

THE REPRESENTATION OF DEPRIVED-CLASS IN PANNALAL PATEL'S FICTIONS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the wretched facets of deprived class represented by one of the eminent regional novelists of Gujarati Literature. Pannalal Patel is considered an exceptional incident of Gujarati literature. The major inspiring sources of his creativity are the native dialect, the living standards, the customs, and traditional, orthodox values of the region where he lived for years. Pannalal is somewhat different than his forerunners because without pursuing any ideology, he has depicted the true heart of human being and sang the status of humanity in his novels. Pannalal wrote more than 400 short stories which are available in his 26 collection of short stories. Except Dhumketu, hardly any writer contributed such huge number of fiction- writing in Gujarati literature. There isn't any exaggeration if Pannalal's art of story-writing is being compared to Chekhov and Maupassant. Likewise novels, the local community and its nature remain like the spinal cord in his short stories. They depict the issues on love affair, family-life and the relationship between husband and wife. While coming across the postcolonial perspective, Pannalal's stories like *Cross- cheque*, *Malak Upar*, *Bapuno Kutaro*, *Daninu Ghadiyal*, *Megho Ghameti* and *National Savings* are remarkable in portraying the inhuman harshness of officers or native oppressors and pains of helpless, illiterate people who remain the victim of external social and political reality.

Two major divisions have been materialized in Indian society: the ruling and the oppressed class since earlier period. The people in power have money and wealth while the suppressed class seems crushed under the dominance of elite class. Those who lack power have been deprived of their human rights. The term should not be narrowly viewed or delimited to a particular class or caste. Actually Dalit is a common identity of people who have been marginalized, suppressed or ignored in social, political or religious sphere. It has been observed as per Marxists views that people belong to scheduled caste category should not be considered only Dalit community, but the landless community, the adivasis, the labour class, the exploited or those who reside outside of the village border are all considered dalits. Broadly speaking, those who are deprived of their human rights anyway, can also be defined under this category.

Pannalal's depiction of either farmer or Thakarda community represents the miserable plight of poor people who are deprived of their human rights. They are under the shelter of native colonial or slave in the hands of riches hence, it indirectly confirms that theirs' is 'Dalit-like' status.

Pannalal Patel is considered an exceptional incident of Gujarati literature, who without any traditional form of training for literary creation, wrote only by his own sensibility. By establishing the distinct image of the subject-content and fiction formation in the field of novel and short-story writing, he could establish his identity among the reputed personalities of Gujarati literature especially as a regional novelist. The major inspiring sources of his creativity are the native dialect, the living standards, the customs, and traditional, orthodox values of the region where he lived for years. Pannalal is somewhat different than his forerunners because without pursuing any ideology, he has depicted the true heart of human being and sang the status of humanity in his novels. He aims at talking an earthly man, showing the manifold mysteries of human incarnation and strength of people in love and separation. He shows the brave face of humanity.

It has been surveyed that more than 400 short stories have been written by Pannalal which are available in his 26 collection of short stories. Except Dhumketu, hardly any writer contributed such huge number of fiction- writing in Gujarati literature. Critics are of the view that there isn't any exaggeration if Pannalal's art of story-writing is being compared to Chekhov and Maupassant. Likewise novels, the local community and its nature remain like the spinal cord in his short stories (Dave & Desai 38). They depict the issues on love affair, family-life and the relationship between husband and wife. While coming across the postcolonial perspective, Pannalal's stories like *Cross- cheque*, *Malak Upar*, *Bapuno Kutaro*, *Daninu Ghadiyal*, *Megho Ghameeti* and *National Savings* are remarkable in portraying the inhuman harshness of officers or native oppressors and pains of helpless, illiterate people who remain the victim of external social and political reality.

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Pannalal's depiction of farmer, Bhill or Thakarda community represents the miserable plight of poor people who are deprived of their human rights. They are under the shelter of native colonial or slave in the hands of riches hence, it indirectly confirms that theirs' is 'Dalit-like' status.

Pannalal had experienced the pain of depressed or deprived human being especially of interior region of society since his childhood. A man who himself remained the resident of hilly region how can he be unfamiliar with their pain. Those whose wealth is selfless relationship with

nature seem rather elevated or noble characters in Pannalal's fictional universe. Their natural outlook, wonderful harmony between emotion and intellect and strength of digesting wicked form of reality seem more impressive. The depiction of wealth and power on one hand shows its deliberate harshness on the contrary the state of innocence and truth flourishes its genuine reality. The helplessness of innocent and honest people against the social discrepancy as well as the rigidity of ruling class makes the reader realize by heart. The live portrayal of characters, typical articulation of language and experimentation in prose remain noteworthy in Pannalal's narrative.

Pannalal's story titled *Cross- Cheque* is centered on Vagad, a man of about 35 and his young son named Singa residing in the lap of hills. This tale seems one of the best stories under the category of Dalit's or depressed class in Gujarati literature. These two illiterate and poor villagers cannot prove their innocence and remain the victim of police, agents and harsh merchants. They are forced to remain silent against the oppressive structure of society. The reward they receive in the form of *Cross- Cheque* of Rs. 500/- while serving the Bombay merchant proves disastrous to them. They are treated thieves by others and sent to jail even obliged to chew up the cheque. Without committing crime, Vagad and his son are verified as thieves. The entire scene describes the wretched predicament of tribal people due to illiteracy and subjugation of elite class. The miserable state of Vagad and the question raised by his son Singa "Father, what is this Cross Cheque?" and Vagad's confusion over the unintelligible issue "Why did he write this paper? What ruin did we commit to him?" even echoes in the mind of the reader till the end of the story.

Daninu Ghadiyal by Pannalal focuses on the subjugation of poor people under the dominance of ruling class. The story narrates Dani's enforced recovery as a charge of his stolen watch from Bhill people and the monopolized watchmen's blaming to innocent village folks. Actually, a small boy uncovers the secret and declares that it has not been stolen but quite safe in Dani's cupboard. The whole issue is dropped by clever man named Fatakaka who explains the little boy not to disclose the fact to avoid further persecution from Dani. He is fully convinced that defeated or insulted Dani would certainly bring further ruin to the grief-stricken people. Hence, *Daninu Ghadiyal* depicts the satirical but the pathetic condition of village people caught in a snake-wrapped social, economic, and political situation.

Malak Upar is a pathetic tale of an old Chamar (Cobbler belongs to downtrodden community: Dalit) whose objection brings him a disaster. He becomes the victim of soldiers who beat him harshly. Ultimately, he is forced to leave his community and village forever. The portrayal of Chamar (untouchable) community has been highlighted along with political, social and economic relationships. Similarly *Rehmu's Sipai* narrates the story of Rehmu, the Sipai (soldier) who not only remains the part, but also the victim as the representative of police department committing the force and exploitation. *Bapuno Kutaro* describes the wretched predicament of flattering people when Bapu's (the protagonist) alien dog is killed by street's dogs of the village. The dog is brought for the occasion of Bapu's arrival. The insulted and excited Bapu shoots four to five dogs caught by village people. Pannalal has drawn the picture of village mentality and royal pomp of Bapu in an ironic tone. The reader of the story experiences the terrible blankness of the situation created towards the end. The story *National Savings* focuses on the wretched economic predicament of poor village people. The government issues the 'national saving certificates' to meet the economic burden occurred due to the war situation.

These certificates are offered forcefully to the poor Bhill Community. As a result of it, each of the villagers is forced to sell his only buffalo or costly domestic material as a cost of purchasing the certificates. Besides this, they are promised that they will receive the doubled sum of their money invested in certificates after twelve years. Unfortunately, even before the maturity period, all go in vain. The riches of the village buy all the certificates in quarter part of the total value. The government and the riches equally perform their exploiting task. The role of government and riches happens to be one and the same. Pannalal's effort is to depict the cruel and harsh approaches of mighty government and riches as native oppressors. The twofold exploitation of poor Bhill community shows the complexities of the ruling class. The story *Megho Gameti* draws the portrayal of Megha (black) night. Here, the clash between government's soldiers and Bhill people is the theme of the story. The soldiers are shown recovering the taxes in the days of famine whereas the Bhills are placed in 'do or die' predicament. The said 'fear' is pushed backward by Gameti with due understanding and love. Gameti remains an impressive personality in compromising the situation. Pannalal manifests the humanity in such a story without preaching the ideals. *Nadan Chhokari* is woven around the psychological knot. It shows how one small doubt scatters the whole family life (*Pannalalni Shreth Vartao*). Pannalal's creative attitude at the initial stage seems to depict love-affairs and its complex knots or individual puzzles in his short stories. But during the sixth and seventh decade, he has tried to depict the portrait of post-independence society, politics, movements, activities and changing situation. His stories like *Chitareli Divalo*, *Morlina Munga Sur*, *Malo*, *Koi Deshi Koi Pardeshi* etc. are woven together with such themes.

Pannalal Patel introduces the love-seeking beggars in a story titled *Sukhdukhna Saathi (The Lame and the Blind)*. The writer manifests the facets of true love and inner world of beggars. The portrayal of blind woman named Jamni and Chaman, the lame show the wretched facets of poor hungry people. Their dream to live together shatters when shivering Chaman dies of fever leaving blind Jamni alone. The security officer while performing his duty on Governor's arrival seems unkind to beggars. He drags them off from the market road and ultimately the separated Jamni couldn't reach hurriedly to save Chaman's life. The story ends in a pathetic mode where reverberation of mere helplessness of beggars is heard.

The story *Bala* is also one of the pathetic tales mirroring the naked reality of poverty and exploitation of depressed class by Pannalal. It shows the true friendship between Bhill girl named Kodri and her dear cat. To survive of hunger, her helpless father brings grain for her dear daughter by selling the cat to the merchant. The cat is sold to Chetan Sheth to protect his grain-stores from rats. But Kodri doesn't eat in absence of her dear cat Kabri which seems mere Bala (nuisance) to Chetan Sheth. Though, the real Bala seems hunger and pain of depressed and harshness of Chetan Sheth who couldn't realize the true love between cat and little girl.

Pannalal's creativity offers the rustic flavor of native land. What Gandhiji stressed 'true India resides in its villages' is fully manifested in Pannalal's fictional world. Pannalal's Ishan region represents an interior sector of north Gujarat, which visualizes the brave face of the community that suffers and survives under wretched predicament. The native oppressions and natural disaster challenge their existence, but their confident willpower remains unshaken. Illiteracy is the major source of their pains and sufferings. Superstitions and orthodox traditions constantly suffocate their living yet they enjoy their earthly role. The prime focus of Pannalal is rural culture and his creativity favors only rustic aroma of native land. It seems that the

innocence mentality and delicate hearts of rural people attract him much. Pannalal views his Ishan region detached from urban flow. The people portrayed in Pannalal's region generally represent the farmer community especially of tribal sector. Their whole life is full of drudgery. They grow grains to manage their livelihood. Bania and Shahukars in the form of native colonial loot and exploit them. The producer of grains remains hungry in the days of famine.

Hence, Pannalal's portrayal of poverty, helplessness and exploitation of deprived class offers the realistic touch to his creativity. When one observes Pannalal's rural region and tries to compare it with the modern status of either region or nation, it becomes rather complicated to offer it an authentic image in general. Pannalal has depicted the rural culture of pre and post-independence phase, especially of border sectors of north Gujarat. The said picture of colonial and native colonial ruling system, their exploiting nature, illiteracy, ignorance, rigid caste-system and superstitions etc. have gradually been decreased, even the majority of these features have no place in the modern status of the region. The spread of education and public awareness towards individual rights has reduced the gap of such weak spot in present era. The economic status of farmers and laborers has been getting better due to the affordable price of grain, milk, etc. Similarly, use of modern technology in agriculture sector has reduced their physical labour to a greater extent and various government schemes have made their bread-earning far healthier than the past. However, one cannot claim that the said scenario has completely been changed; it is equally true that interior sectors still suffers poverty, native oppression, rigid caste-structure, superstitions, female exploitations and scarcity of waters for agriculture.

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