

**Antagonistic Relationship between Human and Nature: An Ecocritical Reading of  
Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!***

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This research work entitled "Antagonistic Relationship between Human and Nature: An Ecocritical Reading of Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!*" submitted to the Central Department of English in Tribhuvan University by Mr. Gajendra Bikram Shahi has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Antagonistic Relationship between Human and Nature: An Ecocritical Reading of Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!*" submitted to the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuwan University, is an entirely original work, and I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from various sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The results presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or any other reasons, except where due acknowledgement is made in this dissertation. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

7 July 2024

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Gajendra Bikram Shahi

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### Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of biocentrism and the ethical treatment of nature in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* The research aims to analyze the 1943 dangerous famine in Bengal that killed millions of people and made millions of people homeless. Biocentrism, which asserts the inherent value and rights of all living beings, is a theoretical framework for this study. The research employs textual analysis drawing upon eco-critical theories such as biocentrism. It examines the novel's elements, structure, language, and theme within its historical, cultural, social, and eco-critical context. The secondary sources from environmental literature provide additional support, and biographical elements are integrated to eliminate ecological concepts. The significant characters Rahoul Basu and Kajoli represent the famine-victimized people who were replaced, died, and were buried alive in the absence of food. These characters very clearly depict the apocalyptic effect of natural disasters due to the cause of human destruction. This thesis very clearly challenges the anthropocentric concept that humans are at the center of the universe. More often, it prioritizes nature and natural phenomena as the essential subjects to be saved and protected in this world. Hence, this thesis mainly incorporates how famine and drought destroyed human life and the region's waterfalls, rivers, and dense Sundarban area. Hence, the research mainly focuses on the causes and the fatal consequences of men's acts towards nature.

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## **Chapter 1: Depiction of Ecocritical Consciousness in *So Many Hungers***

The study focuses on Bhabani Bhattacharya's eco-consciousness in the novel *So Many Hungers!* symbolically presenting the analysis explores the intricate relationship between humans and nature within the novel. It emphasizes how the depiction of environmental elements as entities capable of emotion helps readers connect with their surroundings, fostering a sustainable and conservation-oriented relationship. Ecocriticism serves as a theoretical framework to examine the interaction between literature and the natural world. Emerging as a genre in the 1930s, it underscores the imperative to preserve and safeguard the flora and fauna in our environment, reflecting on how human actions can both intentionally and unintentionally impact and degrade nature.

Joseph Meeker first originated the word ecocriticism as an idea called "literary ecology." The term 'ecocriticism' was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." Due to his deep and thoughtful analysis of the subject matter, he is called the father of ecocritical theory. Ecocriticism's history as a critical and literary theory began later in the late fifties, though not much scientific. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) has begun the literary eco-critical movement. *Silent Spring* investigated and criticized the use of pesticides in farming and how they can fundamentally damage the environment. Even though he had created a kind of ecological awareness among the readers, he could not lay a theoretical foundation for the systematic and theoretical framework.

Ecocriticism has a close affinity with the science of Ecology. According to the *Oxford Learners of English Dictionary*, ecology is "the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and their environment" (4). In other words, ecology explains the interconnectedness of human beings and the natural environment. This theory tries to discover modern-day ecological problems through the inspiration drawn from nature-centered literature. This

research has been studied through the lenses of an ecocritical perspective to depict how modern human beings have misused natural resources. As a result, what are the future implications? Why did people suffer in the end? Does anyone can prevent natural disasters? And so on.

Ecocriticism has two branches: Anthropocentric (human at center) and Biocentric (nature at center). Anthropocentrism represents the belief that human beings are the central or essential component of the world. However, this concept has often been challenged as an unscientific, biased, and illogical theory. Despite its rigorous criticism, anthropocentrism still has supporters who argue for the importance of human-centered approaches within ecocriticism. These supporters mainly focus on how human welfare and environmental health are interconnected, sometimes emphasizing sustainable development, human stewardship of nature, and the pragmatic necessity of prioritizing human interests. Some famous supporters of this theory are Bryan Norton, Julian Simon, Lynn White Jr, Mark Sagoff, William Baxter, etc.

Biocentrism is an ecological perspective that places nature at the center. Nature is free from any type of non/human interference. It favors the inborn value of all living beings, not just humans. In this regard, biocentrism challenges an anthropocentric notion by advocating for the essential worth of all forms of life. Being the best means to address problems related to the environment, this theory focuses on how environmental degradation and misuse of natural resources affect the bio-diversity at present time. Why are human beings responsible for this cause, and what are the future consequences?

This dissertation explores biocentrism, examining and textually analyzing the events and incidents in the novel. Bhabani Bhattacharya ,By adopting a polyphonic narrative style .exhumes the joint pain and suffering of the Basu family in Calcutta This thesis explores and explains the pain and suffering of the Basu family and examines how the Bengal famine killed many people. While exploring the issue of cruelty of nature, I have shown how the

forests, farmland, and beautiful rivers have been destroyed by human beings, resulting in the death and decay of millions of people in Calcutta. Wolfgang Huber, a prominent German theologian and ethicist, in his article 'Rights of Nature or Dignity of Nature?' suggests, "Analysing the status of nonhuman nature will require examination of the problem of anthropocentrism and biocentrism in environmental ethics" (44). As per his assertion, it is imperative to examine the problems of anthropocentrism and biocentrism in the framework of environmental ethics in order to comprehend and evaluate the present condition of nonhuman nature.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's work has been extensively examined from various angles. I relied primarily on the library for resources, supplemented by my supervisor's recommendations. Secondary sources encompass reviews, articles, and interviews with the author published in journals, magazines, and books. Credible online information has also been utilized for secondary sources. To aid in textual analysis, this study will primarily use Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Ecology*, along with insights from contemporary environmental scholars.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, a Sahitya Academy award winner, is a talented writer who stands among the finest Indian novelists writing in English. He has authored both fictional and non-fictional works, but his novels have garnered the most critical acclaim both in India and internationally. "Bhabani Bhattacharya's works depict human life in relation to society, and sometimes they explore the human predicament concerning Destiny" (43). His writings emphasize the principle "Art for the sake of life," asserting that art should serve a social purpose. Bhattacharya believes that literature's primary aim should be to improve humanity by providing an honest portrayal of society.

A brief study of the biography of Bhabani Bhattacharya as life will provide background to the novel and Bhattacharya's interaction with the ecocritical literature. He

regards nature as a home where he can find security, certainty, and safety. He argues that there is a close relationship between nature and human beings. Most of his novels are closely related to nature. However, when people start running behind in wealth and personal benefits, they do not care about the destruction of nature. Bhattacharya, in this novel, reiterates this situation below:

Corruption had spread like a rampant epidemic. Money became an insatiable craving, flowing in vast, swollen streams, filling the private coffers of the wealthy. The rich became significantly richer while the poor became proportionately poorer. History had never seen such a process that favored the rich so much. The poor were left with unstable livelihoods. Both the rich and the poor paid little attention to nature, focusing instead on exploiting opportunities in others' domains. (147)

Bhavani Bhattacharya depicts the widespread corruption and socioeconomic disparities generated by the Bengal famine. In this context, the narrative illustrates how the rich exploited the situation to amass more incredible wealth while the poor became increasingly destitute. The reference to money as a "mad hunger" emphasizes the insatiable greed of those in power, leading to stark inequalities and the suffering of the most vulnerable in society. The language used captures the devastating impact of this corruption on the social fabric, highlighting the stark contrast between the affluent and the impoverished during this period.

This research aims to analyze how nature and humans are interconnected, bringing harmony, joy, and inspiration to life to highly exhausted humanity. As Bhattacharya shows the interconnection between the human and nonhuman elemental world of nature, it proves the relevance of reading his novel from the standpoint of ecocriticism. Begoña Simal-González, a Mexican-American environmental literary figure in her book *Ecocriticism and Asian American Literature*, further writes about human's careless acts with nature:

A limited view of the environment as solely nonhuman "nature," particularly untouched wilderness, likely explains why Asian American texts were largely overlooked by ecocriticism until recently. Predictably, the vast majority of authors examined by ecocritics in the twentieth century were Euro-American, predominantly male, and generally had enough leisure to not perceive their surroundings as a "work environment," unlike most working-class and non-white individuals. (94)

As described above, artificial hunger crept into the cities, and Rahoul Basu saw men, women, and children helpless because of hunger. Bengal was in an economic crisis; authority was uninterested, and dishonesty was prevalent in the bureaucracy. Hospitals, on the other hand, would not let the hungry in because only those who had diseases were allowed inside. While the masses grew hungry for food, those in position grew hungry for money. Destitute humanity was overflowing into the city in the tens of thousands.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* vividly portrays the extremes of the 1943 Bengal famine, where over 1.2 million people perished due to hunger: there was no food, no water, no help, and no shelter. In this novel, Bhattacharya highlights humanity's dependence on nature and how nature retaliates when threatened. This work of Indian English fiction brings to light ecological aspects and offers a perspective on the environmental impact. Regarding the Bengal drought and its devastating effects, K. Venkata Reddy blames the social disparity system for the mass deaths, stating:

*So Many Hungers!* is a novel with the distinct social purpose of inspiring and awakening the masses to revolt against the economic and social injustice done to them. The social purpose of the novel happily aligns with Bhattacharya's defense of art as a criticism of life and a review of current values, as well as with his concept of the novel as an "idiom of compassion," which is designed to have a curative effect. And S. C. Harrex points out, "*So Many Hunger!* both as fiction and fact, is more

effective than a straight documentary account because it examines the problem from moral and artistic, as well as practical, points of view". (3)

1943 was a very sad year for the country. The famine in Bengal killed about a million people, and many more perished from hunger and other illnesses.

Through the perspectives of Rahoul, Kajoli, and her family, the novel portrays the melancholy and anxiety of the destitute individuals on the streets who are about to starve to death. He witnesses the hungry and destitute debasing themselves to fill their bellies as he travels around the city.

The novelists have portrayed that nature has the supreme power to give happiness and suffering to human beings. He believes that whatever we do with nature, it always loves us. However, if nature is taken as the means to get benefits, it starts to take revenge on us.

Regarding his skills in portraying nature, A Rani comments:

The effect of the natural calamity on humanity can be seen in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* Kajoli and her family suffering hunger and destitution in the wake of Bengal famine. The Tragedy of the innocent Kajoli family is the premonition and symbolic shape of devastation affecting the whole of Bengal. The novel is full of manysceneries following the Bengal famine, marked by extreme poverty and despair. Peasants are compelled to sell their crops to government agents and avaricious hoarders and profiteers, while the fishing boats are destroyed and the villages are evacuated. (43)

As Rani Comments, Bhattacharya's novel *So Many Hungers!* Shows that nature can be destructive as well. Natural calamities caused the famine in Bangle villages. The drought in Bengal made the ordinary people's lives a tale of sorrow and pain. Men, women, and children drowned and perished in Bengal because of the severe food scarcity in the countryside.

To comprehend the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, it is essential to grasp the underlying causes. The unrestricted use of plastic damages both humans and nature. The proliferation of mechanical items, the increasing number of industries, and influential individuals contribute to these issues, engaging in harmful actions such as deforestation and rock destruction. Saroj Duhan remarks:

Nature and Man's life are so interlinked that it is not easy for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. The effect of one such natural calamity on the humanity can be found in Bhabani'So Many Hungers!' by Bhattacharya. One can get an accurate account of the 1943 Bengal famine, which resulted in the starving deaths of at least 12 lakh Indians. Sighs and tears, anguish and squalor, hunger and poverty, as well as valiant suffering and sacrifice, are all abundant in this book. The main narrative thread of the book revolves around the catastrophic consequences of the 1943 Bengal famine, which claimed millions of lives. (47)

This parallels nature, which bears the consequences of human actions. Our irresponsible behavior causes significant harm to the environment. This demonstrates how interconnected ecosystems are, where every component affects one another. This concept remains relevant as it highlights the impact of natural disasters, particularly on common people such as peasants, laborers, and those of lower status. Additionally, the novel emphasizes that the declining culture of Hinduism reveres nature for solace and happiness.

As the drought hit the Indian city of Calcutta, scarcity of food, drinking water, and other basic needs could not be found anywhere. Its impacts have been visible in the faces of Bengali people. The life of the town and the village turn from its customary channels and undergoes sudden and far-reaching changes. The crisis of Europe overtakes Bengal and disrupts its moral life. As the war runs the third year of its bleak course, the villagers of Baruni begin to experience its heavy burden. Regarding this, Kumari Shikha comments:

The Bengal famine of 1943 which crushed millions under its devastating truculence forms the major part of the novel's plot. The characters in the novels express the nature of certain animals. The character of Laxminathan is designed to show how a man can combine in himself the qualities of both the jackal and the vulture. This is seen when he tortures those who are already beaten by hunger. He is the prince of the black market, lacking a social conscience. Fisher is right when she asserts that In *So Many Hungers!*. (50)

The above statement clearly shows that nature has always proved to be stronger than man. It has often shown its power by controlling human resources through natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake, etc. Man's life and nature are so interlinked that human beings cannot separate themselves from its influence.

As a distinctive approach to literary criticism, ecocriticism increases attention to literary representatives of nature. It is sensitive to interdependencies that ground the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward natural relationships and views the individual as a member of the ecosystem. Pramod Kumar claims:

Nature can be portrayed as benign as well as aggressive and destructive. According to the need, mood or situation the qualities are applied by the writers. Bhabani Bhattacharya has depicted the natural calamity realistically in his famous novel, *So Many Hungers!* This novel demonstrates the tragic effects of famine on the inhabitants of Bengal. Actually, this calamity is the factual presentation of the real Bengal famine of 1943. The novel deals with the painful, shocking conditions of the people. (34)

It depicts the dismal, horrible, and helpless conditions of the peasants impacted by the hunger. The writer used a variety of nature symbols and images to make numerous analogies.

For example, Laxminathan and Samerandra Bose are compared as jackals and vultures due to their villainy and avarice.

The planet is becoming a victim of ecological imbalance and catastrophe. A healthy, balanced environment/atmosphere is required. It is like the universe's lifeblood. The globe requires an eco-friendly environment to promote growth, development, sustainability, and prosperity. This story depicts ecological repercussions on a variety of environmental challenges, including biological, political, social, racial, regional, seasonal, and psychological.

The current study is limited to eco-critical interpretations of this story. The title of this study focuses on ecocriticism, which has had a significant impact on the current evolution of literary criticism. The current study's purpose and scope are narrowly focused on environmental studies and ecocriticism. To substantiate this, novelists have given an example of two different families who, one way or another, suffered the same fate under nature. Hence the central theme of *So Many Hungers!* is the twin hunger for food and freedom. The plot mainly contains two main events: the story of the young scientist Rahul Dasu and his family and the story of the peasant girl Kajoli and her family. Basu's family represents the hunger for freedom, and Kajoli's family represents the hunger for food. The two families live far apart: Rahul's in the city of Calcutta and Kajoli's family in the village of Baruni. Divesh Babu supplies the bridge between the two families, reverentially addressed as Devata, Rahul's biological grandfather, and Kajoli's non-biological grandfather.

When we go critically through the plot, we find various ups and downs in the life of one of the main characters, Rahoul Basu and Kajoli. The story takes place in a rural Bengal village named Baruni. A young girl named Kajoli lives with her family in a difficult situation. Kinu is a father of Kajoli who works daily in other fields to make little money to join his family's hands to mouth. They are financially poor and do not have enough food and water to

drink. Onu, a brother of Kajoli, sadly portrays the suffering of the poor. He says, "The peasants used were payable in cash, whatever the crops were like, why should the overlord worry about production? The peasantry was not in their eyes a living mass. It was like a tract of coalfield out of which you hewed coal for profit and more profit mindless of its exertion" (32).

The famine has badly hit the entire Bengal region. World War II started in Europe along with the Bengal famine, and its impacts have been seen in many parts of Bengal. This World War inspires many of the Indian youths to join the British Army side. They started training inside the forest, on the top of the hills, and in the Roner banks to fight the British side. However, they unknowingly destroyed many parts of the forest and the top hills where they were getting training. Many youths like Rahoul joined the Indian Army. At the same time, the Indian independence movement also took place, and many youths and older people joined the movement. Devata (Devesh Basu), Rahoul's grandmother, also joined the movement and became a more substantial follower of Gandhi. Bhattacharya depicts the volatile situation prevailing in India and around the world in the following lines of the novel:

The Battle of Britain, fought in the distant skies, was reimagined as if it occurred on the trading floor. Share values remained low, but the enemy wouldn't find the rest of the war easy. Confidence was returning to the market, which didn't realize that England always lost every battle except the final one. Prices were trending upward. Bargain hunters, who had waited a long time, feared missing their opportunity and rushed to buy before it was too late. Meanwhile, the bears, having profited greatly by selling more shares than they owned, also hurried to repurchase and secure their positions. (49)

As described above, the novelist describes India's painful situation and struggle to gain freedom and integrity from British rule. At the same time, it highlights the significance of the

youths' desire to liberate the nation. These events made India's socio-political scenario, especially the Bengal region, very painful.

Rahoul, a Cambridge University-educated youth, lives in a confused mindset. He needs to do better in science, his primary subject, and be able to do well in society. However, being Western-educated, he cannot think of resolving the crisis by publically awakening conservation and protecting natural resources. Vasant R. Shedge and Yoesh Atmara Patil observe Rahoul:

Rahoul was aware that his empty stomach was not the result of a natural disaster or crop failure. It was man-made shortage, for the harvest had been fair, and even if the Army purchased large quantities, with proper rationing, there would be enough food for everyone. However, there was no rationing. (105)

Kajoli, one of the main characters in the novel, is an innocent and energetic girl of fourteen when the novel begins. She lives in a remote village of Baruni shaded house with her mother and a younger brother, Onu. Her father and her elder brother, Kanu, are imprisoned for taking part in the Indian Independence Movement. Due to the famine, her family does not have even a morsel of food. So, like other villagers, they depend on roots and figs to survive. They sell all the tangible and intangible properties at home, including cowbells. When Kajoli receives a loaf of bread from the British soldiers, she forgets her mother and brother because it has been almost a month, and she has yet to test any food items. The novelist clearly states:

...She buried her teeth into the lump and swallowed quickly, without chewing or lingering for the sensation of bread on her tongue, swallowing hard. And the soldier clacked his tongue with sympathy, since his heart was a worm. He observed her... In a minute, the bread was gone, and she realized she had eaten everything; there was nothing left for her brother or mother. (144)

These above lines indicate that Kajoli is the real victim of the destruction of nature because, for a month, she could not eat any morsel of food. As a result, when she gets it from a British soldier, she swallows it so quickly that she forgets about other family members. Her swallowing so quickly represents that human beings, human activities, and human actions have jeopardized their future generations because they will face the problem of food, water, and a clean environment.

This novel talks about natural calamities like drought and famine and the inhuman activity that often occurs in chaotic situations. In order to survive, some of the villagers come to kidnap Kajoli so that they can sell her into a brothel house in Calcutta and earn enough money. However, she knows that they will sell her, so she narrowly escapes from this incident, and then, along with her family, she migrates to the city by forgetting the beautiful village of Baruni.

No sooner than Kajoli's family left the village, Baruni, after a few days, they reached Calcutta, a big city where she could find thousands of poor people standing in a queue and begging for a morsel of food to eat. Kajoli finds it very difficult to live in city life. However, there is no option for her to go back home. That is why she, along with her family members, tries to find a job. The Indian Civil Rights Movement started initially, and Kajoli's father and elder brother joined the Indian Independence Movement. As a result, the British kept them inside the prison. Bhabani Bhattacharya has portrayed this painful picture of starvation. He further writes, "Because of mass deaths, corpses and vultures are visible everywhere. A myriad of vultures gazed down upon the countryside. ..., Corpses lay by the road, huddling together. Picked to the bone; only the hair uneaten--fluffy baby's hair, man's hair, the waist-long hair of women" (175).

Many poor youths joined the British army or the Quit India Movement. The reason behind joining such a job is to help the family survive in times of crisis. Rahoul's grandfather continues to help people in need in the city. As an educated person, he feels that nature is the

primary source of happiness and must not be destroyed. It can be seen in the theoretical part of this theory. Glotfelty and Fromm write:

Ecocriticism tries to refocus humanistic ideology by incorporating natural scientific principles into valid interpretations rather than rejecting them. Literature and science have their roots in religious and legal hermeneutics, as well as early concepts of time and space, history, and property. Property and authority are important concepts in science, which explains its long service to Western development (Bowler). Today, science is moving beyond Cartesian dualism to quantum mechanics and chaos theory, in which dynamic, unceasing interchange is the norm. While some forms of postmodern criticism take this approach, many humanists maintain a rationalist bent that overlooks new science.(78)

As mentioned above, the sense of humanity can be seen in the Basu family, where Devata—a respected name of Devesh Basu, grandfather of Rahoul—helps the poor people during a nationwide drought. His merciful act is also highly praised by the readers.

The novel's turning point occurs when a poor girl, Kajoli, makes a hard decision to sell herself in the brothel house. She thinks that she must make the family members survive first, and then she will think about herself. Nevertheless, Rahoul and Devata rescue her with basic food and clothes. Later, she gives off her plan to be sold. Glotfelty and Fromm view:

Political theories fail to provide humanity's most basic requirements on a daily basis, and the environmental catastrophe raises the prospect that the world and all of its species are in danger because humankind has overestimated its own capabilities. The tragic perspective of man, for all its beguiling optimism, has resulted in cultural and biological disasters, and it is time to explore for alternatives that may promote the survival of our own and other species.(250)

In this extract, we can find eco-critical consciousness in the Basu family. Devata seems to be aware of and responsive towards his surroundings. It also refers to a thoughtful orientation and its environmental and ecological impacts. Eco-consciousness improves our quality of life in terms of mortality, age, diseases, etc. We will have a better shot at living a quality life with health if we choose to go eco-friendly.

This research paper argues that human happiness and well-being are intricately linked to the health of nature. The novel explores the theme of man's relationship with nature, emphasizing that nature is the source of life and harmony. The core idea of this research is to investigate how ecological awareness is deeply embedded in the novel's depiction of nature and human relationships. Literature serves as a means to express the environment's significance in human life and the universe. Environmental balance and protection have become critical global issues, of international importance. Economic disparity and environmental pollution have led to global warming, causing widespread ecological imbalance and destruction. A healthy, well-balanced atmosphere is essential, acting as the lifeblood of the universe. For proper growth, development, sustainability, and prosperity, the world needs an eco-friendly environment. Environmental issues encompass various aspects, including biological, political, social, racial, regional, seasonal, and psychological.

## Chapter 2: Biocentrism and Environmental Ethics

Biocentrism, at its core, adopts a respectful perspective that places life and its inherent value as central to our philosophical and ethical considerations. This visionary theory marks a significant departure from the anthropocentric viewpoints that have historically dominated human thinking, encouraging us to adopt a more holistic and interconnected worldview. Within biocentrism, every organism, from the smallest microbe to the most complex sentient being, is recognized as an essential component of existence. This paradigm prompts us to acknowledge our interconnected relationship with the natural world and advocates for a steadfast dedication to nurturing and preserving life in all its diverse forms. It challenges us to move beyond our human-centered tendencies and calls upon us to act as guardians of the delicate equilibrium that sustains the intricate web of life on our precious planet, our shared home.

By using the theoretical tool – of biocentrism, this research tries to examine the impacts of human deeds of misusing natural resources and uncontrollably destroying the sources. For example, the poor family of Kajoli migrated from the village to the city because the rich people had destroyed all the natural resources, farmland, and green forests in the village, and they were made helpless. That is why this theory envisions people who, without making any mistakes, face the harmful consequences of natural calamities. On the other hand, anthropocentrism perceives nonhuman beings as existing primarily for human entertainment or commercial purposes. In the novel,

Before we clearly get the idea of 'Biocentrism', it is necessary to understand 'Ecocriticism'. What is ecocriticism? Ecocriticism is a rapidly growing field of literary and environmental study in recent times which seeks to explore the intricate connections between humans and the natural world. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, in the book *The Ecocriticism Reader*, state that:

The study of the interaction between literature and the natural world is known as ecocriticism. Ecocriticism approaches literary studies from an earthly perspective, just as criticism looks at language and literature from a gendered perspective and Marxist criticism reads texts with an understanding of economic class and forms of production. Ecocriticism examines the relationship between culture and nature, particularly the cultural objects of language and literature. (xviii)

The scholars lay the groundwork for ecocriticism by highlighting the interdependent relationship between humans and the environment. They propose a shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, where nature and its intrinsic value become central to literary analysis. By considering how literature portrays the nonhuman world, ecocritics challenge the conventional boundaries that separate humans from other living beings.

Biocentrism evolves from ecocentrism by emphasizing the intrinsic value of all living organisms, thereby erasing distinctions between human and non-human life. Cheryll Glotfelty, a prominent figure in ecocriticism, defines literary ecology as the exploration of biological entities and relationships within literary works. It aims to uncover literature's role in the ecological dynamics of human existence. Glotfelty expresses deep concern about the conflict between human activities and the natural environment, stating that "Human actions are damaging the planet's fundamental life support systems" (xx). She critiques human behavior rooted in anthropocentrism, which she believes poses risks to both nature and humanity itself. Her advocacy seeks to foster a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature that benefits both parties.

By highlighting the significance of human and nonhuman beings, biocentrism opens new avenues for understanding the environmental crisis and fosters a more profound sense of ecological responsibility. Laurence Coupe's *Green Studies Reader* further explores ecocritical themes by engaging with diverse perspectives, including biocentrism. Coupe emphasizes the

urgency of acknowledging nature's interconnectedness and the need to dissolve the artificial divisions imposed between humans and the rest of the living world. He asserts:

We may be as guilty of treating the nonhuman environment with the same contempt as those destructive forces we might wish to condemn. Does the devastation of bird populations not matter because they are, after all, only referents? Human beings make sense of the world through language, but rather the self-serving inference that nature is nothing more than a linguistic construct. (3)

Coupe expresses serious concern that people might unintentionally treat the nonhuman environment with the same disrespect and disregard as the destructive forces they condemn. She criticizes the self-serving belief that nature is merely a construct of language and emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding and respect for the natural world beyond linguistic interpretations. Therefore, it is crucial to conceive from a biocentric rather than an anthropocentric perspective.

For those who are rational, objective, and have a solid grasp of reality—especially when it comes to the inherent worth of every living thing—the biocentric worldview also offers itself as a workable system of beliefs and ideas. A more comprehensive perspective that recognizes the significance of each unique organism within the complex web of life is embraced by biocentrism, in sharp contrast to anthropocentrism, which is exclusively focused on the interests and welfare of humans. Paul W Taylor, in *The Ethics of Respect for Nature*, observes that the biocentric outlook, which strongly emphasizes the value of all living organisms, is a reasonable and appealing belief system for individuals who possess certain qualities. He mentions that "the biocentric outlook recommends itself as an acceptable system of concepts and beliefs to anyone who is clear-minded, unbiased, and factually enlightened, and who has a developed capacity of reality awareness about the lives of individual organisms" (15). Biocentrism challenges us to reconsider how we relate to the natural world

by highlighting the interdependence and connectivity of all life forms and going beyond the constrained human-centric lens. This is very much in line with the ideas of ecocriticism, which advocates for an ecological consciousness that acknowledges the profound relevance of nonhuman things while critically examining relationships between humans and nature.

Both biocentrism and ecocriticism, in their respective domains, emphasize the necessity of recognizing and preserving the delicate balance of life on Earth, fostering a harmonious coexistence where humanity unites with the intricate symphony of nature. Embracing biocentrism compels us to rethink our roles as a guardian of the Earth, recognizing our interconnectedness with the natural world and promoting the flourishing nature of all life forms. In his work *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Paul W. Taylor suggests that all living beings represent the central purpose of life. Taylor advocates for a biocentric or life-centered approach, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans, plants, and animals. He stresses the importance of maintaining a mutual relationship among these entities. Taylor asserts that all living beings inherently possess value and merit moral consideration, regardless of their usefulness to humans. He critiques anthropocentrism, which prioritizes human interests above all others. Taylor argues:

A typical human centred argument goes as follows. Future generations of people have as much right to live a physically secure and healthy life as those of the present generation. Each of us is therefore under an obligation not to allow the natural environment to such an extent that the survival and well-being of later human inhabitants of the earth are jeopardized. (11)

Taylor attempts to broaden the notion that anthropocentrism only perceives the world through the eyes of humans and is concerned solely with their survival and well-being. Taylor claims that people have a "exploitative perspective" (133) on nature. This approach is based

primarily on human needs and interests. Tylor strongly believes that humans should maintain a state of balance between nature and humanity.

Humans should be morally committed to adhering to environmental ethics. A biocentric approach to nature emphasizes the well-being of both humans and nature. The biocentric or life-centric viewpoint holds that wild living creatures should be safeguarded and fostered in the same way that humans are respected. Tylor says:

The attitude we consider proper toward living things is determined by how we perceive them. The moral relevance of the natural world for us is determined by how we view nature as a whole and our function within it. The biocentric look is the belief system that gives meaning to the attitude of respect for nature and relies on it for justification. (99)

According to Tylor, the biocentric view is based on four assumptions: humans are members of the earth's community, the human species, like all other species, is an integral part of a system of interdependence, all organisms are a teleological system of life, and humans are not inherently superior to other living things. Tylor argues:

When a life-centred view is taken, the obligation and responsibilities we have with respect to the wild animals and plants of the Earth are seen to arise from certain moral relations holding between ourselves and the natural world itself. The natural world is not there simply as an object to be exploited by us, nor are its living creatures to be regarded as nothing more than resources for our use and consumption. (12)

He seeks to eliminate the myth that people are moral agents with a responsibility to act morally toward moral objects.

Humans ought to apply valid moral principles in their treatment of nature. According to Taylor, "Perhaps the most morally significant aspect of a moral subject is that a moral

agent can always adopt the moral subject's perspective and judge how it should be treated" (17). He argues that humans should not view nature solely through a human-centric lens but rather consider nature's perspective. Taylor asserts that "the central principle of the environmental ethics theory I am advocating is that actions are morally right and character traits are morally commendable insofar as they express or embody a fundamental moral attitude, which I term respect for nature" (80). This principle encompasses all moral considerations essential for maintaining a reciprocal relationship between humans and non-humans, essentially constituting a systematic exploration of moral norms. He contends that all living and non-living entities possess intrinsic worth and merit respectful treatment accordingly.

Furthermore, Taylor advocates for a biocentric worldview over an anthropocentric one, urging humans to adopt nature's perspective when considering nature itself. He critiques the anthropocentric view for its tendency to interpret everything based on human benefit alone. Taylor suggests that there is significant confusion in the relationship between humans and nature because humans often perceive themselves as morally superior to nature. He argues that humans frequently place themselves at the center and seek to exploit nature according to their preferences. Taylor identifies an exploitative attitude towards nature as the primary cause of the deteriorating relationship between humanity and the natural world. In this novel, we encounter a poignant moment when Mangala, a beloved cow of Kajoli, dies of starvation.

The upset mother was yelling at the animals. Mother begged nonchalantly, "Do not take her to task, mother." Want to destroy her heart? Look into her eyes, Mother. And she put her arms around Mangala and buried her face against the rough, russet skin, weeping bitterly. The mother stared at her daughter and into the cow's eyes, and even though there were no tears in the enormous, black eyes, the mother could tell Mangala was crying. The fig tree was

stripped of all the little creams and peeled off fruit, except for a few bunches here and there on the uppermost tree, far out of reach, but the boy could not climb like a squirrel (158).

In these above lines, Bhabani Bhattacharya tries to say how the natural calamities, which are specially created, destroy not only the dreams of human beings but also the animals. The cow is so dear and loving in the novel, but ultimately, Kajoli's family cannot save the cow because it dies of not getting any green grass or water.

Digging deeper into the ethical implications, the novel *So Many Hungers!* depicts how human beings create a problematic situation for poor people to live in helpless situations. For example, in this novel, the rich people destroy nature, but thousands of poor people leave the village and are forced to beg on the streets of the many cities in Bengal. Due to the harsh drought in the region, many agricultural lands have turned into deserts. The dependent families in agriculture have been forced to choose other sources of income, such as Kajoli's father and elder brother, who joined the Indian Army, so that they could earn some money to help the family. It also describes the ethical values and cultural and religious faiths that Bengali society used to follow. Bengali people used to consider nature, such as forests, rivers, and the high hills, as their patent gods and goddesses, and they used to spend lots of time in nature by worshipping or consoling themselves or getting liberated from any evil thoughts. Nevertheless, here, in the novel, we can find how the natural ethics, which means respect towards nature, has been degraded, and finally, how the family of Rahoul, as well as Kajoli, escape away from the village in order to get free from the drought that has killed more than a million people or so. The novelist further writes that human beings must also hold up their accountability towards animals. The novelist, in the following lines, expresses his worry:

The village pastor had departed. The landlords had converted the land into fields as part of the increased food production campaign. The village had sold its cattle and lost

access to communal grazing grounds. However, what good was it if they produced more food? It didn't benefit the people. What would happen to the few remaining cattle? It was no easy task to take them to distant grasslands in another village. The old plow tools were exchanged for fifteen seers of rice, a mere fraction of their true worth, leaving Mangala alone. Mangala had been poorly fed for months, standing in the yard day after day, watching the beanstalks grow, along with the younger green creepers sprouting tenderly with broad, lush leaves.(157)

The lines above indicate that human beings and animals are affected by natural calamities. Moreover, from a bios-centric perspective, this human being's act is considered unhealthy, unfit, and unbeneficial for the peace and prosperity of Mother Earth.

Using a biocentric perspective promotes empathy and compassion for nonhuman living forms and leads to a more comprehensive and inclusive view of the environment. J. Baird Callicott's *Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics* highlights the significance of a set of values that goes beyond human interests. Because it questions the idea that humans are superior to nature and recognizes the intrinsic value of all living things, biocentrism is consistent with Callicott's ecological paradigm. He notes:

According to anthropocentric value theory (or axiology), human beings have intrinsic value and all other things, including other forms of life, are only instrumentally valuable, i.e., valuable only to the extent that they are means or instruments that can serve human beings. In contrast, a non-anthropocentric value theory (or axiology) would assign intrinsic value to certain nonhuman animals. (299)

The significance of biocentrism lies in its capacity to reshape our ethical framework, encouraging a more holistic and inclusive approach to environmental ethics. Biocentrism fosters a more profound sense of responsibility and empathy towards the natural world by

valuing all living beings. It challenges the human-centric notion that nature exists solely for human exploitation and calls for a more balanced and respectful coexistence with other living organisms. Baird J. Callicott sheds light on the philosophical division between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric value theories, with biocentrism representing the latter.

A crucial point of view known as biocentrism upholds the intrinsic worth of all living things, emphasizes the significance of ecological interdependence, and pushes for a more peaceful and sustainable coexistence of humans and the environment. Callicott moves forward:

The most conservative, and perhaps because of that, the most completely researched and discussed, attempt to offer a non-anthropocentric axiology for environmental ethics is generally known as "animal liberation." It is the most conservative since it involves the least amount of modification to the current anthropocentric, utilitarian, normative ethical framework. In truth, it focuses on the rigorous and consistent application of utilitarian moral theory rather than a shift in its axiology.(300)

J. Baird Callicott talks about "animal liberation," which is a way of thinking that says we should care about animals and treat them with respect. It is called conservative because it does not ask for a significant change in how we think about ethics. Instead, it suggests that we should use the ideas we already have but be more careful and consistent in applying them to animals. The cow shows us the importance of considering the feelings and rights of animals, even though people often see animals as only meant for human benefit. This lesson teaches us to think about the value of all living beings, not just humans, and how we should treat them with kindness and care from the lens of biocentrism.

To address the complex interplay among humans, nature, and the ethical treatment of nonhuman beings, it is necessary to extend and refine ecocentrism and biocentrism,

highlighting the limitations of current paradigms. While ecocriticism effectively examines the relationships between literature, culture, and the environment, its focus on human-nature dynamics may not fully capture the intrinsic value of individual living entities. Biocentrism, which emphasizes the inherent worth of all organisms, enriches this exploration. However, moving beyond mere acknowledgment and advocacy is crucial to establishing a society guided by a biocentric worldview. Practical implementation requires fostering an ecological consciousness that permeates education, policymaking, and everyday practices. Such a society would not only recognize the interconnectedness of all life forms but also deeply respect the unique contributions of each entity within the intricate tapestry of existence. Through this evolved perspective, humans would strive for harmonious coexistence with the environment, promoting sustainable practices and fostering a collective sense of responsibility towards the planet's well-being. "Huxley, like many of his contemporaries, found the poverty and slums created by rapid urbanization and industrialization appalling and unacceptable; in one essay, he even suggested that, if increasing knowledge, power, and wealth were not to reduce poverty, it would be better for "some kindly comet" to "sweep the whole affair away" (58).

Ecocriticism is an emerging critical theory that investigates the relationship between literature and the physical environment, as well as the role of nature in alleviating living creatures' suffering. Environmental literature is not new to literature, but ecocriticism allows readers to analyze the subject from a new perspective of nature. Eco criticism advocates the idea that the presence of the Almighty can be felt by being as close to nature as possible. However, once a human being is in the midst of nature, he might be tempted to exploit or dominate it for his materialistic purpose. This also makes humans think in a bio-centric way. Bio-centric considers all forms of life as having intrinsic value. Human beings are the

greatest aggressors in this biosphere. They have dominated this earth with their aggressive behavior.

Ecocriticism is a literary theory that studies subjects like science, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc. It attempts to study mankind's attitude towards nature. It attempts to explore the expressions of the environment in literary texts and theoretical discourse. Ecocriticism and ecocritical literature substantially support the process of social, political, and cultural independence. The Indian English novelists depict the locals in general. The practice of eliminating their identity through ecological authority is being contested, and people-ecological connections are blending in the local context. These societies' discourse contains multiple layers of meaning.

Ecology can be categorized into two main perspectives: shallow and deep ecology. According to Sandip Kumar Mishra, "Shallow ecology is primarily anthropocentric, viewing nature as existing solely to serve humanity, with humans considering themselves masters of nature" (355). This perspective supports the systematic exploitation of natural resources like coal, gas, and forests for sustainable development. In contrast, deep ecology challenges this anthropocentric view by advocating for the preservation of nature in its pristine state, free from human interference, recognizing nature's inherent right to exist. "Every organism on Earth possesses intrinsic value, and no entity holds dominion over another" (356). This recognition seeks to establish equal rights for all organisms, promoting ecological balance within ecosystems.

Ecocriticism and ecocritical literature substantially support the social, political, and cultural independence process. The Indian English novelists depict the locals in general. The process of erasing their identity through ecological domination is being resisted, and people-ecological connections appear to blend in the local setting. These societies' discourse contains

multiple layers of meaning. The main study question is: how can nature recover when threatened? Why did the Bengal famine occur in 1943?

Ecocriticism is more than just the study of nature as depicted in literature. Nature encompasses more than just the beauty of its trees and animals. Nature refers to the entire physical environment, including both humans and non-humans. The relationship between the two forms a bond that serves as the foundation for ecocriticism. As long as there is harmony between the living and the non-living, humanity and the world benefit from a healthy ecosystem. The modern ecological consciousness believes that the balance between humans and the natural world must be preserved.

Ecocriticism diverges from dominant literary theories like 'social constructivism' and 'linguistic determinism'. Instead, it prioritizes ecocentric values such as careful observation, collective ethical responsibility, and acknowledgment of the world beyond human concerns. Peter Barry notes that "Ecocriticism rejects the foundational belief in 'constructedness,' a key aspect of literary theory... the idea that everything is socially or linguistically constructed continues to dominate debates in literary theory. However, ecocriticism's primary intervention has been to challenge this notion" (252). Thus, ecocriticism critiques feminist, Marxist, linguistic, and cultural theories for their emphasis on constructedness, opting instead for a phenomenological and experimental approach over a political or ideological one. This approach focuses on the physical world and human consciousness of perceived phenomena, highlighting the significant relationship between consciousness and the environment in ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism features the characteristics of establishing a balanced human and nature relationship, preserving the natural world against mechanical exploitation. It studies the human exploitation of the natural world. It has come into widespread use to denote poetry

with a strong ecological emphasis or message. It deals with various significant ideas about human-human relationships and human-nature relationships.

Transcendentalism in American literature and Romanticism in English literature uphold similar ideas in reflecting the organic vision of nature. Similarly Michael P. Cohen says:

The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), which was founded in 1992 during a special session of the Western Literature Association (WLA) conference in Reno, Nevada, gave ecocriticism—like literary criticism—its due prominence only in the 1960s. Currently, ASLE has groups in Germany, Japan, the UK, and Korea whose goals are to exchange information about literature and environmental studies, including texts, ideas, and data. (36)

The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was founded to provide a venue for critical studies of the literary and performing arts that examine environmental issues. So, American ecocriticism was already a thriving academic movement, and by the early 1990s, it had established a professional infrastructure consisting of recognized journals and an official corporate entity.

However, Cheryl Glotfelty dates the origins of ecocriticism back to the 1970s. According to her, William Rueckert may have invented the word ecocriticism in 1978 in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.' Rueckert defines ecocriticism as the application of ecology and ecological themes to literary analysis.

Ecocriticism, as it now exists in the USA, takes its literary bearings from three major 19<sup>th</sup>-century American writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau, whose works "celebrate nature, the life force and the wilderness as manifested in America" (249). By contrast, the British version of ecocriticism, or green studies, takes its bearings from the British Romanticism of the 1790s rather than the American Transcendentalism of the 1840s. As Peter Barry explains, "The founding figure on the British side is the critic Jonathan Bates" (250). However, the infrastructure of ecocriticism in the UK is less developed than in the USA.

Every literary theory examines the relations between writers, texts, and the world, however synonymous with society—the social sphere; ecocriticism expands the notion of 'the world' to include the entire eco-sphere. It gives an earthy approach to the text. As an earth-centered approach, ecocriticism assumes that no thought, philosophy, theory, or culture predates the earth. It embraces the notion that language, thought, and knowledge begin and end with the earth. Man is of the earth and earthly: the earth is a part of man. In the 1996 collection, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Ecology*, Glotfelty and Harold Fromm posit:

The study of the relationship between literature and the natural world is known as ecocriticism. Ecocriticism approaches literary studies from an earthy perspective, much as feminist criticism analyzes language and literature from a gender-conscious standpoint and Marxist criticism makes readers aware of economic class and forms of production when they read texts. When writing about the relationship between literature and the natural and biological world, ecocritical writers do so with a keen understanding of the harm that human activity is causing to that environment. (18)

It is an ecological approach to the study of the relationship between literature and

the environment. It studies the reciprocal relationship between human beings and land. The home ground of ecocriticism is the human's inseparable attachment to the soil in its existence. So, the dwelling place becomes the center of ecocriticism in its experimentation.

The portrayal of human attachment to other nonhuman natural environments is at the heart of ecocriticism. If we accept Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, then the communion between man and the physical eco-sphere aids in our understanding of the harmonious relationship and coexistence of the human and nonhuman natural world: "Everything is connected to everything else" (19). It shows the interconnection, inter-assimilation, and interrelationship among all nature's ingredients, whether biotic or abiotic. We must conclude that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether but instead plays a part in an immensely complex global system. Energy matter and ideas interact.

Ecocriticism turns away from the 'social constructivism' and 'linguistic determinism' of dominant literary theories. Instead, it emphasizes ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond us. Regarding this, Peter Barry posits:

Ecocriticism, then, repudiates the foundational belief in 'constructedness,' which is such an important aspect of literary theory. Everything is socially or linguistically constructed has not diminished its grip on day-to-day debate about literary theory. Nevertheless, the essence of the ecocriticism's intervention in theory has been to challenge it. It takes an interdisciplinary point of view by analyzing the works of authors, researchers, and poets in the context of environmental issues and nature. (252)

Ecocriticism challenges even feminist, Marxist, linguistic, and cultural theories in terms of their focus on constructedness. Thus, it is rather phenomenological and experimental than political and ideological. As a phenomenological and experimental theory, it focuses on the physical world and human consciousness in relation to perceived things. Thus, the relation of consciousness with the environment becomes considerable in ecocriticism.

Ecocritics believe the Earth is the source of everything. Even man as a part of it depends on the earth in every respect. Ecocriticism embraces the opinion that no branch of knowledge can ever be devoid of ecocentric implications. Every knowledge follows the earth; nothing can be understood in the absence of any spatial or temporal point of reference. Because of this reason, ecocriticism establishes the earth as crucial for understanding ethics and religion, art and literature, philosophy and physics, culture and politics, and all other discipline

Ecocriticism is not just a means of analyzing nature in literature. It implies a move towards a more biocentric worldview, an extension of ethics, and a broadening of human conceptions of the global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment. Ecocritics examines human perception of wilderness, how it has changed throughout history, and whether or not current environmental issues are accurately represented or even mentioned in popular culture and modern literature. Jean Arnold and his other co-authors write:

Ecocriticism is marked by a tremendously ambitious intellectual, ethical political, and even (sometimes) spiritual agendas. Though there is already great diversity of opinion in the field, ecocritical dialogue often aims at nothing less than the transformation of human environmental and ecological consciousness. By and large, ecocritics tend to believe that a considered appreciation of these processes can help restore a harmonious balance between nature and human culture. At the same time,

ecocriticism has borrowed methodologies and theoretically informed approaches liberally from other fields of literary, social and scientific study. (1098)

Ecological reading helps establish a culture that respects the nonhuman world. If the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman members is understood, it can heal the environmental wound humans have inflicted upon it.

Ecocriticism tends to reread texts with eco-friendly motives and ecological consciousness. It shows the integrated relationship between humans and nonhumans, having interconnection and inter-assimilation. Moreover, it invites all perspectives into its tent to understand the coexistence of living and non-living entities. Ecocriticism contributes to making 'green politics,' as 'Postcolonial' and 'Feminist' reading contribute to 'race' and 'gender politics,' but its true importance may be more phenomenological than political. If so, 'ecopoetics' will be a more helpful denominator than ecocriticism. On the other hand, the dominant aspect of ecocriticism, the study of the relationship between literature and landscape, appears in poetry. Ecopoetics, as related to ecocriticism, studies the relationship between poetry and dwelling place, and they are interconnected. So, ecopoetics extends more ideas of ecocriticism in terms of poetry.

Thus, nature is always a supporting element in literature. It can be seen in multitudinous forms. It reflects various atmospheres, moods, feelings, and status. It is an expressive form of literature. It is a very significant mode of expression for describing fertile, colorful atmosphere, happiness, gloominess, bitterness, disturbing, lively, tragic atmosphere, etc. All types of environments can be presented through the help of nature and various elements of nature. Nowadays, ecology, eco-balance, and environmental concerns are the points of attraction and concern. The prevalent environmental imbalance has seriously caused intellectuals and rational people to consider this. Therefore, the literary figures have used

their strength to strengthen people's attitudes towards environmental protection and eco-balance. Many poets and novelists have become eco-conscious or environment-conscious.

### Chapter 3: Suffering of Human Beings in *So Many Hungers*

In environmental literature, nature represents living and non-living beings in the universe. It is a significant source of life for many flora and fauna. Being an essential part of nature, human beings play a vital role in preserving and protecting nature. On the other hand, literature often shares a close relationship between the socio-political and cultural scenarios dominant around us. However, nowadays, this relationship has changed due to human's reckless acts of misusing natural resources. The nature-human relationship can be analyzed by textualizing nature's ups and downs and its impacts on modern human beings.

When we go through the novel, we find that before 1943, Bengal was rich in natural greenery, and the thick forest Sundarbans and the beautiful sea nearby covered a large area. However, when the British started constructing big industries in the farmland of this region, the greenery place slowly and gradually changed into bare hills. As a result, there was not enough rain on time, which caused mass migration of the farmers and poor people and the extinction of many insects, birds, and butterflies. This research shows how people suffered during the 1943 Bengal famine and its impacts on the flora and fauna.

At the novel's beginning, it is evident that when there are natural calamities like famine, drought, landslides, earthquakes, and so on, nature does not discriminate based on sex, ethnicity, originality, rich or poor, or something like that. The same thing happens in the case of Rahoul's family and Kajoli's family. Though Rahul is from a wealthy family, they still suffer from the impact of drought; for example, Monju, a pregnant wife of Rahoul, is from a wealthy family, but during her pregnancy, she becomes physically weak due to a lack of nutritious food. No healthy food was grown on their farmland due to the famine, and no food was available in the market to buy. Bhattacharya clarifies this pathetic condition by writing, "Manju has been getting thin and pale since her fifth month of pregnancy. She has needed tonic calcium. She has refused it, though- calcium, she had heard it was bad for the baby's

complexion! And month by month she has grown thin; she had let her strength ebb away. Oh, if only - Rahul ache- if only he had insisted that she should take calcium" (6).

Kunal, the younger brother of Rahoul, works as a local journalist in the city of Calcutta, and in his reporting, he has experienced, seen, and observed the plight of the poor migrant people. Many migrated from the village to the city for free food and shelter. Unfortunately, they could not get proper food or shelter. He describes a horrible scene where the vultures, the foxes, and the jackals are waiting for the dead bodies of a small child who died of starvation. The helpless condition of the women, children, sick and elderly people, and their struggle to get free food by standing in queue has been described sadly by the novelist. He further writes, " That vulture had set his greedy eyes on her streets of fields, never intending to kick them. The country was safe for the men when they returned one day. But the autumn crop was mortgaged, all for a mere fraction of the market rate, to pay the Zamindars' rent---"(183).

In same way, we can also see that the natural calamities of drought-hit so hard back in the city area that there was no place for the village migrants to live and nothing left to eat. It shows how the British mismanagement administration has created difficulties and disasters in the lives of Bengali people. Along with this, Bhattacharya also shows how horrible the situation is for the animals because millions of animals and birds die due to lack of water as well as food. When we look at villages, there are dozens of barred houses and abandoned agricultural farms. Kajoli, one of the narrators, vividly portrays the horror of the hunger and crops lying across the street to her mother as follows:

Vultures sat on trees and wheeled or dangled in the sunlight. A swarm of vultures stared down on the landscape. Late in the afternoon, the mother observed their effective performance. Crops lay huddled together by the road. Picked to the bones with eyelash socket covers, bites of skin and flesh, rotten on the nose and chin, and

tears the skulls pecked apart, only the hair uneaten--fluffy baby's hair, men's hair, and women's waist-length hair. A family group had fallen asleep, and beyond that, vultures. (189)

In these lines, Bhabani Bhattacharya portrays Kajoli and his mother Mangala as the direct victims of the drought and witnesses to the horrible scene. This also indicates how humanity started disappearing during pre-independent India and how the British lost their sense of humanity.

Bhabani Bhattacharya strongly criticizes the British for destroying the rich natural resources of Bengal. Many readers also seem to agree with what the novelists say above. They also believed that the British were responsible for the famine because they destroyed the thick and dense forests of Sundarban and laid railway lines for their purpose. They wanted to remove the valuable natural herbals available in the forest, as well as stones and marble from Calcutta and London. He also blames them for using fertilizers and other chemicals in the farmland so that the Indians more and more depend on the British imports of goods and services. The novelist reaffirms the impacts of rail line expansion on agricultural land. Her further views that "Stripped of mid-winter harvest, bare and backed, the cracking earth of rice fields pushed and stretched to the two-room railway substation from which Rahoul emerged at sunset" (25).

In the same way, the novel talks about the central theme of hunger and starvation, where the innocent villagers migrate from the village to the city area and go to the threshold of rich people and the temples to beg for food and shelter. They consider helping people to be their real God. Kajoli and her mother come to Rahoul's house to beg for food, and when Devash Basu gives them some morsel of food, they call him Devata, i.e., God. "...Let it be said that our devotion to Devata should be expressed through worship rather than affectionate love. But, Devesh Basu is Devata for us. We worship him because we are the poor people and

he helped us "(27-28). Nevertheless, the problem is that even rich people like Devata, the grandfather of Rahul, face multiple problems in their homes because they also worry about the lack of food and grocery items available in their locality.

The famine has left villagers in such a situation that they go to a household with their hungry infants by their ap and beg for food. They do not have any worry or shame when touching the feet of rich city people. The novelist describes this horrible scene in the novel:

'Master-' they implored with bent palms, and one whispered to the other, 'His grandson, bear a weight when we are about! Has the village lost its sense of shame? Is there no honour in the village? One man screamed as the Palmyra clump passed, and he came this way. Rahoul gazed. A tall and upright figure wearing white homespun. Long silver hair thinning at the edge of the high forehead, with a long, flowing silver beard. It was Dadu's grandfather. He walked barefoot, like the peasants.(29)

In the above quotation, we see how the poor people come to the village and beg for food.

Rahoul, who is innocent about the Indian way of life because he studied in Cambridge, Britain, tries to understand the value of food and how poor people beg for food during times of famine.

In the same way, the novelist also talks about the long queue of villagers who came from villages to city areas for survival. He talks about Kanu, a young boy and good neighbor of Kajoli who, along with Kajoli, goes to beg for food. Mangala, Kajoli's mother, and Onu, Kajoli's younger brother, also go to Rahul's house for food. They begin in such a way that they do not hesitate even to touch the food. They dream of getting a morsel left out of the food and a better shelter for nighttime. Rahoul has further clarified it:

A girl appeared at the low entryway holding a shiny brass vessel... The girl set down the vessel and dropped to her knees, halting over Rahul's feet. Her skin was pale and her features attractive. She was fourteen years old. The phrase "may you live"

remained on Rahul's lips. Kajoli was undoing his shoelaces! Rahoul, flustered, removed his shoes--leather shoes he knew could not be worn beyond the doorsteps. But the girl, Kajoli, came to a halt, now perched comfortably on her bottom, and poured cool water from the vessel onto Rahoul's feet to wipe away the rough dust.

(36)

In these painful quotations or painful lines, we come to know how Bengali people reached this condition and how the war, the horror, and the brutality of the British created a kind of havoc in the Indian people, especially women, and children. Why did all the villagers of Baruni flee to the city by abandoning their belongings?

The impact of natural disaster in the novel is so deeply rooted that it has not only destroyed the everyday life of Bengali people, but it has destroyed the lives, careers, hopes, and dreams of millions of youths. Among them, Rahoul Basu, one of the novel's protagonists, has completed a D.Sc. in Astrophysics from Cambridge University. He returns to India for a better job, but his dream remains just a dream. His father, Samarendra, looks for lots of jobs in the city, but he needs help to get. On the other hand, Monju, Rahul's wife, also has better expectations from her husband, but all these things remain just a dream because of the human-made calamities in the region. Samarendra expects that there will be better jobs and technical progress for youths like his son. He furthers views that "If his efforts were crowned with success, thus, so they would be, with facilities placed at his command, and with proper encouragement from authorities, a factor of incalculable moral value, well, the present technique of hardware would then have to be scrapped altogether" (52).

The volatile socio-political, economic, and environmental situation has created trouble for the world. Second World War, decolonization, and the emergence of America as a world power have set new political dynamism. Environmentally, the governments started founding industries and companies by destroying the nature and farmland of the farmers. As

a colony of Britain, India cannot remain unaffected by these national and international changes. As a result, the Bengal region was harshly affected by the drought because the British had already cut down the rainforest to set up industry. Many people left their homes for survival, including the rich and poor. Not only in the everyday life of people but also in the governmental and financial sectors has everything been destroyed. The novelist clarifies the financial crisis during this natural calamity and below:

Samarendra recalls a threat that had previously been stored in his memory: blood, toil, and tears! He made a quick addition. In a minute, he was on the phone with his stockbroker. Samarendra cleared his holdings in one fell swoop. Unfortunately, he couldn't be a millinery. However, he would not be a pauper rider. The stock market shook with the explosion of bombs in Rangoon, and Alexander's ill-equipped khaki-clad army retreated into the trackless jungle. The market also dropped back. Then the market fell. (53)

As mentioned above, Smarindra is the common voice of many investors who lost considerable amounts in the share market and stock exchange. Here, we can see how helplessly the people lost their property due to the drought and bad governance in Bengal.

The novel proceeds ahead with a strong determination of the character to preserve and protect the flora and fauna of nature. They commonly stand together against the natural calamities and the authority that created such a situation. Chapter five of the novel mainly focuses on Devash's worry about the current famine in Bengal and the helpless situation it has created. His health deteriorates, and he wishes that the forthcoming generation would join their hands in the freedom of India. He also tells his grandchildren Rahoul and Kunal to respect nature and protect and preserve the motherland. He further reminds their duty towards the nation:

They, the rulers of half-mankind, recognize all people's right to select the form of government in which they will live, and they want to see sovereign rights and self-governance returned to those who have been forcibly denied them. That was an explosive talk! What about the sword hung there facing India? We conquered our Indian Empire with the sword, and we want to keep it with the sword. What about the other talk? In the course of working and fighting for success, we must never lose sight of the ultimate goal. We are now planning for the better future we want to create.(70)

For this purpose, they even need to protect the greenery and the natural resources in Bengal. The grandfather also inspires many youngsters in the city and village to fight against the colonial agents. They plan to occupy the farmland and forests, industrial development, the unnecessary exhaust of natural resources, and take away local resources. So, as the chapter moves on, we can find more rigidity and resistance from the characters. This chapter is unique because the characters of Monju, Kunal, and Rahoul have been described in smooth and consistent ways.

In the same way, chapter six of the novel describes the deteriorating condition of the people living in the village named Baruni. The famine hit so hard that the villagers faced a few problems, like health problems, food shortages, and proper care for pregnant women and children. The chapter also highlights the increasing tension among the villagers because many of them remain homeless, foodless, and hopeless while living in the crisis. This type of internal conflict and moral dilemma makes people struggle for their life purpose. That is why many people living in the village of Baruni start migrating to the city area. On the one hand, nature troubled them, and on the other hand, the British army started regularly coming to the village and taking them away, accusing them of protesting against the British Raaj. On their way to leaving the village, they reached a half-dried and muddy river, where many villagers of Baruni started to cross the river on the boat. Unfortunately, the boat sank and got stuck in

the mud, and a large number of men and women died on the spot. Kanu describes this pain as below:

The boats lay in piles, broken and heaved, with a big group of men and women surrounding each pile, faces bent with profound sorrow and eyes focused. All of the fishermen had arrived, and the boat wreckers had piled up boat bits for sale as firewood. The rate was cheap and nominal, but no fisher, not even a peasant, had made an offer. The peasants should not use the wreckage of a fisherman's life to start a kitchen fire. No scrap of wood had found a buyer. (80)

This reference shows how human beings have destroyed available water resources and what effect it will have on them in the future. A large number of migrants have ridden on the boat to escape from the natural as well as human-made brutality in the village. However, the dream shattered amidst the mud and river, which has taken their life forever and forever. The dream of living a happy and healthy life in Calcutta remains just a dream. It is because of influential people's destructive and careless behavior towards nature and natural resources.

One of the unique aspects of this novel is that it is embodied in the tiny and invisible problems that were dominant in Bengal at the time of famine in 1943. For example, it highlights how the drought, burglary, and robbery in the village and city areas disharmonized the community. In order to escape from this common problem, many villagers come together, gather at the junction, and see if somebody is coming to rob the remaining grains at home. To see this event and incident, one casually says it is the type of unity drought brought to them. Finally, the Bengali people could protect and preserve the village from external forces like the British Army and vigilante groups. Kajoli further restates the dominant problems in Baruni in the following lines:

"Sugarcane," said Kajoli, offering the length of cane to her brother, who hadn't eaten that day. Nobody in the village had eaten anything. He inserted the cane end into his

mouth but removed it quickly with a grimace of pain. His ear ached from the pain he had been experiencing for the past half hour, since the thrill had subsided, such that even stretching his mouth open was painful. This is his chronic ailment, and it occurs intermittently. Something was awry with the roots of his left ear. He often lay screaming in agony. (90)

Kajoli's brother Onu and her friend Kanu represent the villagers' pain, agony, and suffering. They struggle hard to make social order and a group to preserve nature and its resources. During this time of scarcity, humans have lost their remaining humanity. They do not get even a morsel to eat, but they are determined to do their duty in the village.

Throughout the novel, Bhattacharya argues that humans have become disconnected from nature, thus disrupting the external and harmonious bond between humans and non-humans. Identifying himself as biocentric, Bhattacharya condemns acts of harm against nature. He emphasizes a horizontal relationship between humanity and nature while rejecting vertical relationships characteristic of the modern era. Viewing nature as a cohesive entity with humans as integral parts, Bhattacharya aims to recognize nature's power and foster human communion with the elemental aspects of the natural world. He advocates for ecological gratitude toward the egalitarian Earth. Additionally, he explores the human-animal relationship in the following passages:

However, the peasant mother couldn't bear to sell Mangala. Even if she had considered it, her children Onu and Kanzuli would not allow it. They would rather starve than consume the rice obtained in exchange for Mangala. This sentiment was justified because to them, eating that rice would be akin to consuming Mangala herself, whom the children did not view as just an animal. Through their long companionship and affection, they had humanized her. They had grown up drinking her milk, knew her voice, and called to her with deep affection. Mangala, with her

large udders, had even allowed them to play with her new calves. It was common knowledge that those buying cattle were interested solely in their meat. Reports suggested a vast army was sweeping across Bengal to combat a locust invasion. (162-63)

This abovementioned animal-human relationship is vital from an eco-critical perspective. Kanu, Onu, and Kajoli's relationship with the cow is so loving and caring that she constantly worries about anything wrong with the animals. So, the cow is valuable to the family; not only does it give milk, but it also gives love and affection.

So Many Hungers! represents the need for humanity and human efforts to cope with the difficulties. Bhattacharya has portrayed such characters in a highly moral, honest, and sincere way. Rahoul, for instance, is one of the protagonists in the novel who believes in human values and ethics. Though a financially prosperous and academically sound scientist, he helped the poor and hunger-affected children, women, and men. The following lines characterize what type of person is Rahoul:

He attentively attempts to grasp her dilemma and inquires as to what happened to the youngster. Why did you neglect him? You must have come here seeking food. The mother had great luck dying on the platform. Rahoul stated that the railway personnel will take care, the infant will be transported to the foundling home, the body will be removed by the Corpse Disposal Squad, and it would be burned on the Ganga bank by noon. Why not work in peace for a short while till the good folks return? Do not worry, there are individuals who will take care of you, and I will take your reference afterward. (216)

A desperate mother whose son recently died of starvation goes to Rahul to settle the body. At that time, Rahoul becomes so worried about the situation of the mother and the child that he

promises to do his best to help her. This kindness of Rahoul suggests that even in times of crisis, God sends kind-hearted people to help needy people.

Hunger, the novel's central theme, reminds the readers that nature was destroyed due to human beings' destructive activities, resulting in famine throughout Bengal regions. The natural plight has affected not only human beings but also street dogs, birds, crows, etc. The street dogs started attacking in open Sunlight to the children and elderly people. Onu, the brother of Kajoli, pictures this horrible scene: "...a beggar boy, passing that way, took this innate glance. He came dashing, kicked the dog, snatched the jammed skin from its teeth, and is still ready for the counter-attack. Moreover, the dog attacked. It was angry and famished" (234). All of its hair had fallen from its skin, leaving it looking confused and naked, unlike a dog. However, it battled brilliantly due to its hunger and defeated the attacker. Then Onu grabbed a stone and smashed it into the beast. The dog's horn has cracked.

The novel *So Many Hungers!* Portrays characters with good, generous, and honest traits and characters with negative mindsets. Bhattacharya has also created a person like Sir-Laxminath, a wealthy and well-educated person without sympathy or mercy. He is so insensitive about the plight of the poor that he creates a kind of fun for these poor people. On the streets, corps of children and elderly people spread everywhere. However, this person is so insensitive that it is nothing to him. He states, "... haven't you ever looked at our city's pavement as you drive by? The filthy bodies of both men and women, old and young, is still all about? Ugly sight. Fancy not having one grain of rice to eat for days and ends" (240). Not only does he consider himself a person from a high-class family, but his honesty and sincerity are not seen. For example, he creates a mock of brothel houses that flourished during the time of famine because many young village girls sold their bodies in exchange for a paisa or so. It is not their wish but rather a compulsion to feed their family members. He hates the girls who go to the brothel house by forgetting their compulsion to provide butter and bread to their

minor brothers, sick mothers, and paralyzed fathers. He further derogatorily depicts such girls:

You see, a lot of money has been associated to these slim chicks. He argues that brothels have become a significant business. Conditions have never been more favorable. There is a delicate balance between demand and supply in the line. Both have benefited significantly from this work. You see, a lot of money has been tied to these slim females from the countryside. Skinny mind—he lifted a clean fingertip to illustrate the fine distinction, not skin and bone. The hungry must eat well before going into business, consuming rice, ghee, and milk so that the bones can grow into meat.(241)

Bhattacharya's words above seek to reveal human limitations. If nature retaliates for our cruelty to her, the entire human race, with all of its intelligence, will be wiped away from the face of the earth. He depicts the governmental structure responsible for conserving animals and their natural habitat at the expense of innocent life. Climate change poses a significant threat to global biodiversity.

When villagers of Baruni leave the village, they face multiple difficulties on the way to the city. Kajoli becomes wholly exhausted and hunger-struck on the way. She is left with no strength. She meets an Indian soldier and begs him for food. She is so gluttonously hungry when he gives her some bread that she slugs it in without thinking of her mother and brother. As she is eating, the soldier, who is sexually attracted to Kajoli, leads her to a meadow. "A piercing screech, a deep heavy groan" from her awakened senses, and he discovers that she is wounded and unconscious (243). Kajoli had a miscarriage. A jackal approaches to eat her while she is bleeding in the meadow. Meanwhile, her brother, Onu, on his way to see his sister, encounters the soldier and begs for food with pitiful cries: "My sister. She is hungry. I am hungry. Mother is hungry.... Give us a little bread, strong soldier. Hunger consumes us

(244). This is possibly the most frightening scene in the novel. Kajoli is eventually rescued by an army doctor and taken to a hospital in Calcutta. The novelist portrays Kajoli's trauma following the rape case:

When Kajoli walked out of the hospital, she noticed with a surprise that there was no joy on mother's face, only grief. The eyes were puffy from sobbing, and the voice in the hearse was low. They proceeded together to the alley's opening, and the mother stood motionless, hanging her head. Kajoli shouted out in surprise as tears trickled down her cheeks. What is it, modern? She responded, "After a while, I told you nothing but lies, girls." Please don't worry about our account. We are homeless and poor. We have no work. We sleep in the street. There is nothing we can hope for.

(243)

Because Kajoli is in the hospital, her brother and mother have to move about in Calcutta, seeking food from dustbins and refuse in the streets, where the destitute fight with each other and sometimes with dogs for food scraps. We are moved by Onu's pathetic expression when he tells his mother: "Those garbage cans-they are our food -bowls, Mother. We pick out of them before the city's scavenger folk come with their vans. Sometimes we pick at night--less competition. I saw two women fighting like animals over a dustbin--it haps- penned yesterday" (162). Thus, the existence of these poor folk is now at the lowest animal level.

By focusing on starvation, Bhattacharya reveals that when nature destroys due to floods, volcanoes, or even draught, it indeed brings some good things back in the short or medium term, but when a man causes destruction due to pollution and manmade casualties, bomb explosions, nuclear radiation and so on. Such things can never bring back good results. Human beings indeed do different activities to satisfy their greed. For power and strength, people do not consider the life and existence of other animals and nature. In the name of fulfilling their greed, people are polluting the environment through different activities, like

opening many and more factories that manufacture natural resources to produce different things as people demand, and these things are destroying the originality of nature. *Living Planet Report 2022* reflects this fact:

Globally, it is obvious that leaders in dominant cultures have failed to control the human activities that are driving climate change and habitat degradation, whereas Indigenous lands and waters have been successfully managed for millennia. In Canada, Brazil, and Australia, for example, vertebrate biodiversity in Indigenous territories is comparable to or greater than that observed in formally protected regions. Indigenous conservation strategies prioritize reciprocal people-place ties in cultural and care practices, as opposed to the colonial conception of isolating people from nature to preserve the pure wilderness unaffected by humans.(50)

The ecosystem became imbalanced due to the booming and firing; the environment became pullulated. As a result, different pandemic diseases attack Bangel's local people. As a result, many people died due to pandemic diseases and hunger. The novelist presents that humans depend on nature for all their needs; hence, there is a deep connection between humans and nature. In the natural world, human life will be more peaceful and healthier. The purity of nature increases the life expectancy of human beings and keeps them far from diseases.

By exploring Rahoul's act of socio-political reform and Kajoli's struggle to survive, the novel highlights the significance of recognizing the intrinsic worth of all living organisms and advocates for a compassionate, interconnected world that respects and cherishes all life. Farmers struggle to get a morsel of food during the famine, and burying their small children indicates complex emotional responses from the readers. The novelist further clarifies this problem: "The Battle of Bengal thickened. Human endurances ebbed. Hungry children cried themselves to death. Streams of desperate men ventured out of their ancestral homes for food. Hanging on the footboards of railway trains, riding on the sun-baked roofs"(154). This

complexity of emotions, including curiosity and a sense of kinship, demonstrates the inner emotional depth and capacity for experiencing a wide range of feelings to the modern human beings who have shown the seeds to destroy nature. From the biocentric perspective, recognizing animals as sentient beings with emotions, self-awareness, and the ability to form connections underscores the importance of treating them with empathy, respect, and consideration for their well-being. Through the lens of biocentrism, the novel urges readers to reflect on the ethical considerations owed to all living creatures, nurturing a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of life and the importance of empathy, kindness, and respect in shaping a harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world.

*So Many Hungers!* warns against the failure of the natural environment. Through the novel, Bhattacharya portrays that nature is a primary source for human survival and it is a source provider to survive from the gift of nature: "The Rivers of Bangel Choked with fish every kind's large and small still the years old packed in tiny you fancy both you and Kunal" (8). Everything humans need to survive and thrive is indeed provided by the natural world around us: food, water, medicine, materials for shelter, and even natural cycles such as climate and nutrients. In the novel, Laxmikanth and his family also depend on the river for survival. They get food and earn money from the river. In the novel, Bhattacharya discusses how rivers and oceans play important roles in people's lives.

In the novel, Bhattacharya presents nature as the superior human being who cannot beat nature. It is impossible to beat nature, which we are made of, made by, and part of. Through the novel, he learns that beating nature would be beating ourselves. Nature changes, nature progresses, it evolves. Nature is everything and everywhere. Nature is our mother. She provides for us, and she can take it away. The novel portrays the World War. Due to war, every natural habitat was destroyed as the famine stalked through the land, and villagers began to die of hunger. Destitute leave their villages and march toward big cities, hoping to

get food. "He had died for lack of food, so it was reported, and the brief news flashed past almost unnoticed—a mere beggar. No one felt that he was a premonition, a symbolic shape of things to come. Other men sank and died" (105). The novel presents the scenes of hunger and exploitation after the Great World War. After the war, there was no agricultural production.

Through the novel, Bhattacharya wants to convey the message that nature does not require human beings to survive, but humans cannot even exist without the help of nature. Nature has existed since the origin of the universe. So human beings should not keep themselves at the centre. On one hand, nature has created the world, but if the world destroys nature, the destruction has far-reaching impacts that cannot be regained.

Due to starvation, they are forced to eat everything found in the Calcutta. "Those garbage cans—they are our food Bowls, mother. We pick out of them before The city's scavenge folk come with Their vans. Sometimes we pick at night- Less competition. I saw two women fighting like animals over a dust-bin-it happened yesterday" (162). These words of the destitute reveal their precarious condition. Further, they had to fight even with dogs for possession of the city's heaps of rubbish, which contained caps of rotting food. The portrayal of the scene in which Kajoli saw a Jackal crouch and eat the body of a woman, who is stretched by the tree trunk, also exposes the stark reality. The episode in which an artist, a ticket collector, and the crowd watch a gruesome scene of a child sucking the breast of its dead mother also creates horror.

Ecocritics advocates for a pure and clean environment. They criticize the injustice of human beings over nature, which creates self-destruction of nature. They argue that human beings are the main factor in the destruction of nature. As Arne Naess says: "Current human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is quickly worse" (62). This definition shows that inhuman human activities cause the entire pandemic on Earth. Nature is a necessity; we have to revive from its harmful effects by itself in broad terms. Man

brings in technology for the micro level to help with nature's lousy effect. Then, generation by generation, we begin to destroy nature for further improvement of our lives and lifestyles.

In the novel, Bhattacharya asserts that nature holds greater significance than humanity. It demonstrates its power through natural disasters such as floods, famine, droughts, and earthquakes, which directly impact human lives. The interconnectedness between nature and human existence makes it difficult for humans to separate themselves from its influence. Bhattacharya also discusses nature's adverse effects on humans, stating, "The starving must eat well before engaging in business—eating rice, ghee, and milk to strengthen their bones and smoothen their hair. A hundred other details. It pays. There's no better investment in the entire financial market" (176). If any character can be considered a protagonist in this novel, it is hunger itself, as all characters embody different forms of hunger. While people injured by bombs receive immediate medical attention, those suffering from severe hunger are often overlooked. When a soldier gives Onu half a rupee, he initially plans to buy a cheap meal but decides instead to purchase flowers for the Goddess. Rahoul becomes a victim of the pervasive hunger depicted in *So Many Hungers!*. Each character must inevitably face both the benevolence and adversity of nature. This relationship is reciprocal, as nature both influences and is influenced by human actions. Our irresponsible behaviors can inflict significant harm upon nature, illustrating the interconnected chain of ecosystems where every element impacts and is impacted by others.

Bhattacharya's novel *So Many Hungers!* realistically explores the impact of the Bengal famine in the early 1940s, focusing on two types of hunger: the desperate need for food and the craving for sexual fulfillment. The novel vividly portrays how ordinary people suffer and die due to starvation while also depicting the disturbing scene of a sex-starved soldier raping the impoverished village girl, Kajoli. Bhattacharya exposes the dual scourges of war and famine that drain the lifeblood of the poor. His narrative vividly contrasts the

suffering of famine-stricken communities with the callous profiteering and joy of black marketers, presented with a blend of thoughtful reflection and poignant sentimentality, albeit sometimes exaggerated. As a social realist, Bhattacharya aims to provoke societal change by depicting the harsh realities of India. He deeply engages with human suffering and analyzes the root causes of the famine in his exploration of the human predicament.

Human exploitation causes suffering for every character in the narrative. Humans have long claimed superiority over the natural world. This is visible on a daily basis, as most people only interact with man-made environments and other humans. Initially, humans had no idea how their lives might harm the natural world. Science and technology have shown how serious the consequences of anthropogenic activity are. The current problem stems from people's lack of responsibility for environmental health. Some people are perfectly satisfied to degrade the environment for personal gain. Through the novel, Bhattacharya wants to spread the knowledge that no humans are not 'superior' to nature, but humans are not only nature either. They are sociocultural animals that have families, communities, and societies.

#### Chapter IV: Biocentric Egalitarianism

The exploration of Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* through the lens of biocentrism, this research has led a compelling journey of understanding, compassion, and ethical reflection on human acts toward nature. By examining the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques, this study aimed to uncover the deeper connections between the real stories developed in the novel and the biocentric perspective, shedding light on the intrinsic value of all living beings and the imperative for ethical consideration in our interactions with them.

This study looked into how the terrible story of a primarily human-caused drought, in which over a million people died and millions of homes were destroyed, was harmed in the Bengal region during the 1943 famine. The Bengal famine was so devastating and hazardous that human endurance dwindled. Hungry children screamed themselves to death, while desperate men left their ancestral homes in quest of sustenance. Whatever tragic occurrences and situations have occurred, the underlying cause is humankind's direct attack on nature: deforestation for industrial purposes, urbanization, and excavations in water areas.

This novel also exhumes how the poor family of Kajoli gets wholly replaced by her beloved village, Baruni, and longs for food and shelter throughout the streets of Calcutta. It also depicts the plights of women and their children, poor and sick, pregnant and new mothers, and their struggle to survive during the drought. On the other hand, this novel portrays Rahul's rich and well-educated family. However, the pain of these two families is almost the same. Kajoli's family suffers from food scarcity, and Rahoul's family worries about possible food scarcity in the future. Rahoul's family seems to be very generous and helpful. They help the needy people, but their help for needy people is not enough because they, too, are suffering from the same famine. Hence, the Bengal famine of 1943 has neither left the rich, like Rahoul Basu and his family, nor the poor, like Kajoli and her family. Hence,

when human beings turn against nature, what they get in return is none other than the death, decay, destruction, and demolition of the existing human society.

Looking forward, this research has made more demands for heightened awareness of the ethical implications governing our treatment of flora, fauna, and the environment. The novel's portrayal of the interconnectedness of all life forms serves as a touching reminder that our actions reverberate throughout the intricate web of existence. The call to action lies in education and advocacy, which can nurture empathy, compassion, and respect for further intellectual inquiries and scholarly pursuits, keeping all creatures in the center and fostering a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Through the novel, Bhattacharya has shared the moral lesson that nature can be portrayed as benevolent as well as aggressive and destructive. If human beings properly respect and treat nature as an essential organ of their life, nature also provides uncountable tangible and intangible benefits. He depicted natural calamity realistically in his famous novel *So Many Hungers!* This novel demonstrates the tragic effects of famine on the inhabitants of Bengal. This calamity is the factual presentation of the real Bengal famine of 1943. The novel deals with the painful, shocking conditions of the people. It reveals the famine-affected peasants' miserable, gruesome, and helpless situations. The writer used a variety of nature symbols and images to make numerous analogies. For example, Laxminathan and Samerandra Bose are compared as jackals and vultures due to their villainy and avarice.

Nature is always a supporting character in literature. It can take many forms. It conveys a variety of atmospheres, moods, emotions, and statuses. It is an expressive type of literature. It is an important term for defining a fruitful, colorful atmosphere, happiness, gloominess, bitterness, upsetting, energetic, sad atmosphere, and so on.

Literature has evolved into a means of expressing concern for the environment and its significance in human life and the larger world. Environmental balance and protection have become important topics around the world. It is a globally significant issue. Global warming is wreaking havoc on the entire planet as a result of economic imbalance and pollution. The planet is becoming a victim of ecological imbalance and catastrophe. A healthy, balanced workplace and atmosphere require time. It is like the universe's lifeblood. The globe requires an eco-friendly environment to promote growth, development, sustainability, and prosperity.

As a realistic writer, Bhattacharya paints a positive picture of India and its cultural traditions. As a novelist, he stays faithful to his goal of painting a clear picture of India: poverty, environmental ignorance, and malnutrition. Through his characters, he emphasizes the reality that millions of people died from starvation as a result of dangerous and unethical environmental practices. His command and control over the novel's happenings and events are impressive. This contributes to his reputation as a novelist and social realist in pre-independence India.

However, the association of landmarks with text marks, as well as the problem of environmental ethics in the modern world—the realms of ecopoetic concern—are essentially related to Bhattacharya's concept of ecological consciousness. Because of his willingness to combine the body text with the body of nature, his works create eco-effects that reveal the essence of nature everywhere. On the other hand, natural processes are linked to interior human systems and the process of creating literature. Thus, his novel is no less than environmental reports that respect all natural elements while appealing to humans to create equitable thankfulness in a biocentric world.

So, everything is interconnected in Bhattacharya's literary world, where every flora and fauna of nature receive equal vigor and attention. Overall, Bhattacharya's work is ecocentric and promotes ecological consciousness through a strong affinity between two

ontological zones: human and nonhuman. Thus, nature is the entire, and any additional ingredients, such as humans, are pieces of the whole. This is what eco-literature sees in Bhattacharya's literature: only by living in harmony with all-natural components rather than exploiting and destroying them can we be re-paradised and put organic nature's vision into action.

To summarize, biocentrism, as a theoretical tool, seeks to evaluate any literature that emphasizes nature and the environment. Green cultural studies, ecopoetics, and environmental literary criticism are all terms used to describe the same wide genre. For some individuals, ecocriticism can be both socially activist and spiritual. Although ecocriticism can affect almost any field when put into action, it usually returns to its roots--the human relationship with the Earth. Ecocriticism, then, can be, but does not have to be, politically active, as it advocates for a worldview that seeks to repair the environmental scars that humans have inflicted on it, such as hunger, malnutrition, flood, and drought. Bhattacharya points out that hunger and deprivation ultimately lead

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