



THE INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL REALISM IN CHINNAPPA BHARATI'S NOVEL "THE MINERS"

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23259322>

Maktuba Murtazakhodjaeva

*Senior Lecturer, Department of South and Southeast Asian Languages,
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan*

E-mail: said_lola@mail.ru

Abstract: *This article examines the artistic representation of the lives of miners, the poetics of social realism, and the features of artistic psychologism in the novel "The Miners." The novel portrays the miners' harsh working conditions, socio-economic dependence, poverty, occupational hazards, labour exploitation, and restrictions on human dignity through precise artistic details. The analysis reveals the artistic and psychological functions of the mine as a compositional and semantic space, as well as those of everyday detail, portraiture, landscape, metaphor, contrast, interior speech, and rhetorical questions. The changes in the miners' consciousness—from accepting their fate to understanding their own situation and striving for collective solidarity—are analysed in terms of the psychological possibilities of social realism. The article substantiates the idea that the relationship between individual fate and the social environment constitutes one of the novel's principal artistic problems.*

Keywords: *Tamil prose, social realism, miners, labour exploitation, social inequality, artistic psychologism, interior speech, metaphor, rhetorical question.*

INTRODUCTION

The representation of the working person in Indian literature has developed as one of the important directions in the artistic comprehension of social reality. In particular, by depicting the lives of people living under harsh working conditions, a writer can reveal contradictions between economic inequality, social dependence, labour, and human dignity.

In the novel "The Miners," the lives of miners are likewise illuminated from this socio-psychological perspective. The reality of the novel is not limited to the

process of working in the mine. The writer portrays the miners' housing conditions, family relations, their children's deprivation of education, occupational hazards, relations with the administration, and changes in human consciousness as interconnected phenomena.

From the very beginning of the novel, the description of the area where the miners live establishes their social condition. Narrow, dilapidated huts, dirty water, defective roads, dampness, and extremely poor hygienic conditions demonstrate that poverty has become not a



temporary state but a permanent condition of the miners' lives. In particular, the small hut in which family members live is presented as a space where even the possibility of personal privacy and family inviolability is severely restricted.

Research Aim and Objectives. The aim of the study is to identify the features of the artistic representation of social realism in Chinnappa Bharati's novel "The Miners," to analyse the socio-economic and psychological representation of miners' lives, and to reveal the writer's mastery in employing realistic representation and devices of artistic psychologism.

The objectives are:

- to identify the forms in which social realism manifests itself in the novel;
- to analyse the working and social conditions of the miners;
- to reveal the artistic and semantic functions of the hut and mine as spaces;
- to determine the functional characteristics of everyday and sensory details;
- to examine the psychological functions of interior speech and rhetorical questions.

The methodology of the study comprises textual analysis, historical-social analysis, structural-semantic analysis, psychological analysis, and poetic analysis. In addition, compositional analysis was employed to examine the plot-compositional structure of the work and the system of artistic details.

A distinctive feature of "The Miners," in comparison with the writer's other novels, is that before writing the novel Chinnappa Bharati worked alongside miners in a mine for a period of time and studied their lives; he subsequently wrote "The Miners" on the basis of this experience. [The novel "The Miners" ("சுரங்கல்") was published in 2006]. An internal artistic relationship emerges between the spaces of the hut and the mine. While the hut represents the materially constricted life of the individual, the mine appears as the continuation of this condition in the sphere of production. In both spaces, the human being is deprived of the possibility of free movement, safety, and personal inviolability.

There is an internal semantic connection between the hut and the mine in the novel. The hut is the confined space of the miner's private life; the mine is the confined space of his working life. In the former, he suffers from material deprivation; in the latter, from labour exploitation.

While depicting the family conditions in the hut, the writer demonstrates how the social environment reaches into a person's private life. In the cramped room, husband, wife, children, and everyday life are forced to coexist within the same space: «पति-पत्नी के सारे अन्तरंग तब भी संपन्न होते हैं, जब साथ बड़े बच्चे सोते हुए होते हैं।» [1,9] (Even the intimate relations between husband and wife take place while their grown-up



children are sleeping beside them.) Here, the everyday detail acquires psychological and social significance. The loss of personal privacy demonstrates the limitation of a person's social opportunities.

Later, this space is replaced by the mine. After hearing the whistle in the morning, the miners descend into the mine. The writer compares their movement to that of animals: «शिकारी कुत्ते की भौंक सुनकर बचने के लिए छलांग लगाने वाले खरगोश की तरह खदानकर्मी अपनेबिलों जैसेघरों सेखान की गुफाओं की तरफ चौकड़ी भरनेलगे।» [1,14] (Like rabbits leaping away to escape the bark of a hunting dog, the mine workers began bounding from their burrow-like homes toward the caves of the mine.). This comparison expresses the restriction of human freedom and the fact that movement within the production system has come to resemble instinctive movement. Thus, a semantic parallelism exists between the images of the “burrow” and the “cave”: both at home and at the workplace, the miner appears not as a free human being but as a creature struggling merely to survive.

The mine is the central artistic space of the novel, in which social, economic, and psychological contradictions converge. The writer depicts the underground space through sensory details: «सीढ़ी पर लगेजंग की गंध तथा मशीनी तेल की गंध पेट के अंदर उल्टी और उबकाई पैदा कर रही है।» [1,11] (The smell of rust on the stairs and the smell of machine oil were causing vomiting and nausea in the

stomach.). Here, an artistic detail based on the sense of smell intensifies the harmful effect of the mining environment on the human body. Descriptions of water, darkness, and noise are added to this. Water flowing from the mine walls, the darkness of underground passages, the noise of machinery, and the heaviness of the air determine the miner's physical condition. At the same time, the oppressive external environment is transferred into the character's inner psychological state.

The realistic value of the novel also lies in the fact that labour in the mine is presented not as a general and abstract concept but through concrete technological processes. Workers are divided into groups, each group performs a particular task, and a prescribed quota is imposed on them.

The writer also exposes injustice in the labour quota through a concrete detail: «प्रबंधन द्वारा सवा टन के नाम सेरखा वह भीमकाय माप निश्चित रूप सेढाई टन क्षमता का होता।» [1,12] (The huge measure designated by the management as one and a quarter tons actually had a capacity of two and a half tons.). This brief detail is an important artistic device that reveals the essence of the social problem in the novel. The miner does not know the actual volume of his labour; therefore, he is dependent not only economically but also in terms of information. Another important feature of social realism in the novel is the depiction of the way poverty affects all spheres of human life.



Although Chanchal Kumar's children are highly capable of learning, economic circumstances force them to leave school: «बच्चे पढ़ने में इतने अच्छे कि शिक्षकों को इन होनहार बालकों पर नाज़ था।»[1,10] (The children were so good at their studies that the teachers were proud of these promising boys.) Here, education is presented not as a personal problem but as a mechanism of social inequality.

The parents think about their children's future, but the immediate necessity of subsistence takes precedence over securing that future. As a result, the children also enter the labour market and repeat the lives of adults. Thus, the novel artistically demonstrates the mechanisms through which poverty is transmitted from one generation to another.

Through the character of Champa Devi, the problems of family economics, maternal responsibility, and hope for the future are revealed. Through various forms of thrift, she tries to accumulate money and secure her children's future: «दुधारू गाय खरीद, दूध बेचती, खाद तैयार कर खाद बेचती, उससे मिली आमदनी सेबेटों के भविष्य की योजनाएँ बनाती।»[1,10] (She would buy a milch cow, sell milk, prepare and sell manure, and make plans for her sons' future with the income she earned from it.). In this episode, the cow is not merely an everyday object. It appears as a materialised image of the mother's hope. The death of the cow is interpreted not only as an economic loss but also as a psychological blow. Through this situation, the writer shows how fragile the

economic foundation of a poor person's dreams can be. From this perspective, the character of Champa Devi brings the novel's social problems to the family-psychological level.

Alongside the hardship of the miners' labour, the novel also depicts their devaluation as human beings. The workers' needs are extremely limited: «उनको अगर कुछ मालूम है तो सिर्फ एक ऐसा पेट जो खाली न हो, अपनी इज्जत की रक्षा करनेवाला एक चीथड़ा, सुअर के चौपाल सी छोटी सी झोपड़ी।»[1,13] (All they know is the need for a stomach that is not empty, a rag sufficient to preserve their dignity, and a small hut like a pigsty.). This passage contains one of the key points expressing the novel's social philosophy. The writer demonstrates how human needs are reduced to a minimum.

For the miner, happiness is no longer a dignified life but merely not going hungry. Consequently, the possibility of resisting exploitation also weakens. The psychological mechanism is crucial here: the more a person reduces his or her demands, the less the existing system is required to provide. Thus, social oppression operates not only through external coercion but also through the artificial restriction of needs. Chanchal Kumar's injury in the mine constitutes a turning point in the novel's plot and psychological composition.

The writer depicts his injury through physical details: «कोयले और पसीने से लथपथ शरीर में, चोट से निकला खून पूरी तरह से फैलकर यों रिसने लगा जैसे खून की बाढ़



हो।» [1,25] (On the body covered with coal and sweat, the blood flowing from the wound spread all over and began to seep as though it were a flood of blood.). Here, the image of blood functions simultaneously as a realistic detail and as a symbol. It represents not only the worker's physical suffering but also the human resources expended by the system.

Instead of allowing the injured worker to rest, he is required to continue working. Thus, in the production process, human life is relegated to a position below economic interests. This situation may be interpreted as the writer's critical position characteristic of social realism.

One of the most powerful manifestations of artistic psychologism in the novel is interior speech. For a long time, the miners accept the oppression inflicted upon them as their fate. However, severe events cause questions to arise in their consciousness. In the character's mind, for example, the following thought emerges: «उफ़! यह जीवन बरदाशत के बाहर है। हमारे साथ हो रहे जुल्मों को हमें यों चुपचाप नहीं सहना चाहिए।» [1,25] (Oh! This life is beyond endurance. We should not silently tolerate the oppression being inflicted upon us.). This interior thought marks the starting point of psychological change in the novel.

What is important is that the character does not immediately move to open resistance. First, doubt arises in his consciousness. Then this doubt becomes a question, and the question develops into social awareness. This process may be represented as the following artistic-

psychological chain: physical suffering → inner question → doubt → awareness of one's condition → collective solidarity. Therefore, in the novel, interior speech is not a psychological element detached from the plot; rather, it functions as a means of setting the plot in motion.

Another important episode revealing the conflict in Chanchal Kumar's consciousness is connected with his recognition of himself as a worker: «मैं मज़दूर हूँ, मेरी परम्परा मज़दूरों की है।» [1,28] (I am a worker; my tradition is that of workers.). This sentence expresses the character's social identification. Yet there is an interesting paradox here: although labour is simultaneously the cause of his oppression, it also becomes a source of his sense of self-worth.

Thus, the writer does not interpret the image of labour in a one-sidedly negative manner. Labour is both a means of exploitation and a source of self-awareness. This aspect increases the psychological complexity of the novel.

The explosion in the mine is one of the most acute points of the social problem in the novel. Several miners die, and their families are deprived of their principal source of livelihood. The writer expresses very precisely the importance of labour for a poor family: «श्रम ही उनकी सम्पत्ति है, उनका धन है।» [1,27] (Labour alone is their property; it is their wealth.). This statement is important for understanding the novel's social concept.

For a wealthy person, capital may consist of money, property, or means of production. For a poor worker, however,



the only capital is his body and capacity for labour. If that capacity is lost, the family's economic foundation is also lost. Therefore, the death of a worker is depicted in the novel not merely as a personal tragedy but as a socio-economic catastrophe.

After the explosion, new questions arise in the consciousness of the miners: «हम क्यों स्वतंत्र चिंतन नहीं कर सकते?... सोचना क्यों मना है? अपनी तकलीफों का बयान करना क्यों मना है?» [1,27] (Why can we not think freely?... Why are we forbidden to think? Why are we forbidden to speak about our suffering?). These questions mark a new stage in the psychological dynamics of the novel. The function of the rhetorical question is not to obtain an answer but to express an awakening of consciousness.

The character no longer accepts his condition as fate or as the will of God; he begins to question social relations. In this way, individual suffering becomes a collective problem. This process is also consistent with the compositional development of the novel: poverty → labour → exploitation → injury → death → questioning → awareness → solidarity.

Conclusion. The artistic representation of the miners' lives in "The Miners" demonstrates important characteristics of social realism. The reality of the novel is constructed through the interrelationship of everyday, social, and psychological levels.

1) The miners' lives are concretised through everyday details. Narrow huts, clothing, food, household objects, and

working tools are not merely external signs of poverty; they also reveal the inner world of the characters.

2) The mine functions as the central artistic space of the novel, expressing social dependence and human unfreedom. The darkness, dampness, noise, and danger underground determine not only the miner's physical condition but also his psychological environment.

3) Labour exploitation is depicted in the novel not merely as an economic relationship but as a psychological process affecting human dignity.

4) Interior speech and rhetorical questions play an important role in expressing changes in the miners' consciousness. Through the example of Chanchal Kumar, the character's inner movement from acceptance of fate to doubt and self-awareness emerges as an important manifestation of realistic psychology.

5) The motifs of industrial injury and death acquire a broader social meaning than personal tragedy. For a poor person, the capacity to work constitutes the principal form of capital. Therefore, a worker's injury or death can destroy the economic foundation of the entire family.

Finally, the artistic dynamics of the novel move from individual suffering toward collective consciousness. At first, the miners accept their suffering as fate; later, they begin to ask the question "why?" The emergence of this question is an artistic sign of the awakening of social consciousness. In this respect, social realism in "The Miners" is not limited to



the realistic representation of the social environment. It rises to the level of an artistic investigation of how the social environment shapes human psychology,

how labour relations affect individual consciousness, and how individual suffering develops into a process of collective awareness.

REFERENCES:

1. चिन्नप्प भारती. कोयले की खान. – दिल्ली, आलेख प्रकाशन, 2008.
2. Chinnappa Bharathi's Novels: A Critical Study. Chennai/Madras, 1996.
3. The All-India Seminar on the Literary Works of K. Chinnappa Bharathi, Namakkal, 19–20 July 2008.
4. Бычихина Л. В., Дубянский А. М. Тамильская литература. – М.: Наука, Главная редакция восточной литературы, 1987.
5. संवेद।- नई दिल्ली, 2009। — अप्रैल।