

The Language and Speech Community in *Maila Anchal*: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

Krishna Kumar Paswan

University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

E-Mail: krishnasoni.bhu@gmail.com

Maila Anchal is one of the most popular and at the same time controversial regional novels in Hindi. The main reason for the controversy is the diversity in the language use. The readers experience a real challenge in understanding the novel due to the diversity in the language use. Many speech communities in Hindi also find it difficult to understand the language used in this novel. It is due to this reason that some critics (Madhuresh 9) have certain objections in considering this novel as a part of the mainstream canonical Hindi literature. But is this objection valid? There have been lot of discussions regarding this matter from the literary point of view. The current research attempts a sociolinguistic reading and understanding of the language-related problems of *Maila Anchal*. The focus of this paper is on the speech communities in *Maila Anchal*. 'Idiolect' and 'Sociolect' are used as tools for analysing and understanding the language of the various social communities in the novel.

Literature is the live document of human emotions, relations, and imagination. Novel is the best medium and *Maila Anchal* is the perfect example of such a work in this contemporary age. It is said that the human emotions and relations depicted through the language of *Maila Anchal* are rare. Introducing the geographical background of this novel, Fanishwar Nath Renu writes in the preface of the first edition, "here is *Maila Anchal* (i.e. a soiled end of a saree or shawl, or a dirty region or both), a regional novel. The place is Purnea, district in Bihar state; on one side is Nepal, on another is Pakistan and West Bengal. If we draw the boundary lines of Santhal Pargana in the south and of Mithila in the west, we complete its boundaries, I have selected one village from one of its part as a symbol of a backward village- as a locale for the novel" (qtd. in Pandey, 82).

Renu's statement, here, is very important and helpful in understanding and analysing the content and language of this novel. This geographical description gives an insight into not only the language of this region but also its neighbouring areas. Presently, Purnea district is bordered by Araria district in the north, Katihar and Bhagalpur in south, Madhepura and Saharsa in the west, and Kishan Ganj and west Dinashpur district of west Bengal in the east. The dialect of Bhagalpur is Angika, Maithili is used with little variations in Saharsa and Madhepura. Bangla is spoken in west Dinashpur. The dialect of Kishan Ganj, Katihar, and Purnea is a fusion of the language of the bordering areas. The geographical area of the novel touches Nepal in the north and so the language of Nepal also affects the language of this area.

It is a universal fact that language is always in a state of change. Countries and states can be divided by drawing lines on the map but the transmission of language is a social as well as psychological phenomena. The language of *Maila Anchal* demonstrates this fact very well. The plot of this novel is

set in the village of Maryganj. The villages of India illustrate this quality and reality whereby the different social groups are segregated on the basis of caste, class, and ethnicity. Each social group is different from the other in terms of nature, culture, and language.

Caste, Class, and Social Group in Maila Anchal

The society of *Maila Anchal* is segregated in terms of Caste, class, and political parties. The identity of the society depicted in *Maila Anchal* cannot be imagined and will become meaningless beyond these categories. This discrimination has often been portrayed in the novel. The social structure is sustained by the four meta groups of the caste system and fundamentalists Hinduism. Here everyone's identity is represented by his/her caste. Renu has discussed this in the context of Dr. Prashant. The power and administration of the village is in the hands of three major castes - *Kayasth, Rajput, and Yadavs (Gwalas)*. Apart from this, other castes also exist in the social fabric of the village such as - *Koyari, Dhanuk, Tantri, Chamar, Dushad, Baniya, Santhali, Brahmins*, and so on. Among these castes, some practice their traditional occupations while others are dependent on farming. Here, land is considered as the main status symbol. The main political parties active here are Congress, Communist, and Jansanghi. In the earlier phases of the novel, Baladev is the representative of Congress in the village, but later on the power is transferred into the hands of Tehsildar Vishwanath Prasad. The leader of the Communist party is Kalicharan while the Jansanghi is led by Hargauri Singh.

The language of all these castes and communities is a blend of the aforesaid language which cannot be given a particular name. Since *Purnia* is an important trade centre, one can see linguistic amalgamation but if one looks with a microscopic vision then one can see that actual language spoken here is the colloquial and degenerated version of Maithili which is influenced by the bordered languages. In the novel, one can see a perfected and ocular use of the language.

Speech Community of Maila Anchal

Before analysing the speech community of *Maila Anchal*, it would be relevant to examine what "speech community" means. For the study of sociolinguistics, experts have developed various terminologies; speech community is one of them. Speech community is related to a certain kind of social group, individual group, linguistic group, or oral usage of language. It has been seen that in a particular kind of social or individual group a certain kind of language variety is used which is different from other groups; for e.g. Bihar's Maghaiya Musssahar dialect, the Bangla spoken by the Bengalis of Kolkata, the Bangla spoken by the Bengalis of Tripura, Bihari and Telugu spoken by Biharis living in the Bolaram Region of Hyderabad. Thus the society shaped on the basis of form of language is called speech community. One can spot various such speech communities in *Maila Anchal*. The language of the novel is 'Khadi Boli.' The grammatical structure of almost all the regional languages used is akin to Hindi. According to context and characters most often Bhojpuri, Angika, Maithili, Bangla, English and Sadhukadi languages have been used. It can be seen in many places in the novel. Few instances are given below:

Bhojpuri

BHAGWAN BHGAT. *Are ee to das aadmi ke kam baa, je-baa-se ekara men sabake milke matat kare ke chahin.* (Renu 18)

[This is the work of ten people, everyone should do it together.]

SIPAHI. *Ka ho sassure bina hunter ke bat na manba sss...* (269).

[You rascal....you won't listen without the hunter . . .]
SAHUAIN. *Budhaba ke bukhar baa hamaro sir bathata* (282).
[Budhaba is suffering from fever and I have headache].

Maithali

Chah piyai la bajabai chathin daya ... neechan chalaho ... (253).
[Madam is calling for tea ... please come down ...]
Oo! Bataha nati bhela hau ...
[O! You have been blessed with a grandson ...]
Ooh gujur gujur herai chai ... (304)
[He is blinking his eyes with wonder]

Magahi

BHANDARI. *Raniganj ke teengo muratee to aaj sata din se dharna dele hathun. Jaya le kahai hiyen ta kahai hathin balu sarkar se agya le lee hai. Bela math ke ek muratee ke bukhar lagalain hai, dokan men saburdana na bhetai hai.* (23)
[Three persons from Raniganj have been staying here since seven days. When I tell them to go, they reply back saying they have taken permission from Balu sarkar. One person from Bela Mutt has fallen sick, but there is no sabudana to be found in the shop].

Bangla

ABHARANI. *Tumi jao! Aamar jaye bhebo na. oee dyakho, bhagawan aamar kache nijee aise gechen.* (130)
[You go! don't think I will go, see god himself has come to me].
GANGULI. *Bhagwaner brat bhang houba asambhaw. Karan gurutar. Taabe apnar bhagya bhalo je bechara ke surdaser katha mane pade ni, naele eatkhan aar bhagwaner chokh thakto na.* (134).
[It is impossible to break Bhagwan's resolve. The reason is noteworthy. It is your good luck that he does not know Surdas' story, otherwise by this time he also would have become blind].

English

NEWSPAPER REPORT. the station will undertake malaria and *kala-ajar* investigation in all aspects preventive, curative and economic. (51)
JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU. I remember the name of the book. (131)

Hindi of Angrez

MR DAFF. *hamara state men ek bhi badmash ko ham nahin dekhana mangta. Tum amara teseeldar ko jutha bola. Amara admi jutha? Tum sala ka bachcha sachcha?* (136)
[I don't want to see a single rascal in my state. You said our Tehsildar is a liar. My man is a liar? You bloody rascal, you are saying the truth?]

Such examples of multilingualism can be seen in the novel from the beginning to the end. One thing to be noted here is that irrespective of the speech community the speaker belongs to, his language shows influence of either *Khadi Boli* of Hindi or colloquial and degenerated version of Maithili. Such usage of language seems unnecessary and forceful at times. We can prove it through aforesaid examples. Bhagwan Bhagat says in Bhojpuri, “*Are ee to das aadmi ke kam baa, je-baa-se ekara men sabake mil ke matat kare ke chahin.*” In Bhojpuri “to” is used in place of “ta”. From this, we can define the limitations of the writer or this is possible due to the fact that the speaker has lived in a certain place for a long time. Similarly, in the Magahi example given above “*Raniganj ke teengo muratee to aaj . . .*,” “to aaj” exemplifies the perfect usage of *Khadi Boli* Hindi. On the other hand, in Magahi, “taay” is used. Such limitations of language are seen in a lot of places in the novel.

Idiolect is used successfully in the novel. The speech of every character is full of variations and repeated similarly. The writer has tried to sketch all the characters through language variation. When a character appears for the second time in the novel one can recognize him/her through his/her usage of language, there is no need for the name, like the language of Sumritdas, Baladev, Kotharin, Kalicharan, and Jyotishi Kaka. For example, Sumritdas says everything with an air of mystery and uses his signature word “*waajib baat*” (genuine speech). Code-mixing is visible in a lot of places. Like, “Party pledge par sign kar diya hai” (89) [I have signed on the party pledge]. In this sentence, party, pledge, and sign are three English words which are used with the grammatical structure of Hindi. Many such experiments can be seen in the novel. Arabic and Persian words have also been used in a natural way. The writer has given special attention in distinguishing between the language of the literates and illiterates. Regional words have been used numerous times in the novel, partially because of the fact that the hold which a writer has over his mother tongue, he does not have over any other language. This is also the reason why all the characters of Premchand speak in *Khadi Boli*, be it a literate or an illiterate person, a worker or a landlord, an officer or a contractor. Everyone’s language is the same. But Renu appears to be an exception. This is substantiated by the above example. The range of his characters is due to their social background. *Maila Anchal* is a regional novel, the surroundings and daily life of which are replicated through language. However, to maintain the individuality of the outside society which comes in this novel, the writer has used his own language. This has led to the existence of numerous speech communities in the novel such as Angika, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bangla etc.

It can be concluded that the main problem of language understanding in *Maila Anchal* is due to the presence of various kinds of speech communities and their usage of regional words. But such usage expresses the context in a substantial and solemn way. Since it is a regional novel, it reflects regional colours. Accordingly, regional words have been used. So the use of various regional words creates problems for the different speech communities. Yet, through only these kinds of experiments it is possible to give a true picture of the social and cultural expressions of the region. The main purpose of literature is complete manifestations of a society and its surroundings. The treatment of language in this novel is unique. The usage of idiolect and sociolect makes the novel more purposeful.

REFERENCES

- “District Maps of Bihar.” *Mapsofindia.com*. <<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/bihar/districts/purnia.htm>>
- Madhuresh. *Maila Anchal ka Mahatwa*. Allahabad: Sumit publication, 2008. Print.
- Pandey, Indu Prakash. *Regionalism in Hindi Novel*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974. Print.
- Renu, Fanishwar Nath. 1992. *Maila Anchal*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Publication, 1992. Print.