



THE SKILL OF CHARACTER CREATION IN CHINNAPPA BHARATI'S NOVELS (BASED ON THE NOVEL "PAVLAI")

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23259543>

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Abstract. *This article examines the skill of character creation in the novel "Pavlai" by Chinnappa Bharati, one of the prominent representatives of modern Tamil literature. The artistic and psychological characteristics of the characters are analyzed through the images of Pavlai, Periyannan, and Thankamma. Particular attention is paid to the functions of portraiture, psychological description, retrospection, interior monologue, dialogue, contrast, symbolism, and details of nature in character creation. The study establishes that the author shapes the characters not merely through their outward appearance or participation in events, but also through their inner experiences, memories, verbal behavior, and relationships with other characters. It is demonstrated that the image of Pavlai embodies the conflict between a woman's personal feelings and socio-moral norms; the image of Periyannan embodies love, forgiveness, and loneliness; while the image of Thankamma embodies labor, resilience, and social vulnerability. The symbolic details of water, the neem tree, and the pigeon are also analyzed in terms of their function in revealing the psychological states of the characters. The article interprets the characters not separately, but as an integral system possessing semantic and psychological interconnections.*

Keywords: *Tamil literature, literary character, system of characters, psychologism, interior monologue, retrospection, dialogue, symbol, portrait, realism.*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Tamil prose, the representation of social reality through human destiny is regarded as one of the important artistic principles. In the works of Chinnappa Bharati, issues such as social relations, traditional attitudes, family relationships, and the position of women in society and the family are portrayed in

harmony with the inner conflicts of human character.

In the writer's novel "Pavlai," the relationship between personal destiny and the social environment, as well as the conflict between an individual's personal desires and the moral norms shaped by society, occupies a central position. Through the characters of Pavlai, Periyannan, and Thankamma, the novel



illuminates the psychological experiences of people in different social circumstances, as well as issues of love, family, fidelity, forgiveness, and loneliness.

The distinctive feature of character creation in the novel “Pavlai” is that the characters’ personalities are gradually revealed throughout the plot not through a single portrait or authorial description, but through actions, dialogue, inner experiences, memories, and symbolic details. From this perspective, psychological representation and socially realistic modes of depiction are organically integrated in the poetics of the novel.

The purpose of this article is to identify the methods of character creation in Chinnappa Bharati’s novel “Pavlai” and to reveal their artistic and functional role in shaping the characters.

• The main objectives of the study are as follows:

to identify the character traits of Pavlai, Periyannan, and Thankamma;

• to demonstrate the role of portraiture and psychological description in character creation;

• to analyze the revelation of the characters’ psychology through dialogue and interior monologue;

• to determine the role of retrospection and processes of memory in the composition of the characters;

• to identify the psychological function of natural details and symbolic images;

• to reveal the semantic and psychological interrelationship among the three principal characters.

Research Methodology. The article is based on the principle of comprehensive analysis of the literary text. Textual-analytical, psychological, structural-compositional, and typological approaches were employed in the study of the characters.

Through the textual-analytical method, artistic details, dialogues, and psychological descriptions characterizing the protagonists were analyzed. The psychological approach made it possible to examine the characters’ inner experiences, memories, hesitations, and decisions. The structural-compositional approach served to identify the characters’ functions within the plot and their interrelationships. In addition, a contextual approach was employed in interpreting symbolic details.

Pavlai, as the eponymous protagonist who gives the novel its title, is the principal manifestation of the writer’s artistic skill. Chinnappa Bharati creates this character, on the one hand, as an embodiment of feminine virtues and, on the other, as a victim of the ruthless customs of society. The artistic power of the character is manifested in her inner contradictions and in the subtle representation of each psychological state.

In creating the image of Pavlai, the writer extensively combines psychological representation with the technique of



retrospection. At the beginning of the novel, while Periyannan is drawing water around the water-wheel, his recollection of Pavlai brings together the layers of the past and the present. Through the depiction of memory, Pavlai's ten-year married life, her labor, patience, and inner secret are revealed simultaneously. This sequence of representation, based on the technique of cutting between temporal layers, is an important indication of the writer's artistic skill.

The artistic completeness of Pavlai's character is manifested even more powerfully in the "pre-wedding" scene. The moment of her farewell to her mother is one of the most poignant episodes in the novel, poetically expressing the complex relationship between woman and society. Her mother's following words define the tragic essence of Pavlai's character: "There is nothing in a woman's life that truly belongs to her. She cannot express what is in her heart, nor can she live according to her own wishes. If you kill your heart, burn your dreams in the fire, swallow all your pain and sorrow, and continue to live, then the victory is yours, because that is a woman's fate!..." Hearing this, Pavlai "bursts into tears, sobbing with her head resting on her mother's breast" [1,62]. The details of this depiction demonstrate the author's skill in transforming the character's inner life into external action.

The writer gradually and step by step reveals the sharp conflict within Pavlai's psyche the struggle between respect for her husband and love for her former lover.

The episode in which she goes to the wedding and meets her beloved Murugan, the feelings in her heart, and her subsequent decision to leave the house all these elements present Pavlai not as a one-dimensional character on paper, but as a living human being endowed with emotions. The most remarkable aspect of the novel is that Pavlai regards leaving the wedding as a solution, yet this solution is itself not free from tragedy.

The image of Periyannan is created in the novel as a means of expressing the author's humanistic ideal. The writer portrays him as a physically strong and hardworking peasant: "Broad shoulders, strong arms and legs, smiling eyes, a well-shaped nose, curly hair, and a body shining like cast iron, he could attract any girl. The girls might even turn his head, but he had never looked at another woman; he loved only his wife and had sacrificed his heart to Pavlai. Is it right to betray such a man? His wounded heart ached painfully" [2,58]. This portrait detail is not accidental. Periyannan's physical appearance may be interpreted as an external manifestation of his inner moral nobility; although nobility is visible in his outward appearance, the writer has also managed to vividly portray the turmoil, pain, and psychological suffering within his inner world.

The strength of Periyannan's character lies in the fact that he learns of his wife's secret the love affair before the wedding and the pregnancy "sometime after" the wedding, yet keeps it secret. The writer convincingly presents his



forgiveness in a psychological manner, not sentimentally, but through interior monologue and dialogue. His words, “I heard everything your mother told you that night. That was when I learned about all your affairs. But after you married me, you changed. After that, you never went down any crooked path. I knew you were guilty, and I was angry, my anger was boiling, but when I thought about how such things happen in so many people’s lives, I controlled myself. During these ten years, the wound in my heart healed, though, like the root of a tree, it left a scar” [2,63] represent one of the highest examples of patience and forgiveness. Through this, Chinnappa Bharati elevates Periyannan beyond the level of an ordinary character who would simply “divorce his wife for betraying him.”

The depiction of Periyannan after his wife leaves is one of the lyrical peaks of the novel. The writer conveys Periyannan’s loneliness through precise and expressive descriptive details: “Smoke was rising from the chimneys of all the other houses, spreading like mist. Only his house had no smoke rising from it. The glow of oil lamps spread from the courtyards of every household. His courtyard was always covered in darkness like a demon. In the neighboring courtyards, cauldrons of hot water were prepared to wash away the day’s fatigue. Most painful of all was seeing the children, who had now grown enough to speak, running to meet their fathers. In his house, however, a bat flapped its wings and, hanging upside down, welcomed him in its

own language” [2,57]. This sharp contrast is a powerful example of the writer’s skill in expressing the character’s loneliness emotionally.

The image of Periyannan becomes even more profound through his dialogues with Raaman. He gradually begins to reveal to Raaman his loneliness, his memories of his wife, and his love for the soil.

“- This soil has never betrayed me until now, but it burned easily. Should I consider this soil my enemy because of its betrayal? Let it come whenever it wishes to come...” [2,55]

In this passage, the writer’s linguistic skill is manifested through a profound figurative expression that incorporates Periyannan’s attitude toward both the land and the woman into a single metaphor.

The image of Thankamma functions as the third principal character in the novel. She is described as “an ordinary representative of the common people, illiterate, uneducated, and unable even to imagine her own personal rights.” However, the writer does not create her as a weak and passive character, but as a living personality endowed with faith in life and diligence.

Thankamma’s history is presented briefly but effectively: her parents died immediately after her wedding, her husband died of pulmonary tuberculosis, and she returned to her parental home without support. The writer describes her as follows: “She lived from hand to mouth through servitude. Wherever she found work, she would fly there with wings



attached to her feet” [2,56], thereby portraying her as a person who actively confronts life. Through this depiction, the writer develops a parallel with the destinies of Pavlai and Periyannan, reinforcing the novel’s concept and the common fate of people belonging to different social strata, as well as the ruthless mechanism of society that determines their destinies.

At the end of the novel, Raaman recommends Thankamma to Periyannan. This is another point at which the writer’s skill becomes apparent: Thankamma’s character functions not only as an independent character but also as a symbolic means of providing a point of hope in Periyannan’s life at the end of the novel and indicating the possibility of “social mobility” within society.

Chinnappa Bharati primarily reveals his characters through dialogue. The dialogues in the novel, particularly the conversations between Pavlai and Periyannan, are distinguished by their psychological richness. On the surface, they appear to be ordinary conversations, but they possess a rich second layer of meaning.

For example, Pavlai’s metaphorical response to her husband, “-True, it is food cooked at home, but is it proper to sit down and eat it right in the middle of the street?” is an example of the writer’s skill in constructing dialogue. This one-line response simultaneously expresses the woman’s dignity, sense of honor, and inner state. Periyannan, meanwhile, reflects through an interior monologue:

“Oh God! Life makes women wise long before their time! How do they learn to use correctly the rules that apply in life’s delicate situations? Men should learn all this from women.” Lost in such confused thoughts and overwhelmed by emotion, he suddenly blurted out: “How can a madman know that he is mad?..” [2,60]. Here, we observe an example of the harmonious use of dialogue and monologue.

The dialogue in the divorce scene, which constitutes the climactic point of the novel, deserves particular attention. On the one hand, Pavlai is firmly determined to divorce; on the other, she does not expect Periyannan’s composure and forgiveness.

“-Even after I have said all these things to you, aren’t you angry? Even after humiliating you so much, do you not hate me? Beat me, curse me, I will be happy. Beat me on some pretext. At least then there will be no gossip in the village. My secret will remain a secret between us” [2,60]. Pavlai’s words are psychologically convincing: she wants to provoke her husband’s anger in order to make the divorce easier. Through this, the writer depicts not only Pavlai’s pangs of conscience, but also her desire to turn the divorce into a kind of “ritual”

Chinnappa Bharati uses descriptions of nature as an organic component of character creation. The introductory remarks specifically emphasize “Indian comparisons and descriptions of nature,” which constitutes an important element of the writer’s poetics.

The image of the pigeon performs a symbolic function in the novel. A pair of



pigeons in the garden and the female pigeon's acceptance of another pigeon after the male has been killed create a natural symbolic parallel with Periyannan's loneliness and his subsequent affection for Thankamma. The conclusion, "The hope of living and time became a balm for his wounded heart. They gently caressed the petals of the faded bud of love and gradually forced it to blossom. From then on, the two became one" [2,66], introduces a note of hope and constitutes the symbolic significance of the pigeon imagery.

The image of water performs a multilayered symbolic function in the novel. From the very beginning of the novel, water seems to Periyannan like an "eternal enemy" [1,57], because turning the water-wheel and drawing water from the age of eight deprived him of his childhood; at the same time, water is the place where Pavlai washed his feet, and thus becomes a symbol of love and affection. This contradictory symbol is an artistic device expressing the complex relationship between the characters.

Trees, particularly the "bolut" (acacia) and "neem tree" also acquire symbolic significance. The shade of the neem tree is the place where Pavlai's youthful love was experienced and where Periyannan becomes immersed in his memories. Near the end of the novel: "The earthen pot in which the food was cooked boiled over, and the stove sent out sparks as though expressing its dissatisfaction. The neem tree in the courtyard, watered every day, shed its leaves, expressing its

sorrow. Now it was crying out from the depths of its heart. Pavlai had made all the preparations to leave her husband. There was no need to think again" [2,60]. In this passage, anthropomorphism demonstrates the writer's mastery of figurative language.

The writer skillfully employs the technique of "interior monologue" in psychological representation. The scene of Pavlai's farewell to her mother, Periyannan's lonely nights, and Thankamma's moments of immersion in memories all contain elements of the "stream of consciousness." When Periyannan becomes lost in thought while working in the field: "Does he remember his wife? It seems as though she is living, standing there in his feelings, in his thoughts and dreams, in every beat of his heart, in the blood flowing through his veins, in every place upon which his gaze falls" [2,52] this is a classic example of interior monologue.

The writer skillfully employs the contrast between "external" and "internal" states in psychological representation. Pavlai smiles outwardly and appears to those around her as "a person without sorrow," while inwardly she suffers deeply. This duality the sharp contradiction between the social mask and inner truth creates what literary scholarship calls the "second self." The author explicitly identifies Pavlai's artificial smile as "A completely artificial smile!"

The novel organically depicts Tamil culture and customs. The feature



specifically emphasized in the introduction as “Tamil comparisons” can be felt on every page of the novel. Muhurtham (the tradition of determining an auspicious time), the Tij festival, the Veena (a stringed musical instrument), Pon (betel leaf), Dhوتي (traditional national attire), and the goddess Lakshmi, all of these are explained to Uzbek readers through introductory notes, demonstrating both the skill of translation and the writer’s creation of national color.

Chinnappa Bharati portrays the fate of women within the tradition of social realism, in the context of social inequality, stratification, and the caste system in Indian society. In the novel, the “marriage talisman” and its symbolic meaning are carefully developed as representations of male dominance and female dependence. In the scene where Pavlai leaves the house, the sentence “she left this house forever in the sari she was wearing” reminds us that the sari functions as a symbol of social status and identity as a wife.

The three principal characters in the novel – Pavlai, Periyannan, and Thankamma form an integrated system that complements one another. Chinnappa Bharati develops the three characters in a “triangular” configuration: Pavlai occupies the center; Periyannan is connected to her and strives to understand her; while Thankamma functions as the “solution” or point of hope in the novel.

The generic characteristic of the novel lies in the fact that it begins as a domestic and moral novel but, in terms of interior monologue and psychological

depth, approaches the psychological novel. The writer does not divide his characters into “good” and “bad” categories. Pavlai—she has renounced her family and places love above everything else; Periyannan—forgiving, yet suffering; Thankamma—weak, yet resilient. The motif of loneliness is the central theme uniting all three characters in the novel:

- Periyannan is physically alone after his wife leaves;
- Pavlai is spiritually alone in her husband’s home;
- Thankamma is a widow, alone and without support.

Through this common motif, the writer raises the issue of human loneliness in society as a product of the social system. One of the most important features of the novel is that its ending remains open, leaving the fate of the protagonist Pavlai to the judgment of the reader.

Conclusion. In Chinnappa Bharati’s novel “Pavlai,” the process of character creation is not limited to external portraiture, actions, and plot events. The writer creates an integral artistic character by interconnecting the characters’ inner worlds, memories, dialogues, interior monologues, details of nature, and relationships with other characters.

Through the image of Pavlai, the psychological conflict between personal feelings and social norms is revealed, while the image of Periyannan demonstrates the impact of love, forgiveness, and loss on the human psyche. The image of Thankamma, in turn, expresses a person’s ability to adapt to life



and strive to survive even under conditions of social vulnerability.

An important artistic feature of the writer is that he depicts his characters not according to a predetermined psychological formula, but as complex personalities who develop through events and relationships. Consequently, the character's personality in the novel becomes not merely the result of the plot, but one of the important factors determining the movement of the plot itself.

While retrospection connects the past of Pavlai and Periyannan with the present reality, dialogue and interior monologue reveal the relationship

between the characters' external speech and inner experiences. Contrast performs an important artistic function, particularly in depicting Periyannan's loneliness. Symbolic details such as water, the neem tree, and the pigeon harmonize psychological states with descriptions of nature.

Thus, the principal characteristic of character creation in the novel "Pavlai" can be defined as the integration of socially realistic representation with psychological and symbolic poetics. This feature enables Chinnappa Bharathi, in his novelistic art, to depict human destiny at the intersection of society, family, and personal feelings.

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