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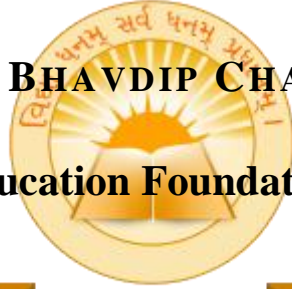
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## **Contemplating Hunger in *Endurance: A Droll Saga***

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## Contemplating 'Hunger' in *Endurance: A Droll Saga*

*Endurance: A Droll Saga*, originally published in Gujarati in 1947 as *Manavini Bhavai*, is a modern classic – modern in the sense of being a major achievement in a fictional mode, Pannalal himself had initiated with his *Malela Jeev* (1941) in Gujarati literature. Set against the rural backdrop of Gujarat it is a fictionalized account of the great famine of 1900 which had ravaged this part of India. Written in simple, direct style, free of conventional artifice and sophistication, at the same time without being 'crude' or 'raw', it is the story of love between Kalu and Raju, but is also the story of the hard and tragic lives of farmers in Indian villages. Rarely has the village of Gujarat been so artistically etched as in this novel.

### Theme - A Central Idea:

According to M. H. Abrams,

Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with "motif," but the term is more usefully applied to a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader.

While J. A. Cuddon says 'properly speaking, the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly.'

### Themes in *Manavini Bhavai*:

Throughout the novel, there are plenty of universal and humanistic themes. Novel is apparently the story of love between Kalu and Raju and also it is hard and tragic life of farmers and their struggle for existence in inhospitable land that runs through-out the novel. The pangs of hunger and worst of all the utter humiliation during farming are brought out sharply and minutely. Here is the list of some themes.



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1. Love
2. Nature Vs Man
3. Good Vs Evil
4. Struggle of Life
5. Hunger

### **Hunger in *Manavini Bhavai*:**

Theme of hunger is a constant theme from the very beginning of the novel. It is wonderfully described by Pannalal Patel. To this Umashankar Joshi says,

The heroine of 'Manavini Bhavai', 'Bhangyana Bhedu' and 'Ghammar Valanoo' is Raju but of 'Manavini Bhavai' is hunger; hunger of heart and body. This not only lifts the novel but also makes it three-dimensional. (24) (Translation is mine)

### **The Word *Hunger*:**

'Hunger' in *Manavini Bhavai* could be studied with different perspectives. The word 'Hunger' has literal and general meanings. One could study it as hunger of heart, hunger of stomach, hunger of mind and so on. One point of studying hunger is Kalu's consideration of *hunger*. Kalu, in the novel considers hunger as a worst thing of the world. In his dialogues of chapter 31 (The Hungry Ghost Rabble) he says, '*surely, there is nothing more accursed, nothing more wretched in the world. Hunger is indeed the ultimate wretchedness!*' (330) Even in *Last Salute of the Dead-Alive* one can find Kalu unaware of hunger when Raju asks Kalu when Kalu doesn't understand what Raju wants to convey so Raju replies, '*How could you when you have not known what it is to go hungry?*' (320) Here, Kalu seems unaware of being hungry and to go hungry. But in the very next chapter, Kalu sees not only hunger but also hungry people enacting to their going hungry. This next chapter of the novel is entitled as *The Hungry Ghost Rabble*, here in this chapter, perhaps there is



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no exaggeration to say, Pannalal portrays the best picture of hunger which is ever been portrayed in literature when Kalu goes to protect the cattle from the raiders and he sees inhuman act of nomadic people who are very hungry and to contemplate it they eat the cattle robbed from nearby villages without respecting lives. And for one moment he wonders and speaks out: '*Aren't these human vultures?*' (329) By having look of such ghastly events like of a woman who is eating her own child and nomadic people's eating of cattle, he is driven to the madness he cannot believe what he saw by his own eyes for a while but as he regains his consciousness villagers ask him what had happened, what have you seen and he replies,

There's nothing, brother, just hunger...

No, no, I haven't seen 'Hunger' yet.

All I've seen is hungry men...no, no, not men – a train of hungry ghosts rather... (334)

### **Hunger of Mind:**

Pannalal has represented many humanistic aspects through his characters. Pride, ego, honour, social status, jealousy, inner conflicts of mind - all have been presented deeply. Most of the characters with their activities represent real individuals of the society; Manavini Bhavai's characters have all this aspects of normal men or women. In the novel Kalu the major character, represents his inner conflicts of mind. He is respected by the society as a brave, courageous and hard-working farmer. While Nano and Mali represent some evil in their characters with ego and jealousy. One can find this evilness when Mali dies his son Nano says...

Get away now, you... but remember, wherever you go - even in the house of fate – if I don't sink my teeth in your throat it wasn't me, a human child, you bore but a stone! (366)

### **Hunger of Heart:**

The novel's main theme is a love theme - love of Kalu and Raju. Hunger of heart could be studied in two ways. First is hunger of love as hunger of emotions, feelings, affections and second is hunger of body, i.e., physical needs.

The first hunger one can find into Kalu who is from the very beginning of the novel hungry for love



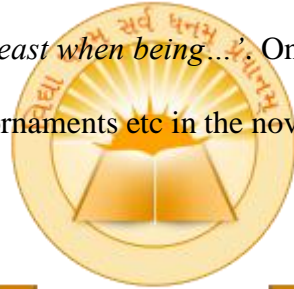
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at personal level. He is an emotional person. As the novel and Kalu grow, one can see the hunger of Kalu remains unsatisfied and his hunger expands. At the end of the novel Kalu perhaps gets satisfaction for the both the hungers as Raju is with him and by consciously or unconsciously he feeds her breast. One can find here, Kalu as a child to Raju and Raju a true beloved who is ready to do anything for her lover. In addition Kalu's desire to sleep in the Raju's lap - a romantic dream is also filled up at the end. Mostly Kalu's mind was puzzled as he did not want to marry Bhali but due to his promise to his mother he had to marry her. His heart's desire to marry Raju remained unsatisfied. There are some chapters like *Last salute of the Dead-Alive*, *How are you Concerned?*, *How you take it makes all the difference*, *Dancing Peacocks of the Mind* and so on are showing the love spirits of Kalu and Raju. One can also see the Raju's desire in her words when Kalu's asks her to be with each-other at the time of death. She replies in these words: 'Oh, where we have such good fortune to be together at least when being...'. One can also find Nano as hungry of physical love and materialistic things like money, ornaments etc in the novel.



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### Hunger of Food:

Pannalal has shown the best food-hunger in his chapter called *Bhukhi Bhutaval*. Here in this chapter, descriptions of nomadic people's raid and their eating of cattle, in addition a woman's eating of a child in a secrecy are so effectively visualised with words rather than written that any human on the earth would be shaken up. Not only that the description of shooting out an old man when he takes away the roti from a dog also opens up many disturbing questions relating to the hunger for food.

### Hunger of Farmer:

The prime job of farmers is to do farming but in this novel due to drought farmers could not farm their farms. Farmers wait for rain but it doesn't rain for months and years. In such situations farmers remain hungry for farming. They do not have even a single gain to farm and so to eat. They were unable to pay the Seths their borrowings not only that in the contrary they were in need to borrow more and more and so they



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are demanding more from them in the time of such crisis.

### **Hunger of Possession:**

Hunger of possession could be seen in the character of Mali Doshi when raiders raid the village. Mali is that character in the novel which represents evil throughout the novel. She was so possessive that she thought that money can buy everything. At the time of raid she didn't give her ornaments to her sons or daughter-in-laws to take care of them. But takes away all the ornaments in her possession and at an attempt to hide them she has been robbed and killed by the raiders. She was so possessive that she wanted her son Nano to marry Raju by breaking Raju's engagement with Kalu. For this she played every trick that she could.

### **Hunger Vs Contentment:**

Hunger and contentment is that aspect of the novel which one can also find throughout the novel. Mostly each hunger remains unsatisfied in one or other way. Kalu's yes to marry Bhali was due to his promise to his mother, as per his wish he wanted to marry Raju. In that way it remains unsatisfied but the promise that Kalu kept throughout the novel was surely satisfying. The last chapter perhaps one can call chapter of contentment for the all hungers. In the last chapter it finally rains and the starvation of water is satisfied. Even Kalu's wish to sleep in the lap of Raju and being with her are satisfied. One can also note that his bodily desire seems to be satisfied with electrifying sheer nectar.

To conclude, one can say that Pannalal succeeds in describing hunger as primitive essence of human being. Characters in the novel, rarely reach to the words like freedom, will, choice. All the characters have their own limitations and due to this they seem very natural and real to life coping up with their hungers.



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