlessness in work. The body's various hungers were appeased—-that was all.²⁰⁰

Satyajit is a very important character in the novel. He chooses morality and spiritualism. He is the embodiment of man's hunger for idealism. He believes in simple, ascetic life. Believing in the Gandhian

199. Shadow from Ladakh, p.204.
200. Ibid., p.221.
principles of castelessness for which he is prepared to lay down his life, he discards his surname indicative of his caste affiliations. He uses homespun cloth for a bedspread and adopts the idea of non-violence and simple living. He is so much preoccupied with the abstract world of idealism that he does not think of Sumita and Suruchi as human beings made of flesh and blood. The young Chief Engineer, Bhashkar Roy, who falls in love with his daughter feels that he "had no right to make his daughter a sacrificial offering simply to vindicate his own moral grandeur."

He dedicates himself to a life of service and continues the work of spiritual reconstruction, "He is a non-violent Neo-Marx and seeks the distribution of wealth through the instrument of heart, the inherent goodness of the human spirit." He has set up Gandhigram an ideal village based on the ideals of Gandhiji. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Santiniketan have overwhelming influence on his personality. He has great respect for Gurudev's ideals of aestheticism, world religion -- the religion of man. He believes that economic uplift is not at all important. There are other values not less vital. He attaches little importance to material possessions. He cares more for the inner satisfaction. Through Satyajit Bhattacharya "accentuates Tagore's belief in man's urge for happiness which emanates from the fullness of life and not from the attainments of riches." Satyajit is of the opinion that happiness cannot compete with wealth in its list of materials and happiness being creative has a source of riches within itself. At Cambridge he was quite restless shaken by storms within. At one time he had been obsessed by the idea of becoming a Buddhist monk and living in a monastic abode either in Ceylon or in Thailand. In deed, he had a tremendous hunger for the happiness and inner richness. To achieve this goal, under the magic spell of Gandhiji. He promises to lead a brahmacharya life and he leads

201. Shadow from Ladakh, p.133.
it. Such a life obviously grants him purity of body and thought, providing him spiritual strength and power.

Bhattacharya explores the varieties of human hungers both internal and external. Hunger thus continues to dominate the novel. Speaking about the different kinds of hungers discussed in this novel the remark of K.K. Sharma is worth quoting here:

...... Man's hunger for moral grandeur and idealism. Besides, it concentrates on man and woman's essential need for each other; instead of man's urge for sex it stresses his innate and healthy hunger for the woman in her wholeness. However, the novel does not completely ignore the basic hunger for food; it makes many references to it. In fact, the book is interspersed with references to the ravages of hunger and unemployment. Unemployment—the young educated men and women's hunger for jobs certainly precipitates and worsens the people's problem of hunger for food.

A Dream in Hawaii is the last piece of novel written by Bhattacharya. Of course it is a departure for the author being an American novel, American even in Hawaii. Bhattacharya says, "The American content of the novel is a challenge which I have immensely enjoyed." The novel deals with the theme of hunger where we come across the class of values between the east and the west. There is great disenchantment in the American Society and man's intense desire and fretful strivings to find an answer to one's life and to discover the path of one's fulfillment.

The first twenty chapters almost concern with the depiction of sex where the hunger for sex is very prominent. It is indeed the symptom of the sick society of America. The other half of the novel explores

204. K. K. Sharma, p. 36.
205. Dorothy Blair Shimmer, p.21.
the hunger for spiritualism and salvation. The author believes that it is achieved not "through self denial but only through self-fulfilment." 206

Neeloy Mukherjee is the main character in the novel. He is the Professor of Indian Philosophy. He has a spiritual hunger of his own. His student paramour, Devjani fulfils her need and desire and she helps him to find his new identity. "Handsome and spiritual as he is he remains throughly human through out playing his roles of a teacher and an ascetic...." 207

A Dream in Hawaii is not devoid of the description of sex in which hunger is the main theme of the novel. K.K. Sharma describes the author in the following words thus:

Bhattacharya is not averse to the description of sex in literature. Sex can be an appropriate subject for artistic expression and hence he is not in favour of its censorship in literature. Since sex constitutes an integral part of human life, it is bound to have an important place in literature. 208

"Virtually all characters in the novel are either sexually timid or sexually frustrated or sexually inhibited or sexually aggressive or sexually sublimated." 209

Stella Greson is unable to satisfy the sexual enjoyment of her husband, Walt Greson. As a wife she fails in this respect. She is far from being the right partner what her husband calls "the body's demandful rapture".....Not to see life's ultimate meaning in newfangled sexual practices." 210

207. Ibid., p.181.
208. K.K. Sharma, "BHABANI BHATTACHARYA'S AESTHETICS", Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya, p.35.
209. Ibid., p.182.
210. A Dream in Hawaii, p.25.
Walt Greson has let down his talented wife and is living with a mistress, a woman from Hong Kong. He poses himself as 'a liberated man' and advocates free sex. He wants even, his students to adopt his so-called philosophy. He is very much 'sex-crazy'. He is the Professor of literature and seeks co-relation between portrayal of sex in contemporary fictions of America and the actual situations in which he himself is the participant. His hunger for sexual enjoyment leads him from one bed partner to another. He keeps longest relation with Sylvia Koo because she is sexy and treats this at the level of sheer animality.

When Walt Gregson asks Swami Yogananda about his sex life Swami Yogananda gazes at him with much interest. He asks him to tell him the difference between the normality and abnormality in man. Walt's response is prompt, "The right to enjoy sex—that's normal. Abstinence, societal or self-imposed—that's abnormal. In our premissive society abstinence has no validity whatever...... that the body's fires are never quenched by getting fed, they only blaze fiercer." 211

Henry also advises Frieda to use her "sex appeal to make the young fellow wear something fit for the beach." 212 The young fellow is no one else but Swami Yogananda.

Jennifer is an American girl who is young and rich. She is not able to get an emotional and satisfying sexual relationship with the youth of her own age group. Therefore "she seeks and even finds tenderness in the sexual embrace of a New Delhi teen-aged gigolo and the shoe-shine boys at the sunset Beach in Hawaii." 213 "She would feel upon her body the tender touch of the New Delhi boy." 214 She has been unfaithful to Ralph

211. A Dream in Hawaii, pp.57 - 58.
212. Ibid., p.96.
213. Perspectives on Bhabani Bhattacharya, p 182.
214. A Dream in Hawaii, p 135
four or five times and Ralph several times. She knows that a secretary always goes with him on his business trips. She also knows that he at times hires a new girl. He has "all for ever new pastures." 215

The book 'Kamasutra' has a greater appeal to character like Nishi. By going through this book she is sad to realize that she knows only one or two ways of kamasutra and the rest thirty ways are not known to her. Horace does his Master's degree in Sociology. He mixes freely with Nishi. They walk arm in arm on the secluded Ala Moana Beach....." They had kissed in the two elementary ways known to everyone and all the other were yet to be explored. 216 Bhattacharya describes thus:

She would leave nothing to chance with Horace. When the show was over they would drive up to a secluded spot somewhere in the valleys. Then she would pass Kamasutra to Horace with a casual remark,........... he would soon be hungry for experience. 217

The vaunted celibacy of Swami Yogananda is nothing but pretence. Girl's are more susceptible to him. Sylvia koo is an American lady, who thinks that Devjani is a 'lucky woman’, because everyone wants to sleep with her. Hence, in guise of Devjani she tries to seduce the celibacy of Swami Yogananda. She applies every device she knows. She is sure that she would not take defeat from a man deprived of the primary joy of living. 218 It is observed that Swami Yogananda's arms are raised towards the dream girl. He holds the braid clutched in his fist. It is a defeat of Swami Yogananda.

Devjani's father is a scientist who has no time for his wife. He is always preoccupied with his profession. Hence his wife keeps adulter-

216. Idem.
218. Ibid., p.204.
There is a woman like Frieda who believes that the Kamasutra is the new gospel for America. "She has a taste of 'heavenly ambrosia' from an Indian charlatan-guru, who thrills her with the display of tremendous prowess. She feels cheated when Yogananda refuses to oblige her with the gift of a similar seminal 'heavenly ambrosia.'" Bhattacharya believes that being mortals, human beings are given to carnal desires. It is quite but natural on the part of men to be tempted by flesh. To control the instincts is not in harmony with nature. Experience shows that curbing of human emotions and normal impulses does not necessarily lead to sublimation or celestial heights. It has resulted more after in failure on the moral plane. What is needed is purely a human approach.

Bhattacharya also deals with the spiritual hunger of man. On her first visit to Rishikesh, Stella Gregson instead of going back to Delhi stays on at 'Sadhana', the ashram which signifies path of spiritual discipline. Yielding to an unaccountable urge she stays there. Stella Gregson feels revulsion for organic sex demanded by her husband. Therefore she turns to Indian Yogi, to seek fulfilment of her spiritual needs.

Swami Yogananda is a Professor who has been turned into a Yogi and has practised certain ideologies of his own. His ideology is a source of great inspiration for others. He has a great passion for love of mankind and tries to establish love for humanity. He decides to initiate 'humanitarian work' at 'Sadhana' where he stays before he goes to the island of Hawaii. He advocates that there could never be enough of such


220. Mrs. Sudarsan Sharma, p.129.
work with nine-tenths of six hundred million people needing help of every kind. Like Vivekananda he also believes that religion is not for empty bellies and hunger is one of the problems and should be solved. Swami Yogananda tempered by spiritual force is now a well known figure and Sadhana is an ashram of renown.

Swami Yogananda advocates and propagates fasting, the traditional way of inner purification. In order to attain spiritual power one has to control one's hunger Bhattacharya describes thus:

"He follows the traditional way of inner purification fasting, with total submergence in meditation. At first it is a five-day stretch. The first two days are easy. Hunger comes and goes.............. On the fifth day he is acting with hunger.......... Towards the end of the fortnight he is mad with his craving to eat."\(^{221}\)

Control of appetite and fasting is the first step towards attainment of spiritual perfection.

To Yogananda, work is worship and preaches that every man should not only complete his inner image through work but should also do without any hope or desire or even reward as described in the Vagabat Gita. He is a staunch supporter of the teachings of Gita which narrates that one should remain untouched by victory or defeat and gain or loss. With the intention of a true human purpose -- to serve the humanity he accepts the invitation of Stella to the island of Hawaii. He agrees to stay there for sometime and preaches spiritual peace. He is never in support of a huge building to accommodate the devotees. His ideas are to some extent parallel to that of Gandhiji. Like Gandhiji he insists upon simple living. "Through his talks and dialogues he impresses upon the youths of America the value of the Bhagavad Gita's gospel of desireless action to attain a dynamic equilibrium on inner

\(^{221}\). A Dream in Hawaii, p.18.
adjustment and peace. He exhorts them to have a purpose in their life and strive God consciousness." 222

Devjani is very much overwhelmed with the three lectures delivered by Dr. Neeloy Mukherji who is otherwise known as Swami Yogananda. Each lecture produces greater impact and deepens her spiritual hunger. She at last discovers herself. The spiritual hunger of Devjani is described in the following words:

"How puzzled and even worried she grew at a strange discovery: within her was a hunger for the spiritual life! A hunger of which she had been totally unaware . . . and the impulse was; growing too fast . . . ." 223

Swami Yogananda finds Devjani to be unmarried. He can see one reason why she is still a spinster. The feeling of Yogananda is that she has a strong hunger for a spiritual life which can defeat all other feeling and needs.

In his address to the public, Yogananda says, "there is a deepening spiritual quest in America . . . . . . Western eyes are turned Eastward with great expectation." 224

Indians are deeply religious and the old people including widows who have no sense of belonging all over India come to spend the remaining years of their lives in Benaras. It is recognised as India's most populous retirement center. People find solace in meditation at temples. The bells ring at dawn and at dusk 'in a symphony of worship.' 225 The purpose is that their spiritual hunger would be quenched and they would

223. A Dream in Hawaii, p.82.
224. Ibid., p.130.
225. Ibid., p.138.
get salvation after their death.

Only a few months after her marriage Sujata becomes a widow. As she comes off a wealthy family, she could have lived in luxury but she is seized with restlessness. Something she fails to resist compels her to quit home and come to Benaras. She sings devotional songs and listens to verses from the Ramayan. This is devotedly done only to satisfy her spiritual hunger.

Devjani explains to Bishnu Narayan that she has received diksha and 'her hunger has been appeased.' This hunger is nothing but the spiritual hunger in her. Vishnu Narayan being a disciple of Swami Bhaktivedanta and devotee of Lord Krishna wants to carry the Krishna message all over America. They have already established 'thirty temples in the big cities' and they would very soon have a 'New Vrindaban'. Chorus comes out off the Temple:

"Feel Krishna, breathe Krishna, call Krishna name!" ²²⁶

It is not easy to quench the spiritual hunger of American people. Bhattacharya describes, "the hunger is unappeased . . . . . The young people in their lostness are in desperate search of emotion-based relationships. They need friends. They need parents, they need man-gods." ²²⁷

The splendour and glory of the present civilization cannot save the youth from frustration and depression. They hunger for a meaningful existence. Therefore they always desire to find a path for self-fulfilment and turn towards the advice of Indian guru or sanyasi.

²²⁶. A Dream In Hawaij, p.175.
Besides sexual and spiritual hunger, there is occasional reference to hunger here and there in the text. For example Swami Yogananda wants "to build a two-way communication between him and his audience; he had to see their targets beyond the good life, their hungers and struggles."\(^{228}\) In another context Bhattacharya narrates about the countless empty stomachs of the hungry Indians.

No food for empty stomachs which are countless and they go on breeding like pigs.............................................

How does it affect our lives and our civilization if they go hungry.\(^{229}\)

In another context the author says, "the explosion of hunger was not of India's making. The country's economy had been gaining strength and the success of the Green Revolution could settle the problem of food for a long time."\(^{230}\)

*A Dream in Hawaii* also deals with the hunger for money and wealth. The material desire of Dr. Vincent Swift behind the world center for Yogic Discipline is not very plain. Offers of grant fulfils his best expectation and his fund-raising appetite increases. "Dr. Vincent Swift, the prototype of the American culture - vulture and Jennifer, the young socialite, represent America's voracious appetite for dollars and superficial culture."\(^{231}\) They wish to turn this yoga center into a profit-oriented big business concern. They have no care for the true spirit of spiritualism and hire from India an astrologer, a hath-Yogi and an exorcist. In founding a flourishing spiritual center they use Yogananda as a tool in this respect.

\(^{228}\) *A Dream in Hawaii*, p.162.
\(^{229}\) Ibid., p.178.
\(^{230}\) *A Dream in Hawaii*, p.178.
\(^{231}\) Harish Raizada, p.167.
Man is not free from hunger of money or material gain. It is there in man since time immemorial. Money has great power. Though it is neutral by itself like any weapon or instrument, it depends on the hand that wields it. The hunger for money in man drives a man far from being spiritual. Mystics with little spiritual power are easily victimized to such force. They lose their capacity to transform the forces and make them work for true spirituality. It is significant to see that Yogananda attracts Vincent Smith, the man with the scheme of five million dollars. Besides him, there are Walt Gregson and Sylvia Koo who with their various hungers pounce upon Yogananda.

Devjani is the typical Indian girl having tremendous faith in moral values. She believes in simplicity, modesty and purity. She is very much upset to know her mother’s hunger for sex i.e. her illicit love affair. Devjani’s sense of respect for her mother at once vanishes when she comes to know about her mother’s character. She puts Neey on the mystic path. Again it is his hunger for her which proves to be the greatest hurdle on his way of spiritual progress. But it is that very hunger which in a way saves him from the culture-vulture’s beak. Devjani, more or less, is steady in her faith and emerges as the strongest character.

From thematic point of view it can be said without any hesitation that Walt Gregson is a symbol of sexual permissiveness, Dr. Vincent Smith of material wealth and Yogananda himself of spiritual values.

Some of the stories of Bhattacharya bring into focus the problems of crime and destitution generated by hunger. Poverty and hunger are nothing but social evils which stand as impediments in the direction of achievements and progress of India.

‘Glory at Twilight’ brings into light the hunger of the money-lenders. The money lenders are just like ‘sharks’ who exploit the poor villagers for material gain.
The story also presents the hunger of a groom's father for dowry and his hard-heartedness. The bride's father Srinath moans before Satyajit, "The groom's father is a man of stone. He will break off his marriage unless cash is paid to him before the ceremony starts. Who will marry Bina after such dishonour?" 232

The story points out the hunger of the greedy money-lender for material security in exchange of money. Harish, the 'evil-eyed shark' is willing to advance a loan of rupees two thousand one against the security of Satyajit's house and fish-pond which is much more than the loan advanced to him.

'A moment of Eternity' is the unhappy story of a woman whose husband dies untimely due to poverty, hunger and disease. She becomes a despodent woman and kills her two children and tries to kill herself. The two children are Sona and Mona who are crying because of hunger. Bhattacharya narrates their hunger thus:

Mona cried because of her hunger 233

... but she was hungry and returned eagerly to the breast. 234

There are references to hunger here and there in the text i.e. "Failure would mean hunger for them, starvation. 235 "Tell me, why should gay-living villains sit above you and let money flow like water, while all the time you honest folk have not enough to stop your hunger?" 236

Taken as a whole Bhattacharya's central preoccupation with the theme of hunger is quite evident in his world of fiction.

232. Steel Hawk and Other Stories, p.22.
233. Ibid., p.82.
234. Idem.
235. Ibid., p.102.
236. Ibid., p.115.