

**REGIONAL NOVEL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SELECTED NOVELS
OF RAM SARUP ANKHI AND PHANISHWARNATH RENU**

Thesis submitted to the Central University of Punjab

For the Award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

Comparative Literature

By

Rajandeep Kaur

Supervisor

Dr. Rajinder Kumar Sen

Department of Languages and Comparative Literature

School of Languages, Literature and Culture

Central University of Punjab, Bathinda

December, 2020

Conclusion

Literature holds a mirror to the society reflecting what is happening in our society. Novel is a genre of literature which depicts society in a realistic manner. No doubt there is an imagination in this genre of literature, but still it is very close to the reality. Novel has many types like realistic, historical, romantic, progressive, absurd etc. Regional novel is also a type of novel which has been evolving since the mid twentieth century. These type of novels depict the life style of the people of a particular region in their social, economic, political, and cultural conditions. Regional novel is such a type of novel which shows a close observation of a particular region. In regional novels, the novelist portrays every aspect of the life of the people of that region e.g. social, economic, political, and cultural.

The tradition of regional novel started in British literature in nineteenth century. Some novels have been written before nineteenth century but these novels cannot be categorised as regional novels because these novels do not fulfill the conditions of regional novels. Maria Edgeworth is considered as the first regional novelist in English. After that many novelists have written regional novels but Thomas Hardy is a name of fame in the field of regional novel in English.

In the field of Punjabi regional novel, the trend of regionalism started with the publication of the novel *Peo Puttar* written by Surinder Singh Narula in 1946. This novel revolves around Amritsar region of Punjab. After Surinder Singh Narula, Gurdial Singh, Jaswant Kanwal, Karamjeet kussa, Ram Sarup Ankhi, Dalip Kaur Tiwana, and Mohan Kahlon are some other regional novelists who contributed in the field of regional novel. In the field of Hindi regional novel, Phanishwarnath Renu is considered as the first regional novelist of Hindi and he started this trend with his first regional novel *Maila Anchal*. In this novel, Renu has depicted the life of the people of Eastern Bihar region.

The present study is a comparative analysis of the regional novels of Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu. Both the novelists presented the life style of the people of their regions i.e. Ram Sarup Ankhi portrayed the life of the people of Malwa region of Punjab and Phanishwarnath Renu depicted the life of the people of Eastern Bihar region. Ram Sarup Ankhi and

Phanishwarnath Renu depict the plight of a woman from her birth to death in their regions. They explore discrimination done with them in their nourishment, education etc. and have to remain in control of their father, brother, husband and son. In both Malwa and Eastern Bihar regions the of birth of a girl child is considered an ill omen. Many people kill their girl child after birth or abort them before birth. If they remain alive they have to face discrimination throughout their life. Even if they educate their daughters, it is not to make them independent but to get them married to well settled young men who have enough property. Education of groom does not matter for parents of daughters; they rather prefer properties. And after marriage women have to obey their husbands and then sons for their whole life. Sometimes they have to face problems of their husband's second marriage like Partapi and even then they have to live with their ex-husbands.

Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu both present a vivid picture of tortures and injustice against women. They portray how females have to face discrimination not only in society but also in their families. There is a difference of three decades between the writings of both novelists and this difference could be seen in the condition of female characters of both novelists. Phanishwarnath Renu's female characters live in more sympathetic and pitiable conditions. As compared to Renu, Ankhi's female characters have more educational opportunities. Although during the writing years of Ankhi, women became more aware about their rights but this does not mean that the condition of his woman characters is a contrast to the condition of Renu's women characters. Ankhi's many female characters too become victims of discrimination but since they have more educational opportunities they become more successful in bringing about changes in their conditions.

Economy is the base of caste division and plays an important role to further promote politics in any system. Agriculture is the main source of income of Malwa region. The people of this region are mostly farmers and depend on agriculture to earn their livelihood. It is observed that the more the influence of green revolution, the more the rustic and rural population falls in debts. These modern technologies are mere decorative pieces in front of the small piece of land they own. Tractor and tubewell have become status symbols, hence even

a small farmer struggles hard to first get them. However, the small land ownership is not capable to afford such high end facilities.

Economic condition of the farmers of Malwa and Eastern Bihar regions is very bad. Major cause of this bad economic condition is the unequal distribution of wealth. On one hand, lies a rich exploiting class which has many economic resources at its disposal and on the other hand lies another class which is being exploited by this rich class. The upper class comprises of big land holders and lower class comprises of middle class farmers who are economically weak. Many political parties have committed for equality of these farmers for their political motives. After coming to power they forget their commitments and not pay any attention towards these depressed classes.

Showing off is also one of the reasons for the bad economic condition of middle class farmers of both the regions. They spend more than their capacity on the occasions of birth, marriage, death and are continuously under debt. When they can not pay the loans, they start consuming drugs or commit suicide in order to escape from embarrassing and stressful situations.

Like farmers, the condition of dalits is also very miserable. They cannot even sit beside the high caste people. Separate utensils are kept for them and they have to wash their dishes themselves. They are called by the name of their caste or occupation. They are called *chamar, bhangi, nai, nain* etc.

Lower caste people cannot eat by sitting with high caste people even during religious ceremonies. Separate dishes are cooked for them. Even children who belong to high caste have hatred in their hearts for the children of lower caste. Seeds of hatred have been sown even in the minds of our future generations.

But with the passage of time, some changes are evident. It is not because of the changing mindsets of high caste people but because of the awareness of dalits. This awareness is possible only due to education. Dalits understand that if they will not stand against this discrimination and exploitation, it will never come to an end. Now a days, dalits do not tolerate the insulting behaviour of society. They raise their voice against it. Likewise, in the novels of Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu, the characters are putting in

continuous efforts to improve their condition in society. They are ready to fight for their rights. It is a positive turn in the life of dalits that they are being made aware about their rights and are raising voice against discrimination.

They have become more conscious of their rights and have started raising their voices to get their rights in both Malwa and Eastern Bihar regions. Now dalits have stopped tolerating violence against them. One major reason behind their awareness is the change of their hereditary occupations. Many dalits have opted other occupations and many of them have expanded their age-old family occupation into a vast business, which makes the work of similar nature more respectful.

Education plays a significant role in bringing awareness among dalits. Dalits educate their children so they can live a respectful life. In the selected novels, characters like Naseeb, Malari and Manjeet are also educated and they are ready to do anything for their rights. They have stopped seeking their caste as their fortune but they stand strong against atrocities they face.

Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu depict both good and bad aspects of life of Malwa and Eastern Bihar in their novels. Both the writers play an important role to make people aware despite depicting problems related to economic and political life of people of these regions. They motivate people to stand firmly for their rights. Despite depicting economic and political problems they also put emphasis on the concept that people cannot be happy without eradication of economical differences.

Education plays a significant role in bringing awareness among the masses. Education brings positive changes in social and financial lives of all. The detailed analysis of social and cultural conditions of Malwa and Eastern Bihar regions shows both similarities and dissimilarities between the life style of both regions. Education leads to awareness amongst people about their rights. Both novelists also discuss about discrimination faced by dalits and represent how dalits become aware about their rights and start raising their voice for their rights.

Not only social, economic, political, cultural and religious aspects form the crux but there is a lot of contribution of linguistic aspects as well in the novels

of Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu. Both the novelists lay much focus on the language of their novels. The characters of both the novelists speak in their regional language. Some educated characters also use some words of English and some other languages also. Ankhi and Renu have created pure regional environment by using the idioms, proverbs, and slangs of their particular regions. Characters of both the novelists have used some typical regional words in their novels, which a non-regional person is sometimes unable to understand. Idioms and proverbs used by Ankhi and Renu gave regional colour to their novels.

To conclude, Ram Sarup Ankhi and Phanishwarnath Renu have portrayed all the aspects of the people of their particular regions of Malwa and Eastern Bihar respectively. They have presented the actual life style of their people. Both the novelists have a very close observation of their regions because both of them have been born and nourished in their own native lands. They are too much attached to their people, that is why the life portrayed by them brings the whole picture alive.