



CHUNILAL MADIYA'S LILUDI DHARATI: A NARRATIVE CENTRED ON SAURASHTRA REGION

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Abstract

As the inheritor of Jhaverchand Meghani, Madiya has narrated the old districts of Saurashtra (Sorath, mid-part of Saurashtra and Halar Region). Liludi Dharti is considered his ambitious Janpadi (of Rural Life) novel. It is his experiment based novel in which he has combined together the individual and group life to narrate the story of Sorathi life. Gundasar, a village located in the lap of the Girnar mountain of Junagadh in Saurashtra region is at the centre of the novel. The novelist aims at depicting realistic portrayal of rural culture. The event occurred in mistake develops the pitiful situation. The poverty of rural culture, their sexual desire, enmity, envy and conspiracy against each other show its genuine expression in context to the entire set-up. The writer employs the local dialects of Saurashtra region in its indigenous form. As he himself is the soul of that land, hence could efficiently utilize the local colours.

Keywords: *period novel, Saurashtra region, social realism, traditions, community, folk-mentality*



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Chunilal Madiya (1922-1968) earned bright fame as a writer of Gujarati literature in his short life (died at the age of 46). He was born at a village called Dhoraji in Rajkot district of Gujarat. He rendered his valuable services in the editing department of a daily called *Janmabhumi* in Bombay and Gujarati Department of the United States Information Service (USIS) since 1950 to 1962. He was also awarded Ranjitram Suvarnachandrak in 1957 and won many prizes for his collection of short stories. His creativity confirms that he has a special talent to judge the vein of folk-mentality and has a good combination of poetic power to translate the minute observation and wide experiences of life through artistic substance. Instead of traditional plot and customary narrative style, he has invented a new trail in most of his novels.

As the inheritor of Jhaverchand Meghani, Madiya has narrated the old districts of Saurashtra (Sorath, mid-part of Saurashtra and Halar Region). *Liludi Dharti* Part: 1, 2 (1957) is considered his ambitious *Janpadi* (of Rural Life) novel. The novel actually covers two parts, but its plot has been extended even to *Shevalna Shatdal*, hence, remains the trilogy. It is

his experiment based novel in which he has combined together the individual and group life to narrate the story of *Sorathi* life. Gundasar, a village located in the lap of the Girnar mountain of Junagadh in Saurashtra region is at the centre of the novel.

It focuses on the obstacles and ordeal test of Hada Patel's family, especially his young son Gobar and Santu's family life and its wretched consequences. Santu, though impressive in the beginning, becomes the widow because of the cunning attitude and evil conspiracies carried out Gobar's cousin brother Mandan and Shardul: the son of Thakor. Though, innocent Santu is pregnant by her own husband, yet becomes the victim of suspicion of village people. To prove her chastity, she accepts the challenge to face the fire-test by keeping her delicate hands in boiling frying pan full of oil. As a result, both her hands completely burn in fire. Constant torturing and harassing by people make her insane when she gives birth to a dead daughter. Later on Mandan seems to change by heart after receiving the unknown abandoned daughter. He restores the same calmness by taking interest in an adopted child. The characters like Ragho, Amthi, Samjuba, Takhubha, Zamku and Gidha add the interest of the reader and develops the novel in due proportion. In the pre-part of the novel, 'desire for progeny' is introduced as a dynamic force. The novel narrates the painful story of Santu's separation without child, the illegal child of Ajawali, the desire for progeny to Thakarana Samjuba, the incident of carpenter's wife Amthi's child and the story of Jasub, the grocer. The game of coconut reflects the rural culture. In the chapter *Vajavala Aavya* (the bandsmen came) the story of orphan children remains grateful to develop the plot. In the same manner, the *Sanyasi* of Girnar peak, Bhuvo (the worshipper) and Satima involve themselves directly in the novel. The group of the devotee at the end brings the decisive point in the mainstream of the novel.

In an 'Introduction' to this novel Madiya says: "My effort is to write what is called 'chronicle' in the west" (18 Tr.). According to The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms the term 'chronicle novel' may be preferred, especially if the story's events are connected with notably historic dates and events. Bhupendra Mistry in *Gujarati Pradeshik Navalkatha* observes that the plot of Chronicle novel incorporates the human life and nature which represents the constant movement of time. It doesn't depict community and destiny as a direct moving element of human life. Such novel covers up the eternal consequences of time and place and depicts the sudden changes in the series of incidents under the impression of abstract time. Hence, it represents the life by visualizing the universally acknowledged and

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original vision. According to such norms Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Galsworthy's *The Forsyght Saga* are considered chronicle novels. The life of characters portrayed in novel *Liludi Dharti* does not manifest the universal life incorporating the constant changing nature. This novel shows all the practical approaches of the characters, their action-reactions are in relevance to cause and action. Since one can find here the society or destiny as the central elements which manage the entire human life. The novel merely shows the vague form of plot called Chronicle. (187-188 Trans). The characters like Shadul, Girizaprasad, Jasub, Devshi, Parbat, Gobar, etc. remain the symbol of composite folk's desire, but 'all' seem common characters who have lost their personality under the dominance of circumstances. The symbol is the event resulted through an active movement. It cannot be elevated through characters who are simply dead, passive, and dependent upon circumstances.

Liludi Dharti focuses on the movement of particular community limited to a visual time portion. Nalin Raval is of the view that it should be treated as 'time-dominated (period novel)'. Dilavarsinh Jadeja opines that 'the true picture of bare reality of rural life and the emphasis towards it should be considered Madiya's specialty among Gujarati novelists' (Dave & Desai 107 Trans.).

The rural people are shown trapped in the orthodox traditions, rude attitudes, blind beliefs or superstitions. The incidents like the justification of the worshipper (Bhuva) on scarcity of rain in the form of anger of Goddess Meldi, the missing of Bhimo-the grandson of Hada Patel, their singing of Aradh (invocation or hymns) in praise of Goddess, and the performance of *Yagna* (the holy sacrifice) to satisfy the anger of the rain god, etc. confirms the genuine rural vitality.

The majority of Madiya's novels remain rural-centred. The novelist aims at depicting realistic portrayal of rural culture. The entire novel generates the sympathetic approach. The event occurred in mistake develops the pitiful situation. The poverty of rural culture, their sexual desire, enmity, envy and conspiracy against each other shows its genuine expression in context to the entire set-up. None of them seems happy or satisfied. The novel depicts the scattered life and immoral approaches under bad relations of Gidho Luhano, Zamku, Nathu, Takhubha, Samjuba, Mandan. One can find here evil characters like Nathu Soni who seems misusing his own daughter. Takhubha has illegal relationship with Rupa Rabaran. Madan is in love with Santu. Santu is helpless as she has lost her husband. She is forced to perform *Agnipariksha*- the fire-test. This novel narrates the life of trapped and confused woman under

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strange circumstances. Her vigour doesn't sustain thoroughly. Her willpower could not face the severe accusation of orthodox community. Hence, realistic portrayal of rural mentality and its culture has been artistically manifested in the novel.

Madiya either through reality or satire represents the facets of social realism. The writer states in an 'Introduction' of the first part of this novel about the setting of the novel that 'the element of experiment known to him in this novel is about its plot-construction rather than writing. In his opinion this is a 'risky experiment'. (Mistry 188-189). The original source of this narrative remains in the form of three characters: Santu, Gobar and Mandan. The writer further clarifies that the 'motive' of this novel is subjects-centred. The miserable plight of Santu's life is a key tone in the entire narrative. Santu, the married pregnant woman becomes the victim of false accusation, after the death of her husband. The extreme point of emotion generates the confusion over the issue that 'who can verify the chastity of innocent Santu'?

A region of earth of Saurashtra, its nature, people, language and the rural form of community life lived in group culture, etc. are the big wealth of Madiya's creativity. Though, in comparison to Meghani and Pannalal, the proficiency of emotion and language manifested in the portrayal of rural life doesn't seem fully flourished in Madiya, but the unknown concepts of novel receives its genuine form through an effort of new vision in *Liludi Dharti*, which seems highly appreciated. Though, this form is true or illusive is subsidiary, but the movement to understand the form of novel has been achieved certainly. Regarding the form of this novel, the writer has the fixed perception in his mind, but the concept visualized through the novel seems vague and dim form of plot. The writer explains the form of novel through the simile of a 'tree'. To that sense, he imagines the sub-plot as various branches, which delineates somewhat fancy ground.

In this novel no event occurs on the universal line of action. The one phase of life-cycle of Hada Patel seems to complete between two incidents: the departure of his one son and the arrival of the other son. Here, motive doesn't seem to transform in action. The action is important in narrative and not the motive. In chronicle, human life is not placed in context to destiny or society in front of human life changing constantly. The element, changing behind the specific life itself remains the universal life. In *Liludi Dharti* the society or destiny remains in centre either at one or another incident. The event in chronicle remains accidental, whereas the factors like place and time have been represented here as mere outer instruments.

All the events in the novel show its relevance in context to cause and action. There seems nothing like accidental.

The novel defines all the features of 'period novel'. The personality of all the characters remains limited to only village named Gundasar. The life of these chief characters appears true in case of at least up to their rural society. The novel has not become the narrative of individual life, but the narrative of folk life. It has been considered that after Meghani the entire scope of language of Saurashtra and its linguistic capacity has been manifested in Madiya.

Madiya represents the cultural facets of the region through depicting the events of their festivals and certain beliefs. The writer narrates the game of coconut played during the celebration of *Holi* festival. They use to perform big challenges while playing the game of coconut. This is the specialty of region. In addition to this,, the event of celebrating *Bhimagiyaaras* has also its significance in the region. The entire village folk: farmers and labourers very actively participate in it. These festivals are considered an auspicious omen for rainfall during the month of *Ashadh*. The task of sowing the seeds in the earth is carried out during this month.

The writer employs the local dialects of Saurashtra region in its indigenous form. As he himself is the soul of that land, hence could efficiently utilize the local colours. His descriptions seem indigenous and full of vitality. The characters remain supportive to represent the specialty of region. Hence, it doesn't require the sketch of hero or heroine. The writer himself has clarified 'who is the hero of this narrative' cannot be answered easily. Since, no single character of the novel can be placed in the particular frame of hero or heroine or a villain easily. He has deliberately avoided the effort to expand such character. The depiction of entire narrative has been retained as community-centred in place of individual. Here, the earth of Gundasar village, its nature, the river Ozat and the life breathed in its entire surroundings seem fairly alive and awaken characters.

The characters of this novel are farmers not only by profession but also by nature and attitude. Their attachment with the earth and the bullock is since birth and only this remains the source of their livelihood. The man like Hada Patel represents dignity and steadiness. The brave, hard-working, honest and truth-loving Santu, the multifaceted character like Mandan, the harsh and greedy character of Gidho, his wife Zamku somewhat superior than her husband, Ragho, the mischievous in the beginning and later on converted as Brahmin, the

sinner- Nathu Soni and his wife Ajawali often exciting her husband against Santu, Shadul and Girijaprasad and their mother Amthi Sutaran- all remain significant in the development of plot and manifestation of sentiment of this novel. The characters of Santu and Mandan prove more energetic. The character of Santu can be placed in the category of bright female characters in Gujarati literature due to her unique feminine strength against the conventional culture.

The title of this novel is based on Santu's nature. The incarnation of a woman is like green earth which can never dry. The severe snowfall in the winter or the terrific rainfall in monsoon and the burning sunshine of summer cannot destroy it utterly. It will come to its own life and turns into lush-green form persistently. The novel receives the broad vision of community and profound observation of folk-mentality.

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