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DISCOURSE OF WOMAN QUESTION IN WOMEN NOVELS IN KANNADA LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The article explores how women novelists in Kannada literature addressed the woman question in the twentieth century. It sheds a light on the context in which they lived. A closer evaluation of their novels and the projection of women characters in their novels demonstrates radical as well as conservative. They reveal contradictory views on the woman question. All women novelists, whether we now pronounce them radical or conservative, were fundamentally conflicted in their own beliefs about women's proper role and their novels deal the complex of issues which constitute the woman question.



KEY WORDS: Woman, radical, conservative, widow, oppression, Kannada.

INTRODUCTION :

I begin the article by asking a question, why do we need to know 'woman question?' that too addressing 'woman question' by women novelists in Kannada literature. First, it helps to cognize the position of women in society at different times. Two, it assists to know so far how the woman question has been taken into consideration and how do readers receive them if they do not have the proper guidance of entering into the text must be tested? Is there any danger of not having guidance?

To answer these questions, already established feminist research says that from time immemorial, women have been treated as subservient to men, inequality was a very common phenomenon and oppression was part and parcel of women's lives. However, women positions were not static but they always got changed. Most of the credit goes to the state rules. The writers who lived in their respective times could reflect the contemporary life sometimes directly and some other times indirectly. It is evident in ages the existence regarding the code of Manu or women from Brahmin community and residual to non-Brahmin women community.

The persons of letters time and time again have portrayed a woman of their period with the binary opposition as an ideal woman and a fallen woman. The readers basically do not judge the texts that they read but take their favourite writers for granted and consider the provided knowledge as the absolute truth to internalize. This article sheds a light on how the portrayal of women is constructed by the writers from different caste women writers accordingly related many social issues concerned with the status and role of women in their literature.

Contribution of women writers to the literature is not a recent origin since it existed long very back. Susie J. Tharu, Ke Lalita's edited book, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the early Twentieth Century*

provides the historiography of women writing in order to prove, women writing existed much before the entry of British in India however, they did not write in the novel form until the twentieth century. According to Susie J. Tharu, Ke Lalita, women writers were successful to contribute to the development of women writing from the ancient period to till the twentieth century. A surprising fact from their book is, the women' writing emerged as a counter model to male writing for the assertion of their voice in the mainstream literature. The poetess' in the past were rebel, bold and radical but they were finger contable.

They addressed the issue of personal freedom as well as the celebration of womanhood and sexuality in their poems. Mutta (htt1) is the earliest woman poetess during Buddhism expressed her rejection against the restrictions of family life and identified herself with the Therigatha nuns. The Sangam writers between 100 BC-AD 250 wrote extensively about what it meant to have a 'female body'. For instance, the lines of one of the Sangam poems, "On the banks shaded by a punnai* clustered with flowers, when we made love my eyes saw him and my ears heard him; my arms grow beautiful in the coupling and grow lean as they come away" demonstrate this. (Tharu and Lalita, p.73)

Akkamahadevi, the revolutionary poetess in Vacana Movement in the 12th century AD, challenged the patriarchal dominance of the world. Akkamahadevi was radical in her writing as she uses the image of her body to defy her critics when she says, "Brother, you've come drawn by the beauty of these billowing breasts, this brimming youth. I am no woman brother, no whore. (Tharu and Lalita p.79). She is considered the best feminist of all the time to reject married life and live independently. Her annoyance is exhibited in giving up her clothes to destruct the patriarchal norms and assert her choices with regard to the manner of her living. She is both the first feminist and the champion of revolutionary writing in Kannada. Another vacana writer Sankavva who was the prostitute and wrote liberally about the duplicity of society at large that strongly echoed in her only surviving poem, in which she says, "In my harlot's trade having taken one man's money, I daren't accept a second man's, sir. And if I do, they'll stand me naked and kill me, sir." (Tharu and Lalita p.81)

In the 18th century, Sanchi Honnamma was the court poet of Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar, known for her an exemplary poem, "Hadibadeya Dharma" which focused on the duties of a virtuous wife. It also critiqued desire for baby boy in a patriarchal society. She said, "a baby boy neither brings prestige nor a baby girl brings any ill effects". Many women writers like Rukmanibai, Harapanahalli Bhemavva have flowed the literature in Kannada. They took a lead role in bringing a change in the society.

When women write, the writing will be women-centric. The early women writers were expressive and wrote from the feminine model. They were naturalists and radical in presenting female body and sexuality boldly. They challenged the patriarchal model. But over the period under the influence of Western education and culture, women writing no longer personal affair but became public and her position was decided by the nation. However, their writing had no uniformity in dealing the gender related issues in the twentieth century.

Gradually radical women writing disappeared from the literary scenario in modern times. Most of the women writers used nationalist discourses in their respective novels to explore the role of women in society. They created a sense of national identity like male writers without understanding the politics of the nationalist discourse in their writing. Male writers took advantage of nationalist discourse to promote their various agendas regarding women's issues and concerns. The main aim was to create an imagined community in order to serve the purpose of patriarchy that woman as the symbol of the nation. This political agenda was being promoted by individual authors depending upon his/her class, caste and gender.

However, they do not bring any state policy to make women' life better until nineteenth century. (Chaudhuri) writes:

A discussion on the role of gender as an organizing principle of society. Gender, like class and caste, defines not just locations of individuals within a caste or class but also structures the entire society- its institutions such as family and kinship, work and politics, as well as the values that inform society. For instance, we can take the dominant Indian society and see that it is clearly patriarchal. By the term patriarchal we mean that it is a society, which is dominated by patriarchal authority, that is, an authority

vested in a dominant male figure within a social structure which allows men to have greater power and control than women. Further, this dominance appears to be both natural and just. Patriarchal authority is reflected in the structure of its family, marriage and kinship on the one hand and in the structure of economy, polity, society and culture on the other.

The question forces us to know whether it was an immediate entry or was there a history to deal the issue of woman. Answer to this question is, British ruled India brought many historical changes regarding the position of women. Macaulay's minutes have played a pivotal role in educating the natives:

Macaulay's unleashed famous Education in late January 1835 that asserted that the Indian vernacular languages were at present demonstrably inadequate to the task of providing a modern higher education; hence the need for a foreign language, and which of these could be more suitable than English, 'pre-eminent even among the languages of the West', with a literature equal to that of classical Greece and offering unparalleled access to every branch of useful knowledge, past and present? If that were not enough, English was already the language of India's 'ruling class', 'spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of government. (Masani)

Along with nineteenth century Macaulay's 'minutes, printing press, progressive and ideological stand of elite Brahmin males motivated the discussion and argument about the nature and role of woman. However, the anxiety of woman position in India is basically a byproduct of Victorian England. In England, Woman Question was a huge hue and cry for social and political equal rights what the Victorians called "The Woman Question." Although women in England did not get the vote until 1918, petitions to Parliament advocating women's suffrage were introduced as early as the 1840s. Equally important was the agitation to allow married women to own and handle their own property, which culminated in the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts (1870–1908) (Nsaid The western philosophy influenced Intelligentsia endeavored to change the position of women in India therefore nineteenth century was marked by the evolution of middle class reform movements across different parts of India which raised critical questions about a range of social practices such as sati, prohibition of widow remarriage, child marriage, denial of education to women so on and so forth. The focal point of social reform was on women's social status and role. The origin of woman question in England goes to John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women, as well as in his efforts at Parliament, to fight for women's equal rights and it took a major step toward the solving of the "Woman Question. (Jennifer Orcutt). Besides, "the Reform Bills of England in 1832 and 1867 stimulated discussion of women's political rights that reflected in India too.zedze).

During the nineteenth century, the question of women's roles and rights was fiercely and widely debated. The women movement of England, English education and the emergence of industry became reasons for the debate regarding the education of women, their 'proper' place of women in society, whether she would work outside the home of middle-class women. There was a plan to push women to private sphere to reduce the strength of a modern woman.

It is very much true, the social reformers in India and their philosophical speculation attempted to fight for abolishing of women related evil practices such as child marriage, prohibition widow remarriage, sati so and so forth. This article explores the role of literature on the 'woman question'. This period was contradictory for portraying woman as an ideal as well as a 'new woman.' Besides, there was a gradual disappearance of morality and idealism. Moreover, a modern woman challenged the patriarchy. Despite the incredible scientific progress and humanism, the deliberate attempts have been made by the intervention of the government to re-establish the stereotypical defined roles of women in Indian society.

The derivation of discrimination against women goes back to the ancient period. Feminists' research established an idea that throughout history, patriarchy has exploited women sexually, physically, economically, and socially for its own privilege. So far social institutes are concerned, especially women have been treated as the slaves in the name of morality. However, from the nineteenth century onwards the social and economic status of women is being changed, better than it was in the past. But in few cases, the status quo of women has been maintained. For instance, controlling sexuality is still a national agenda. On the contrary, the poor women suffer from humiliation, violence, and oppression. The nineteenth century is

one of the most debated periods in the history of woman's position in India. For the first time, the male reformists started to address 'woman question' and the era was considered as an age of progress and prosperity. The women related evil practices widely debated and attempted to abolish them permanently.

It was an era where many women writers, engaged in contributing the literature. From this angle, the study argues that women projection in the twentieth-century literature by women novelists is produced from the man's truth. Constructed the texts to ensure that man as a protector and women are protected. I develop the article with the assumption that nation is gendered. I review few the select Kannada women writers written novels to verify how they have addressed the woman question as a national project to project changing position of women.

Susie J. Tharu, Ke Lalita's edited book, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the early Twentieth Century* provides the historiography of women writing in order to prove, women writing existed much before the entry of British in India however, they did not write in the novel form until the twentieth century. According to Susie J. Tharu, Ke Lalita, women writers were successful to contribute to the development of women writing from the ancient period to till the twentieth century. A surprising fact from their book is, the women' writing emerged as a counter model to male writing for the assertion of their voice in the mainstream literature. The poetess' in the past were rebel, bold and radical.

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various agendas regarding women's issues and concerns. The main aim was to create an imagined community in order to serve the purpose of patriarchy that woman as the symbol of the nation. This political agenda was being promoted by individual authors depending upon his/her class, caste and gender.

If Kannada literature is concerned, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, a handful of educated Brahmin women writers in the early twentieth century started to contribute to the novel genre. They wrote women-centric novels. "The Fiction of Fiction," Cornillon says, "Women internalize the male idea of the feminine and create themselves in the shape of that idea." (Cornillon, 113). It is true the women novelists in could perceive the mainstream woman question but did not represent like male writers at independence. Rather, they shaped the contemporary male responses to women roles. It was not like what Wendy Martin and Sharon Becker say:

During the Progressive Era, roughly spanning 1890 to 1920, the American woman struggled to change the definition of womanhood in profound ways. At issue was the right to vote, to wear bloomers, to be free from corseting, to work outside the home, and to have a place in the world beyond the domestic sphere. By 1900 the "new woman" had emerged; these modern women were attending college, getting jobs, agitating for the right to vote, rejecting traditional domesticity, proudly asserting themselves in public, and in general, becoming an integral part of American popular culture and invading its... (Becke)

Except a handful women writers, most of the women writers in Kannada did not create what Wendy Martin and Sharon Becker define a new woman who could challenge the norms of society but imitated the male writing. For instance, Srinivas Rao's research has discovered that Shantabai Neelagara is the first woman novelist in Kannada literature and her '*Sadguni* Krishnabai: Uttama Gruhini* (1908) is an award-winning novel. This is a woman-centered novel. Shantabai Neelagara presents the protagonist Krishna Bai as an angelic type by upholding the Hindu values. The notion of the writer is to create an ideal Sita character who is kindhearted or virtuous.

The novel provides ample pieces of evidence for justifying the protagonist Krishna Bai is tolerant, scarifying and dedicated. She plays many roles as a dutiful daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and sister. She drops her studies in medicine to support her husband Madhava Rao's foreign studies for studying law and sold her jewellery to support him financially. The novelist fails to make Krishna Bai continue her studies to become a doctor during the absence of her husband rather it seems, it is written to please the patriarchal world. She could have given better life as a doctor than a homemaker. The novel proves that the education of women ought to relate to men but not for themselves. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honoured by them, to raise their children when they are young, to care for them when are grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet. These are the duties of women at all times and they ought to be taught from childhood. One point she shows education is important in the parental house through her father Hariwant and her brother Shamarao. Later in husbands', she limits woman's life to the homemaker. She is very much interested in Sita model. This novel can be regarded as the carrier of the of cultural nationalism of the country.

Krishnabai was followed by Nanjanagudu Tirumalamba. Her novel *Nabha* (1914) is about the sufferings of Hindu women. Her other novels *Sushile*, *Vidyullata*, *Viragini*, *Daksakanye*, *Manimala* follow the footsteps of *Nabha*. A victim of child marriage. She was married at the age of thirteen and had no formal education, but learned Sanskrit and Kannada and like her Bengali counterparts Anupama Devi and Nirupama Devi. Praised the image of the ideal Hindu womanhood. However, she argued against the restrictions imposed on women, particularly on the widows and strongly advocated for their participation in social activities. Her novels were received well. R. Kalyanamma was another novelist to take the project of creating a unified national literary consciousness. Her novels *Nirmala*, *Priyamvada*, *Sukahalatha* portrayed women as strong characters. She highlighted on the evil practices of society which had plagued with child marriage widows. This was exhibited in her journal *Saraswati* which was brought exclusively for women. The published articles in the journal did not support widow re-marriage but instructed women for the life of Tapasvini (ascetic). Both Tirumalaba and Kalyanamma wrote on women issues such as women literacy, health, hygiene, education but failed to bring some radical change in women's lives.

Kodagina Gouramma(1914-41) and H.V.Savitramma (b.1913) and Shyamala Belaonkar(1913-48) were the contemporary writers of Tirumalamba and Kalyamma. All were regarded as the fine writers of their times. Belaonkar was one of the first women writers to depict the life of the working class women with sympathy and care. Her stories dealt gender discrimination, dowry problems, male domination and women's quest for a respectable life.

The critical response to women writers in Kannada was generally negative though the reading public welcomed them. Critic like Dr. Padikkal, 'classified women's writing as popular literature and called its pejoratively 'kitchen literature' i.e. a literature to be read only by women. Majority of the women writers were Brahmins and their concerns were limited to the highest social group. (Padikkal)

Susie Tharu gives two sides of women representation in colonial period and post-independence period. She says, women writers presented their female protagonists as a symbol of Indianess-that strategically represent the nationalist revival of tradition. In other words, the Indianess had enormous burden within the defining scope. It was about their purity their sacrifice, who were to endure the moral and even spiritual power of the nation.

Anasuya Shankar(1928-63) was well known as Triveni. One of the best writers of the period, she won the phenomenal popularity. Her formal training in psychology left a mark in her stories which deal with the sufferings and concerns about securities of women in men's world. The women in the rural had comparatively greater freedom, larger space for movement and greater opportunities to negotiate with the outer world, both men and nature. The housewife in the urban area particularly in the middle class home where taboos with regard to women's chastity are much more strong was confined within the four walls of the house particularly in the kitchen.

Triveni's writing has a realistic portrayal and it speaks the psychology of the middle class women. She deals the woman question not from gender roles but from the egalitarian ideology. It seems in her novels to be making a plea not so much for a radical change in the social as for a scientific attitude towards mental illness. She advocates psychoanalysis and medical intervention that suggests the family and society should help those who have break down to regain normal life. Among her better known are *Modala Hejje* (the first step-1956), *Sotu Geddavalu* (She who was defeated but won, 1956) *Kilugombe* (The mechanical doll in 1958) *Durada Betta* (The Distant Hill in 1962) and *Bekknina Kannu* (the cat's eye in 1964). All novels generally deal the issues like, the protagonist's dissatisfied with marriage, children, her home, and the stifling codes of a society who refuses to acknowledge women as creative, sexual beings.

Her novels are about the emotional suppressions of middle class women. This suppression becomes necessary for them to gain respectability in a middle class family. But it leads to various psychological problems, as in the case of Kaveri in *Sharapanjara* or Malthi in *Hannele Chiguridaga*. Triveni suggests that no change in the condition of women until men recognize their problems. She is the first Kannada writer to recognize the specialty of women's psyche but one gets the feeling that she sentimentalizes women's problems. Kaveri being a middle class woman, she wears the mask of a faithful wife in order to gain respectability. She cannot admit that she is still secretly in love with her lover but she cannot break off from the married life because she has to get respect in the society. Triveni critiques Hindu society for being partial to men which permits a married man to enjoy affairs outside his marriage but the same privilege is prohibited to woman not as a reward but as punishment. Extra-marital affair is treated as the prestige of men and for women, it is the status of fallen women.

This we can find in *Sharapanjara*. Kaveri's husband Satish carries extra marital affair with his office staff but he has no regret for cheating his wife but he neglects Kaveri after knowing her pre-marital affair. Triveni' (1928-63) novels exhibit the existential problem of women and their uncertain relationship with their husbands.

In response to her world of novels, the protagonists basically quest for autonomy and self-discovery. This radical pursuit ultimately leads them to swim into the ocean until their strength leaves her. Twentieth-century writing offered no effective narrative solutions to women struggle to achieve selfhood but Triveni's

novels became alternative to treat women as human and sexual beings but not as angels. This kind of renewal was required in changing the lives of women.

A set of few progressive writers like Triveni, Aryamba Pattabi, M.K. Indira Anupama Niranjana, and RajaLakshmi addressed woman question from their point of view. It slightly took a shift from the male perspective. They seemed as a treatment to the ailment of the distressed women in their writings. However, the male focused problems like tonsure of the heads of young widows, child marriage, education for women, prostitution, widow remarriage re-occurred in the novels of few women writers too.

The representation of women in M.K. Indira (b.1917-1994)'s novels demonstrate a unified literary arena of the country. The construction of gender as a national identity takes a slight shift in her novels compare to other nationalist writers of her times. She too takes the national issues like caste, gender, prostitution issues but with humanistic approach. Her notion is not creating the myth as a national literature to draw attention of the audience. However, creating a national literature has a goal to have literary interactions and engagements on an international stage and prestige for Indian literature.

In this regard, her most well-known novel, *Phaniyamma* (1976) (htt2) deals the issues of Brahmin widow both a national project or the acute personal problems of Phaniyamma. However, it is not a sequel of Gulvadi's novel *Indirabai*. But few similarities can be drawn, like both Indirabai and Phaniyamma are child widows. Both the stories are based on true incidents. It is a real-life story of a widow whom Indira knew during her childhood. Indira heard the story when the widow narrated it to Indira's mother.

Feminists have widely debated M.K. Indira's novel *Phaniyamma*. The novel is a groundbreaking since it critiques the practices of illogical Brahmin rituals of widowhood how U.R.Ananthamurthy has critiqued the rituals of cremation system in his novel *Samskara*. Both are award winning novels and critiqued the Brahminical rituals but Indira's novel *Phaniyamma* critiques the Brahminical patriarchy. It is well acclaimed novel because Phaniyamma is presented as a woman of high strength, logician and compassionate. She is not portrayed as a helpless, just sitting at some corner of the house blaming the rituals or else sexually weak and become a victim like Yamuna in UR Ananthamurthy's "Ghatashraddha" (The Ritual, 1977) but she acts as a messiah to the miserable ones. Many instances can be found in the novel. She crossed the barriers of her caste to help the untouchables families when they needed her. Her humanism is well exhibited in helping the Dalit pregnant woman Sinki whose could not deliver a baby otherwise she would have died. (Susie J Tharu,). She did not forget to respect her widowhood and led the austere life (Ramanathan, 193) from she was thirteen when her husband died. She never complained or rebelled but questioned the tradition that went against when they hurt somebody's emotions. Another example in the novel her compassion for understanding younger generation widows. Much to everyone's surprise, she supported a young woman who refused to have her head shaved as a ritual for widowhood. Indira made in the Phaniyamma to die Brahmin culture opens shams and sham of society that sanctions inhumanity in the name of tradition. She modifies feminine qualities of a Brahmin widows that sacrifices, tenderness, toleration and loyalty were conceived as essential feminine virtues.

Her first novel *Tungabhadra* (1963) deals the struggles and aspirations of rural women. This was followed by other novels like *Sadananda* (1965), *Gejje Pooje* (1966) and *Navaratna* (1967). *Gejje Pooje* explores the issue of prostitutes that is still taboo in society. M.K. Indira presented the protagonist Chandramukhi as a virtuous daughter of a devastated poor mother who engages in prostitution due to poverty and she hopes that her daughter would get a better life. But Chandra could not escape from the taboo of prostitute background in spite of being virtuous therefore she was rejected by her ardent lover for marriage and he got settled with a girl of his caste from the high society. Basically, the girl had happened to be Chandra's half-sister. Chandra's biological father had abandoned her mother because he had no means of establishing a relationship with them. For him, Chandra's mother's body was more important than the relationship. However, the novel reveals the duality of high caste men. The height of feudalism and modernity forced poor women to sell their bodies for their livelihood. misused the helpless women as from the body of a woman as well the reputation of their become important. Because of such hegemony, the Chandra agrees to perform Gejje Pooje as part of an initiation into a life of prostitution but in the end, she

commits suicide by swallowing a diamond. Like any other girl, Chandra wanted education, marriage and a family but traditional society forces her back into prostitution and eventual suicide. A recurring theme within the gender-nation is the issue and relevance of her novel.

However, the novel had not attempted to change in the conditions of prostitutes' life or an awareness to the prostitute folk that they have various jobs other than flesh trading. Instead, it re-establishes the prostitution is one of the bad social institutes, had to run in the society at the cost poor women people's life. The narrator seems to be more interested in creating the image of the country than the empowerment of the destitute people. According to M.K Indira, the brothel house was not a proper place for idealistic people like Chandra. Besides, she wanted to please the patriarchal and feudal world otherwise, Chandra's empowerment would have weakened the strength of the male psyche. No men in the world wish to have hierarchy than an egalitarian world.

The novelist had all the power to present the protagonist effectively as properly educated, strong, independent, an officer otherwise as a social worker, working for the eradication of prostitution and rehabilitation of the rescued sex workers. But the narrator had not left readers a provision to think differently. She was more interested in showing prostitution as an evil practice of society and people who practice had no escape from the drudgery. Their duty was to please the feudal lords. It left the message that prostitutes cannot live with dignity. It seems as if the narrator did not like to displease the patriarchal world. The females from the prostitute clan must continue their family tradition to entertain the feudal world. Thus, a young born from prostitute family should not dare to dream to enter into a normal life and should not keep hopes of a better life.

This novel is the best example of the sexual transgression which excludes prostitutes from the definitions of good mothers and good women which is apparently threatening to the image of the nation. In addition, women's appropriate sexual conduct also constitutes the crucial distinction between the notion that women's correct sexual behaviour that is a part of the nation. The narrator does not escape from the national agenda for proper sexual roles of a pure woman.

Anupama Niranjana (1934-91)'s projection of women characters is influenced by her non-Brahmin background and her husband Niranjana' leftist ideologies. Hence the women related issues in her novels are dealt from the Marxist point of view. She stands different in addressing women problems. Being a doctor she could be able to portray the psychological and mental problems of women. Her background has helped her to record class hatredness, caste hostility and sex differences very effectively. Her novel *Sankoleyolaginda* (1954) deals the important issue relating the problem of the independence of women (Sisir Kumar Das, 19). She gives us a picture of the medical world based on firsthand knowledge through her novel *Swethambari* (1957). *Nulu Neyada Chitra* (1969) novel presents the life of weavers. Being a feminist writer, Anupama Niranjana does not give prominence to social institute marriage much rather she makes readers to realize that for women marriage is one of the parts of life but not a goal.

Though her novel *Madhavi* does not come under social novels but it is highly discussed novel. The source of the novel is *Mahabharata*. The novel is written to show the heart rending story of Madhavi and her exploitation under the grip of men against 'Ideal Woman' who completely surrendered to man. Madhavi despite of being a princess, became the victim of exploitation and she was disgusted with the patriarchal system and felt to free herself from it and at once she revolted to show them that women cannot simply bear everything.

However, the Dalit woman question was not an agenda of the British India. Except few progressive writers like Shivaram Karanth, U.R.Ananthamurthy and Vaidehi wrote from the Dalit male point of view but Dalit females were either invisible or devalued in their writing. Up-to seventies Dalit literature was not as a new genre. It became only after Dalit Movement in Karnataka led by B. Krishnappa gave way to Dalit experiences as a literary genre and had made the politics of Dalit existence as the pivotal base. (Dominic.D). The subaltern women were invisible from the national agenda thus it increased the power of the elite and feudal class. Felix Wilfred writes on Dalit women in his book, *Dalit Empowerment*:

The plight of Dalit women came to be viewed low and inferior also due to developments of women's question in colonial times. The upper caste Indian elite made a contrast between the material superiority of the colonizers and the spiritual superiority of India and its culture. Whereas the West excelled in the external realm of material advancement India was viewed as having maintained its superiority over the inner realm of spirituality which the upper-caste elites maintained, has remained unconquered by colonizing West. Now this inner and superior realm or the private sphere-was the one where the women were the principal agents...the positions of upper caste women were that of guardians of purity by upholding the private sphere of home. This came in contrast with the life of Dalit women. These women, who by their sheer survival needs were engaged in hard labour in the fields and in open spaces, were thought to be sexually more accessible to male desire and lust. This very situation once again confirmed their imposed position of impurity and inferiority in a world –view in which the superiority and inferiority of a group and its social status depended on the measure of the withdrawal of its women from the productive process. (Wilfred,102) Nisha quotes suits here, “women's literature is the voice of a group of people who have remained oppressed, ignored and rejected by centuries of biases and vested political interests of the dominant males who, always aligned with other reduce womanhood to typical characteristics of inadequacy, impurity, frailty and eternal silence.” (Nisha. 01)

As it is seen, the upper-caste Hindus treat untouchability as a 'disgrace to Hindu Community.' In their writing, Dalits and their images have been devalued and naturalized. Dalits' acute problems like social isolation, deprivation, poverty, hunger is common in the caste-ridden Indian society for centuries. The mainstream literary world hardly attempted to improve the living conditions of Dalits through their writing. As a result, Dalit literature emerged as a reaction to mainstream writing in order to restore the lost dignity. They explored their history and re-recorded it from Dalit writers' sensibility. However, the Dalit ideologues did not take women' triple oppressed situations as the pivotal issue of their concern. Unfortunately, the upper caste women writers never presented the problems of Dalit women in their writing. Their writing was limited to the reformation of their caste women.

Geeta Nagabhushan (b.1942) is a successful and Central Sahitya Academi Award winner due to her exploration of the subaltern women issues. She has firsthand experiences of low caste woman from Talwar¹ Community. After Anupama Niranjana, she is another non-Brahmin writer. She is not like her upper caste opponents to present the woman as an ideal homemaker and assertion of inequality as a legal right for women. She does not glorify such characters. Her novels are best known for the realistic experiences of her community people. But Her addressing woman question is entirely different from upper caste women novelists. The Her novels explore low caste women's sexual victimization. Most of her novels deal oppression, harassment, suppression and resistance of women living in her native village and those living in slums and hutments became the base of her stories. She began writing boldly about the sexual exploitation of destitute and low caste women by the patriarchal society by several rich lechers in the name of god and religion. Her novels caught the attention of readers (meet the author)

She tackles complex issues of incest, rape, prostitution and atrocities. Her Writing becomes a weapon, an act of disclosure. She does not promote “a pure woman”. Her heroines are not passive or the silent sufferers. Her novel, *Hasi Maamsa mattu Haddugalu*(Raw Meat and Songs) explores the story of exploitation of an innocent village girl Lacchi. Being an exploited and shattered by Kulkarni, Lacchi ultimately attempts to kill the Kulkarni. She hated the male sex because of Kulkarni. The narrator projected Lachi as a hating male sex hence she throws her baby boy born into the lake and tries to kill herself. The tragedy is, the child dies off and she has been rescued. As the consequence, she to be arrested for having killed the child and attempting suicide. This novel projects a fierce form of her protest against exploitation.

Geeta is not a conservative in picturing women characters in her novels regarding women's roles in society. She is more of realist and does not attempt to create a myth to project her women characters in the proper role which are the symbols of the nation and its pride. She fills the gap that has been constructed by

¹ One of the low castes in Karnataka

the upper caste writers. Even though her novels are female-centric yet always focus to show the negative side of male power from both feudal and urban society. The novels try to destroy the hegemonic feudal society. Her novels projected with a female protagonist or a strong female perspective. both Lachi and Durgi in Dange are the voice raised against the oppression.

Her second novel, *Dange* projects the protagonist Durgi as the oppressed and violent woman who cannot spare the man who had once patronized her for in lieu of liaison. But the same woman murders because of his plan to kill her college-going daughter. For him, the low birth Durgi's daughter shouldn't be his daughter-in-law since his son was stubborn enough to plan to have registered marriage. Here Durgi destroys the class and caste by murdering the landlord. If this novel is compared with M.K.Indira's *Gejje Pooje*, the protagonist Chandra in the novel dies off to legitimate the patriarchal world. But an illiterate dependent woman Durgi revolts against the power. She destroys it before he could execute to kill her through the professional killers. While travelling from Bangalore to Kalburgi by train, she pushes him out of the train to make to him die. (meet the authour). This is how a lower caste takes revenge.

The Sahitya Academi award winning novel *Baduku* is regarded as the magnum opus since it depicts the life of Subaltern people and their culture. The novel focuses talk of unravelling several masks and revealing the true character of unembellished rustic women, of the joys and sorrows of people living in slums of their problems, anxieties customs beliefs tradition and rituals. (meet the authour)

Mapura Taayiya Makkalu(The Children of Mapura Goddess) highlights the evil practice of Dalit community in the name of religion. Chinchooru in Gulbarga district is well-known for this kind of evil practice particularly. It is the centre place wherein the goddess Mapura Taayi presides. The Mapura Taayi is worshipped by all. During the fair, specially the Dalits worship with an appeal. The novel explores the inhuman Jogini practice of Dalits. According to the novelist, it is the Dalit themselves wish to practice in order to get relief from their acute problems and in return they give their young daughter as a gift to her as a Jogini. There is a saying that the person who does not keep his promise will be severely punished by the goddess. Besides, there will be a naked parade up to the temple how it is at the Yellamma temple in Savadtti Taluka of Belgaum. Thereafter the Joginies must go in begging as a profession public place by singing songs relate the accomplishments of the goddess. The problems of Dalit women specially from villages cannot be compared with the upper-caste women's issues.

The practice of letting a girl be a Jogini means pushing a pubescent girl to flesh trade in the name of the goddess. First, a rich man of the village or the village chief or some influential man of the village gives some money, half a sovereign of gold and a new saree to the parents of the girl and elevates her to the Patta and sexually enjoys her. Thereafter, she has to wear a parade(veil) on her forehead, and stirring of shells around her neck and wander from house to house and roam cities fairs and markets dancing and singing songs in praise of the goddess and seek alms. If this is the manner in which she lives during the day at night she has to sleep with every man who comes to her without refusing anyone. (meet the authour)

The plight of such women disturbed Geeta who visited such fairs with her mother from her childhood. Many questions *bothered* her. Why is this custom found only among the Dalits? Why is it that people of upper castes are forbidden from taking such vows? Why does the goddess turn the girl who has just attained puberty and come to serve her into prostitute? Why does goddess make the girl go in procession in the nude? Why is the Chasity of adolescent girls auctioned in fairs? *Maapura Taayiya Makkalu* is a novel written as an attempt to seek answers to such questions. (meet the authour)

Baduku is the best example of feministic novel. In which the author tries to compare and contrast the life of Jogini this(prostitutes) with other women characters. Another novel *Hasimamsa Haddugalu* is also one of the popular novels about feminine sensibility which gives enormous evidence for woman's struggle. Lachi, a low caste village woman suffers a lot in the midst of rigorous system of the society. Women novelists raise many questions by providing the reader within insight into the problems of different roles that a woman in society, despite the romanticizing of womanhood. Judith Fetterly rightly observes,

"Literature is political and it has a palpable design on the reader, it claims to enjoy universality but has a different reality and different vision." Women novelists herald a changing scenario in novel writing

with their in-depth portrayal of the Indian psyche, specially seen in their depiction of the women protagonists. They cannot be marginalized any longer as they are a part of fiction writing in India today.

Other important women works are Vaidehi(1947)'s *Asprushyaru*, (1992) Sunanda Belgaumkar' *Nasu* in 2012, Nugehalli Pankaja(1929), is an Indian writer in Kannada and English languages. She is considered one of the notable writers in the Kannada language. Her novels *Barale Innu Yamune? Ushanishi Malayamaruta Kaveriya Arthrava Veena oh Veena! Mugilaminchu* are praiseworthy works.

Other notable writers are Vijaya, H.S. Parvathi, Malathi Pattanshetty, Prema Bhat, Sara Aboobakar, Prathiba Nandakumar and Veena Shanteswari (1945). The women characters that Vaidehi and Veena portray are free from emotions that are compare to stereotypical characters projected by the earlier novelists. Veena's "Higonda Kathe" portrays an unwed who feels that giving birth to a child is the right of every woman. Vaidevi's women characters who feel that women' lives do not have to be determined by the requirements of men. The connection of this freedom to economic factors is also significant. All the characters in Triven's and Rajalakshmi's fiction are wives' dependent on their husbands for income. Veena's and Vaidevi's characters show freedom of choice and have independent sources of income. The difference also indicates the change that has taken place in the status of middle class women in the last 20 years.

The following women writers wrote novels shedding a light on the existential problems of women in patriarchal society. Usha Devi's "Mudiyerida Hu, Moggina Jade and Murida Sarapali" explain the suppressed mind of women. A set of women writers like Aryamba Pattabi, Neela Devi, M.C. Padma, Pankaja, Lalithamba and Mallika have written women oriented novels. male hypocrisy and women's sufferings. Vani, has written novels like *Bidugade* (1955), *Chinnada Panajara* (1958), *Erada Kanasu* (1960). *Mane Magalu* (1961), *Subha Mangala* (1962), *Avala Bhagya* (1964) that have made movies. *Bidugade* and *Erada Kanasu* present a stereotypical woman whose concern was to get their husband's love than their self and dignity. the traditional Indian women writers Chinnada Panjara and Bale are very good examples for the expression of conflict of the unsatisfied woman. Feminist problems in a way different from those of others. She records and external life of women and their problems. Class hatred, caste and sex differences are depicted realistically. She delineates how external forces can sometimes help women to solve their own problems. This can be seen in her collections of stories, *Ondu Giliya Kathe*, *Pushpaka* and *Madhavi* etc.

M.K. Jayalakshmi's *Kanasina Kade* deals with life of girls who live in hostels. Other works like *Nindeya Nele* and *Miyada Bale*, analyse problems from the point of view of women. Modern feminists are opposed to mixing up the terms womanliness and feminine distinctions. What is distinctly feminine is a social creation. It values with time, place and culture. The opinion of the feminists is that when this arrangement, which accepts difference of sex is gone and men and women are accepted as equal human beings, feminine distinctions will no longer remain. Therefore, feminism tries to publicize

CONCLUSION

The women novelists in the twentieth century were more of conservative, conventional than radical. They followed pure woman is the symbol of the. They were more interested in creating a utopian world. Except few writers, most of them emphasized on womanhood to please the male patriarchal world. The woman question was based on the writers 'class and caste background. The upper caste women writers concentrated mainly on projecting women in proper roles as ideal mothers, a dutiful wife. They avoided new woman projection in their writing since it was the need of the hour but simultaneously which was particularly irrational national ideologies. There was no right effort disempower the patriarchy rather they retained the status quo of women, naturalised was perpetuated.

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