CHAPTER - V

UKKINA KOTE :

A STEEL FORTRESS OF DOMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

INTRODUCTION

The Bandaya School of literature, which gained a concrete shape from Bandaya Sahitya sammelana held in the year 1979, soon became a rallying point for the progressive and upcoming writers in Kannada. It rejected the traditional ‘art for the sake of art’ notion and advocated ‘art for the sake humanity’ instead. Sensibilities-wise, Bandaya had three offshoots namely 1. The dalita 2. The woman and 3. The Muslim. Stark realities of the society came to be reflected in this school of literature that took upon itself to bring about social change through cultural pursuits. Their stance was anti-feudal and pro-human and social justice was their main concern. Feudal practices, which characterized the rural scenario where the tillers and toilers struggled with barest subsistence but their masters lead a life of luxury and indulgence, were highlighted and reforms sought for from the administration. The novel ‘Ukkina Kote’ by Baraguru Ramachandrappa deals with one such feudal lord who is in possession of vast land holdings despite the implementation of land reforms and the tyranny unleashed by him in the village named Baradenahalli.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in the year 1947 at Baraguru in Tumkur district, Baraguru Ramachandrappa is regarded as a doyen who spearheaded the Bandaya movement in Kannada literature. Through his works namely, ‘Surya’, ‘Benki’, ‘Ukkina Kote’, ‘Ondu oorina kate’, ‘Kappu nelada kempu kalu’ and others, Baraguru has emerged as a prominent thinker in the contemporary political and socio-cultural scenario. The firm ‘leftist’ stance visible through his works bare evidence to the concern the author shares on various socio-cultural issues that have political ramifications. He is at once a poet, a storyteller, a novelist, a critic, a rationalist, a filmmaker and a thinker of significance; so much so, he became a rallying point to hundreds of young and upcoming writers and social activists of Karnataka. His films ‘Benki’, ‘Surya’, ‘Hagalu vesha’, ‘Kshama’ and ‘Shanti’ to name a few, heralded a new pattern in Kannada film making and have received national and international fame. It will not be an exaggeration to say that his works were his ‘projectiles’ aimed at various social evils mainly oppression and exploitation. His basic purpose is to project and firmly establish a pro-oppressed stance in the echelons of culture, for the latter at that point of time was presently traditional and non-progressive. For Baraguru, creation of such cultural works is just not a fashion but a historical necessity. He espouses the necessity of a ‘cultural fight’ against the social evils such as untouchability, castism, gender and class discriminations and inequality which became tools of economic, social and cultural exploitation. For him the ‘social concern’ of a writer has to have a place in his work and therefore calls for a ‘parrallax’ stance in favour of ‘art for the sake of mankind’ instead of the traditional’ art for the sake of art’. While doing so, one need
not become a total opponent of tradition but a facilitator so that the tradition finds a movement in the rightful direction.

Therefore, Baraguru demands a commitment from the upcoming writers towards the eradication of social evils such as oppression of dalits and weaker sections of the society. For him the creative freedom for the writer is inseparable from a sense of social responsibility for the literature itself is seen as an inseparable part of the social process. He urges the writers to be ‘concious’ in their approach rather than being non-chalant or neutral which may tantamount to irresponsibility in the Indian context. For, he opines that ‘inequality and casteist tendencies are on the rise in the country, as the number of educated people are increasing by the day. In our country, pseudo-religious and castiest people are on the rise’ The commitment in Baraguru is not only ideological but finds strict adherence in the committer. He is, therefore, rightly observed as the one ‘who writes what he lives and lives what he writes.’

Baraguru openly targets the feudal elements in the society, who perforce, turn out to be the major perpetrators of social, economic and cultural exploitation in a rural set up. Understandably, the scenario in most of his works is rural and essentially feudal. The geographical location of his works rally around the southern ‘bayalu seeme’ (maidan) of Karnataka and to be more specific, Tumkur and adjoining districts. Being a native of this area, the happenings in around the geographical location may have carried an indelible mark in the writer’s psyche and his exposure to the leftist ideology may have concretised the ‘ slant ‘ in his literary works. The dialect used in his works is realistic. However, the characters depicted
therein go through a pre-meditated path and to a conclusion the writer desires rather taking a natural course.

Criticism apart, Baraguru’s literature has been inspirational to hundreds of upcoming writers in Kannada. The Bandaya literature opened new portals to the hitherto less known expressions of the backward and dalit sensibilities in Kannada literature.

Some of the important works of Baraguru are enlisted below:

1. Collections of poems such as Marakutiga, nettaralli nenda hoovu, Gulama geete and maguvina hadu
2. Collections of short stories namely, Suntaragali, Kappu nelada kempu kaalu, Bayalatada Bhimanna
3. Novels such as surya, Ukkina kote, Ondu oorina kate, Benki, Sangappana sahasagalu, Bharata nagari
4. Analytical and critical works such as Sahitya mattu rajakarana, Rajakeeya chintane, Inuku nota, Bandaya sahitya meemamse and Samskriti-upasamskriti
5. Edited works namely, Janapada vaijnanika adhyayanagalu, Komuvada and the journal named Bandaya.

His films namely Benki, Surya, Kote, Karadipura, kshama, Shanti, Hagalu vesha and Thayi, have been well appreciated.

Recognition has been accorded to Baraguru in the form of several positions in the government forums and academies. Important among them are 1. The president of Kannada sahitya academy and 2. The Chairman, Kannada abhivriddhi Pradhikara. He is accredited to have brought a
thorough change in the functioning of these institutions. He is instrumental in bringing out seminal works such as:

1. Upa samskritigala adhyayana (study of the sub-cultures)
2. Antar-shisteeya adhyayana (Inter-disciplinary studies)
3. Kannada Sahitya punar moulyeekarana (Re-evaluation of Kannada literature)
4. Samajika chintana male (Series of social thoughts)

Of his works named above, Ukkina Kote has been selected for this dissertation. The novel deals with the theme of post-independence feudalism in a democratic set-up. The institution of bonded labour, now abolished legally but survives in various forms in the country, has been well projected. The exploitation and tyranny let loose by the modern day Zamindars with the active support from the establishment and religion is highlighted. However, there is a positive note at the end of the novel that the illusory and tentative assertions of authority may well be at its end.

UKKINA KOTE

Ukkina kote literally means a steel fortress. Fortress it was the village named Baradenahalli to the affluent and rich landowner named Kengappa. The metaphor used fits to the situation obtained at the village which reels under the excesses committed by the self-proclaimed zamindar Kengappa. None of the villagers are in a position to escape the tyranny unleashed by him. There are other landowners in the village but compared to Kengappa’s might they are just reduced to the position of ‘have een’s. It is a society that had its class division sharp and unalterable. Baradenahalli has only two classes, the landowners and the landless. Among the landowners Kengappa
is the most powerful. To retain his position Kengappa goes on unleashing one after other, the atrocities on the land less labourers and the destitute dalits. As Kengappa had the police, the government and the religion for his protection his position becomes a fortress that is impregnable.

The novel Ukkina Kote was later made in to a film, which earned critical acclaim from the intellectuals.

STORY

The story line of Ukkina kote revolves around an imaginary village called Baradena halli. As the name suggests the village is barren which depicts a stagnant and non-progressive existence. The set up may be akin to any village of the given geographical placement.

The story line of Ukkina kote deals with the tyrannic reign of a landlord named Kengappa. He is cruel, despotic and temperamental. He expected that every one in the village should be under his control. He regulates every activity of the village. Any dissent or even a murmer is taken as insult and is punished mercilessly. He functioned through his henchmen who supervised the day-to-day works of the zamindar’s household. Marayya was one such individual. Cruel by nature, Marayya acts as if he is the de-facto zamindar. His position is resented by another servant named Kariyanna. Kariyanna conspires with the help of some villagers in seeing that Marayya is out of favour with Kengappa. Unable to come to terms with his new situation, Marayya rebels against kengappa and in the process is murdered.

In order to overcome the legal hassles that may arise from the murder of Marayya, Kengappa floats an imaginary story that the former valiantly
fought with the dacoits and saved the village from plunder but laid down his life in the process. The Police inspector Dharmarayappa suggests a ‘veeragallu’ be erected in the memory of the dead hero. A pontiff arrives for the consecration of the temple and veeragallu and declares that for the preservation of Dharma such acts are needed. Marayya turns in to a myth and thousands believed that the veeragallu and the temple built to commemorate the hero exuded mystical powers.

After Marayya it is Kariyanna who succeeds to the role of the supervisor of the landlords household. Just as Marayya, Kariyanna too becomes a terror in the village. He however had a lurking fear that the spirit of Marayya haunted him and was out to seek vengeance. Nagamma, wife of Kengappa commits suicide. Sanjeeva, a poor landless labourer suffers for his frank and uncompromising attitude. Rajanna, the village teacher who was a source of inspiration to Sanjeeva is transferred out of the village. Dalit youth Bheemaraja rebels against the zamindar. In the end, the Sanjeeva, kariyanna, Bheemaraja join together and resolve to fight the tyranny of Kengappa.

The novel deals with the theme of oppression through tyranny with active support from the administration and religion. As an undercurrent it evinces a deep sense of resentment against the exploitation of landless and oppression of the meek. It underlines how weird institutions like magic and witchcraft grow in an environment full of ignorance and misery. The novel ends with an optimistic note, indicating that with the newfound awareness and unity to fight the tyranny and exploitation, the future of Baradenahalli may change for the better.
THE FEUDAL CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

1. KENGAPPA

Kengappa is described to have owned ‘most’ of the land situated in the village. While the author does not indicate the extent of landholding of Kengappa, one can understand from the contents of the novel that the holding was substantial. There is an indication in the beginning of the novel to that extent:

‘That land was so vast, seeing from one end one may not be able to make out the other.’

Kengappa was known to the people as a zamindar so much so that people may forget his name but not his sobriquet aforesaid. The title of zamindar was not conferred to him by any position of authority. Nor was he a warrior or an intermediary of a powerful over lord, for that kind of a centre did not exist during the time frame chosen for the story. The story is post-independent when the country had chosen the path of parliamentary democracy, which overruled the existence of over lords. Kengappa and his ancestors immediately prior to him had acquired the lands through unscrupulous means and by unleashing a reign of local tyranny.

Kengappa has been shrewd enough to scent the advent of land reforms and had made ‘necessary arrangements’ with powers that be to see that his interest is well protected. Also he has been the beneficiary of all major contracts awarded by the government.

The author is again silent as to the modus operendi adopted by Kengappa to overcome the effects of land reforms. But his tone suggests to
countless incidences where landlords resorted to transfer all excess lands to various benami (under false name) owners or divide them among the close relatives and aides so that their official holding falls within the maximum ceiling. They however possessed the de facto ownership on all such benami lands. This process is said to have happened in almost all areas of the state and certainly would not have been possible without the connivance of the political set up and the bureaucracy. This can be viewed as an example of insufficient control by the government.

For Kengappa, the pride of his ancestry and the affluence, is deeply embedded in his psyche. He is driven by this to think that he is an important power in the village and therefore nothing can move in the village without his consent. His bloated ego demanded respect from every one in the village. He expected all in the village to pay obeisance to him whenever he moved around. The villagers aware of his position stood up and bowed to him whenever he passed by. Those riding the bicycles quickly descended, all conversations went in to whispers, and even those quarreled went in to a hush-hush mode till he passed by. For, they knew that Kengappa was one man who will take it as an insult if they did not show him the respect in the aforesaid way. There have been instances where he punished those who did not respect his presence.\textsuperscript{11} The punishments awarded to people too were horrifying as they involved acts such as thrashing the people with besoms made of wild shrubs at the lowest and fatal attacks on those who disobeyed at the zenith.\textsuperscript{12} Dacoity and burning the maize heaps were also resorted to scare the disobedient. Those involved in the preparation of hooch without his permission were severely beaten up by Kengappa’s henchmen.\textsuperscript{13}
Along with acts mentioned above, Kengappa also exercised control over the village through his self-appointed position as a dispenser of justice. He expected that every feud-family, inter-personal or social—be referred to him, so that he deliberated on them at his home and dispensed ‘justice’ which was binding on all parties concerned.\(^{14}\) By doing so he wanted to ensure that he held sway over the life of every individual residing in the village.

‘The house where Kengappa lived was a very big one. After all, it was the house of a zamindar. So big it was, it would be difficult to say who is where in it. There were servants and aids everywhere.’\(^{15}\) It resembled a modern day castle in structure, if not in function. The whole village was comparable to an extended manor as most of its affairs were under the supervision of the zamindar.

Kengappa has maintained close liaison with various government functionaries to his benefit. It is through these connections he has been able to retain his holdings intact. The liaison also benefits Kengappa in getting ‘almost all’ government contracts. The friendship with the district administration, the police, the education department benefits him in various other ways such as to hush up a murder or to have an unwanted teacher transferred out of the village and so on.

Just as in the general context of Indian social system, the wife of Kengappa had to remain subservient to the wishes of her husband. Violation of this unwritten dictum was not tolerable. Kengappa is very vocal on this aspect too:
‘A woman has to remain within her confines. That too being the wife of a zamindar, she should not become cheap by moving around here and there outside the house.’\textsuperscript{16}

He wanted his wife Nagamma be content with her status as a zamindar’s wife and the keeper of his large house full of servants and aides. Her sentiments bore no value, wishes dismissed and interference in the affairs of zamindar was resented. His feudal mindset does not allow him to develop a loving attitude towards his wife. Worse, he expected his wife to remain chaste, when he himself had affairs wherever he went. He is shocked and enraged when he finds out his wife’s extra-marital affair with his servant Marayya but his feudal pride prevents him from publicizing the matter.\textsuperscript{17}

Any attempt to disregard him evoked instant anger in Kengappa. A lesser mortal would be punished immediately. However, if the opponent is strong, he would not hesitate to have a compromise with him. Ex: His outbursts and punitive actions against the landless labourer Sanjiva and his diplomatic efforts to placate Shivayya.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{2. OTHER LAND OWNERS}

There were other landowners in the village who resented the omnipotence of Kengappa. The land owned by them is much less compared to that of Kengappa but was still substantial. Shivayya, lingayya, Mallayya and Sannayya were those smaller landowners who felt their wings clipped by the strong presence of Kengappa. Bereft of the influence Kengappa had over the village and his proximity with the bureaucracy, they simmered with discontent but were forced to lay low for fear of the zamindar to whose authority they were no matches at all.
3. THE HENCHMEN

In a typical feudal pyramid, intermediaries controlled the fealty and were controlled by the over lords. In the situation obtaining in the novel, officially there could not be anything called the zamindari. By virtue of the large holdings, an individual like Kengappa was called a zamindar informally. All the works relating to his household were left to the supervision of henchmen hand- picked by the so called zamindar. The latter reported to the zamindar all matters that were important and sought his approval for action intended to be taken or already taken. Although just stooges, the presence of these henchmen caused fear and consternation among the villagers. This created a kind of false pride in the henchmen who under the illusion of power mistreated the people. Little did they know was that whatever power they believed to have had was temporary and depended on the whims of the landlord. They are given a long rope but had the leash pulled the moment they seemed to go out of control. If the actions of a stooge brought the master in to an adverse position, he is dispensed with without any hesitation. This act of dispensing with an unwanted stooge involved physical attacks and even murder.

Marayya was one such stooge with whom Kengappa had vested the supervisory functions. He does supervise but with much of arrogance and high handedness. He is despised and feared by the villagers as if he was the minizamindar. His origin was less known or no one bothered to know. His strong physique caught the eye of Kengappa who thought could be an effective weapon in silencing the dissenting voices in the village. Under the tutelage of his master, Marayya grew so much so to let loose a reign of terror in the village. The besom made of wild shrub was his favourite...
weapon and the orders of zamindar his dictum, Marayya felt invincible only to be brought down by the zamindar later.

Kariyanna was another henchman who enjoyed the confidence of the zamindar prior to the arrival of Marayya.\textsuperscript{21} Every work assigned by the zamindar was supervised by Kariyanna who took pride in calling himself the ‘Kari bhanta’ meaning Kariya, the loyal soldier. Marayya’s arrival had made Kariyanna lose his position and proximity to zamindar. Jealous he was, Kariyanna waits for his opportunity to do ‘Mara garva bhanga’ – to shatter marayya’s pride. His ultimate aim is to get his position as the zamindar’s confidante back. Marayya’s scuffle with Sanjeeva gives Kariyanna an opportunity to conspire and concoct a story that marayya tried to molest Hanumakka, wife of sanjeeva which when conveyed to the zamindar takes Marayya out of favour. After the murder of Marayya, Kariyanna gets back his much coveted position as a confidante of zamindar.

With the ego satisfaction of having been the lieutenant of the zamindar and being cared for with good food and shelter, the henchmen remained contented. The illusion of being all-powerful, made them forget the fact that all their powers emanated from the mercy of their master. When their reign ended abruptly, they were upset and future-weary. Marayya even slaps his erstwhile master in a fit of rage and pays the price through his life. However, Kariyanna awakes to the reality and decides to side with the new found rebellion against the zamindar.

The notable point here is that the zamindar used his henchmen when in need and discarded them when not. When Marayya went out of his favour he even gives a blanket permission to Shivayya to do anything with him.\textsuperscript{22}
Shivayya, encouraged by the permission sneers Marayya as the one who waited for the left overs of food.\textsuperscript{23}

Having given permission to do anything with Marayya, Kengappa is not amused at the murder of Marayya for the consequences of such an act could be grave unless managed at appropriate levels. He is aware of the changed circumstances when he advises Kariyanna that more than the might it is the intellect one has to use in containing elements like Marayya failing which one may have to dig one’s own grave.\textsuperscript{24}

With the concocted story of Marayya laying his life fighting the dacoits who wanted to rob the village finding acceptance everywhere, the veeragallu and the temple built in his memory become pilgrim centres as people believed that they exuded supernatural powers.

Kariyanna ascends to the place held by Marayya and turns out to be another Marayya in letting lose the reign of terror.\textsuperscript{25} However, he quickly realizes his folly and mends his ways by distancing himself from Kengappa. He even advises Kengappa to put an end to his ‘taste for the human blood’.\textsuperscript{26} He joins with Sanjiva and Bhimaraja in search of a meaningful existence daring all odds that may come by.\textsuperscript{27}

4. SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS AND THE LANDLESS

Other than the prominent land owning community there were commoners who owned small portions of land measuring an acre or two through which they were not able to meet the minimum level of subsistence. Such people were compelled to work in the fields of the affluent on daily wage basis. Also, there were the landless who had no option but to work as wage earners or servants in the fields or estates of the rich people.
Circumstances in which they survived were harsh and unbearable. They were subjected to insults and even physical torture. Having self-respect was looked upon as impertinence inviting the wrath of zamindar. People were expected to stand up and pay obeisance to the zamindar whenever he passed by. Rebellion against the zamindar was ruled out. Those having the temerity to question any of the decisions of the zamindar or his henchmen were severely warned to mend the ways and beaten up with the besom of wild shrub.

Sanjeeva, Hanumakka, Kenchappa, Ranga, Ningappa and several others lived in abject poverty so much so that they were unable to have two square meals a day and enough money to pay the doctor or to buy medicine in an emergency. They would rather turn to magic for the cure as it worked out cheaper.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

As seen earlier, the administration is amenable to the wants of the rich and the affluent. Kengappa is depicted as the one who wielded sufficient influence in the system with which he has managed to see most of his holdings remained intact despite implementation of land reforms and abolition of tenancy. With his connections he sees to it the decisions always went in his favour. All lucrative contracts were awarded to him much to the chagrin of other land owners in the area. Officials he did not like were transferred to far off places. Ex: Rajanna who did not tow the line of Kengappa was transferred out of the village to a far off place.

The police step in to the scene after the murder of Marayya. The zamindar shrewdly concotes a story that depicted Marayya as a hero who
sacrificed his life for the sake of the village. Inspector Dharmarayappa is impressed by the story and suggests a veeragallu be erected in memory of the dead hero. The Inspector ignores the submissions of a few as regards to the murder of Marayya and gives a clean chit to Kengappa. Scared by the presence of the police, and also by the might of Kengappa, most of the villagers feign ignorance of the murder that had taken place. Ironically, Inspector Dharmarayappa takes more interest in spiritual matters rather than maintaining the law and order.

The police whole-heartedly enjoy the hospitality provided by the zamindar. Here is the description of the author:

‘The food offered at the home of zamindar was specially prepared for them. With varieties of dishes that included chicken, mutton and what not, police were befriended. The Inspector and the zamindar dined together.’

Impressed by the kind of hospitality showered on them, the police not only refuse to believe that Kengappa was involved in the murder of Marayya, but also reassure their continued support by opening a new police station in the village. The press too highlights the cooperation of Kengappa in the investigative process in order to nab the culprits.

Kengappa’s befriending the police has another dimension: not to antagonize the people who have the firepower. He would rather keep them good humoured so that they will be of use to him sometimes.

A nexus is established between the landed aristocracy and the law enforcing authorities. Ironic is the situation; the author expresses it with the following words:
‘In this so called system of democracy, the security of people is in the hands of such noble men.’

The other government functionary in the novel is the educational officer who tows the line of Kengappa in ordering the transfer of Rajanna to a far off place. He even advises Rajanna to conduct himself properly in his new place of posting.

**THE RELIGION**

In a typical feudal set up, the landed aristocracy, the muscle power and the religion worked hand in hand. The picture in the novel is not very different from this. The land owning community headed by Kengappa, the police team headed by inspector Dharmarayappa and the religious seer Mokshananda work in tandem. If the landlord provided hospitality to the police, the latter provided him the security and the religion eulogized both of them for the patronage offered to the intended religious activities:

‘Very rarely we get people to promote the activities of the religion. People like Kengappa are born here because of the past good deed of Baradenahalli in the past.’

Mokshananda is depicted in the novel as a seer of national standing. He is regarded as a god who walked around. Impassionate but impressionistic, Mokshananda refuses the palanquin arranged to carry him. He even touches a Harijan much to the wonder of the villagers. Stressing on the importance of religion, he intends to make Baradenahalli the centre of all his religious activities because the village had such noble men like Kengappa. He calls Inspector Rayappa as Dharmarayappa for the support he extended to the religion.
Impressed by the reverence he received at Baradenahalli, Mokshananda wants to set up an Ashrama there. The Ashrama is a modern building covered by a bamboo thatched and green leaves, is made ready for him soon after he expressed his wish. The Ashrama built adjacent to the new house of Kengappa on the other side of which the new police station stood. This is an allegoric representation of the nexus between the power centres aforesaid. The clock tower which stood in the middle of Kengappa’s house signified that the time favoured the powerful.

To establish himself firmly in his newly built ashram, Mokshananda undertakes renovation of old temples in and around the village Baradenahalli. By his express appreciation of the heroism displayed by Marayya, Mokshananda salutes mother earth for having given birth to such valiant. Through the veeragallu, the temple and the subsequent holding of cattle fair Marayya’s name spreads in all the surrounding areas as the martyr who died for a noble cause but also as a spirit, which exuded supernatural powers.

The new police station at Baradenahalli is opened with proper religious rituals. Even the rifles of the police station were put to devoted worship. The event of robbers failing in their attempt to break open the safe of a rich man is attributed to the holy presence of Swamiji.

Having established his strong presence, Mokshananda undertakes pilgrimage to extend his religious activities elsewhere in the country. If the established religion is for the affluent, the poor heavily depended on magic. Papayya, the village magician is in much demand from the ignorant villagers for warding off the spells of evil forces. Unable to
afford the cost of treatment they rely on magic to cure their illness. Thimmakka dies as her people resorted to magical cure instead of medical attention. Papayya resents the presence of Mokshananda as his demand went down because of the latter’s arrival at the village.

**LAND HOLDINGS**

As seen earlier, zamindar Kengappa owned the largest part of the lands available in the village. The novel does not specify the exact quantum of his holdings. But the description given by the author in the beginning of the novel states that his holding was so vast that standing at one end, one will not be able to make out the other. There are other landowners in the village. They too are indicated to have owned large areas of land but again the quantum of such holdings are not mentioned. However, they are pictured as sub-servant to Kengappa both in holdings, possessions and authority. Although jealous of Kengappa’s stature, they are incapable of showing an open defiance to his authority. At best they can suggest or convince Kengappa of the suitability or unsuitability of certain intended actions of Kengappa. Kengappa too tries to appease them by allowing them have government contracts in their favour. Ex: Shivayya who supported Sanjeeva hitherto, refuses to come in the way of Kengappa when the latter earns Kengappa’s ire.

Apart from the land owners cited above the rest of the villagers except a few small and marginal holders were landless. The landless being large in number performed daily labour in the fields of those who owned lands and also in sundry jobs available in the village. Their women too perform similar chores on daily wage basis.
EXPLOITATION

Exploitation in a feudal set up indicated in the novel is manifold. As large sections of the village are left either with paltry holdings or landless, they will have to live at the mercy of the zamindar or the other landowners. They are heavily dependent of the land owning class for subsistence. They have to work at the households or at the fields of the landowners on daily wage basis. Wages paid to them are indicated to be meager. Leave alone the comfortable livelihood desired, they are unable to meet the barest necessities of life by what they earn as wages. Ex: sanjeeva is unable to take Thimmakka to a doctor for want of money. The latter is rather taken to a local practitioner of magic. Thimmakka dies for want of proper medical attention.

The toiling of the labour is further compounded by the insults heaped on them. The zamindar’s henchman Marayya assaults Sanjeeva physically, for the latter’s impertinace of questioning his authority. Thimmakka is abused by using terms, which were inappropriate to be used on a woman.

The general standard of living by the labour class is low. On many an occasion they are unable to garner two square meals a day because of the paltry wages paid. Kenchappa’s plight evidences the situation obtained.

‘See in the kitchen. Everything is empty. We had water for food because we do not have ragi flour.’

Unable to bear the hunger, the poor labourers occasionally try to steal grain from the harvesting areas.
Gangakka, a woman of loose virtue, tries to be diplomatic with Nagamma to get a few measures of grain.\textsuperscript{39} Using her charms she gets even closer to the zamindar himself, play a role in a conspiracy to frame Sanjeeva and earns a little money in the process.\textsuperscript{40}

The disbursement of wages made another pathetic scene. Seldom labourers are paid the wages agreed upon. It is the whim of zamindar’s stooge to pay wages as per his own sweet will. Undue cuts are made in the wages paid. Absence was marked though the worker was present and completed the works assigned. Kariyanna deprives a labourer of three days’ wages, an action which had no justification whatsoever. Requests from the labourers were not heeded as Kariyanna had tremendous faith in his accounting acumen. He further threatens that he will complain to the zamindar if any of the labourers did not agree with his accounting.\textsuperscript{41} Even the zamindar is intolerant of a labourer’s plea for the correct payment.\textsuperscript{42}

The henchmen of zamindar, who try to intimidate the hapless labourers, are an exploited lot themselves. By virtue of their position as intermediaries, they bore the brunt of the people from lower class. They are hated and cursed upon by most of the villagers for their cruel and violent attitude. However, they themselves are subjected to tyranny and oppression by the zamindar. They are to be at the beck and call irrespective of time or place and whatever is the condition of their health. Ex: Kariyanna even when suffering from high fever, was mercilessly summoned by Kengappa for an errand. The novel does not indicate the remuneration paid to them. Marayya, a hotel worker, was hand- picked by Kengappa who wanted to make use of the former’s physical strength to enforce his own will over the village. When the situation in the village turn hostile, Kengappa discards and even has
Marayya murdered through his other henchmen. Marayya laments for this as under:

‘Somewhere I was, all to myself. This idiot, the zamindar brought me here. Used all my strength. And now he has thrown me out as if I was a leaf on which he had dined earlier.’

Kariyanna too realizes at the end the futility of serving the likes of zamindar. He makes an honest assessment of his life where serving the zamindar as his trusted stooge was no doubt ego-boosting, but to what avail?. He was fed, clothed and sheltered but was that all the price of his loyal service rendered hitherto?

THE CASTE FACTOR

Unlike the class division, the caste stratification obtaining in the village is not very clear. There are, however, indications as to the general division of the society on the basis of caste one is born into. The author’s descriptions suggest that the affluent landlord Kengappa belonged to vokkaliga caste. Other landowners namely Shivayya, Mallayya, Lingayya, Sannayya and such others belonged to the caste of Lingayaths. Small and marginal land holders and the landless belonged to the backward castes. However, the castes of Rajanna, the school teacher and of Dharmarayappa, the police inspector are not indicated. Bhimaraja and his friends hailing from his own ‘lane’ were dalits. There is also mention of castes like Manegara and Gurikara in the novel.

The seer Mokshananda, Madhvacharya and Shyanubhoga Seetarama belonged to Brahmin community and are regarded highly. Mokshananda is
bent to see the religious activities spread all over the country and undertakes yatra to ensure the same.

With this available data, it can be concluded that the caste division of the village named Baradenahalli followed the traditional mode of chaturvarna. Brahmins occupied the highest position. There are no Kshatriya and Vysya in the village. Lingayaths, who belong to the Sudra varna, were the land owners. All other sudras were small, marginal land holders or landless labourers. Dalits were outside the purview of Chaturvarna who lived on the outskirts in separate lanes. Untouchability was in practice. The dalits usually performed menial jobs. The affluent had a separate graveyard to bury their dead.45

The caste factor appears to have been accepted and adhered to as the novel does not record any friction in the society on this account. However, there is a voice of rebellion in Bhimaraja who accompanied by Sanjeeva and Kariyanna, promises to fight the feudal lords henceforth.

UNTACTHABILITY

Dalits lived in separate lanes on the outskirts of the village. They were outside the purview of chaturvarna. They performed menial jobs and ate left overs of superiors provided to them. Practice of untouchability against dalits was in vogue. They were not allowed to take part in the chariot pulling on the occasion of the car festival. Their ‘Bali’ (sacrificial animal) was not slayed by other caste people. This resulted in the practice of harijans slaying their balis themselves. They have not had a voice of protest hitherto. Their dissensions against the decisions of powers that be in the village is resented.
Only Bhimaraja, an educated dalit, attempts to rebel against the discrimination. There is a strong anti dalit sentiment harboured by zamindar Kengappa. Bhimaraja revolt looks like an act of impertinence to Kengappa. He arranges for framing Bhimaraja in a false case of molestation and sent to jail.

The novel promises a change in future with Bhimaraja, Sanjeeva and Kariyanna joining together to protest all social evils.

**SUPERSTITION**

The usual tough life of a villager, bare subsistence, poor hygiene and above all lack of education play a significant role in making an ordinary individual at the village superstitious. A hardship or ill health, an accident and even the atrocity by a social superior at the personal (micro) level and epidemics, famine, group clashes at the macro level were all believed to be the wrath of god or Satan as a recrimination against undoings or sins. Sins committed in this life or during one’s past life/lives are believed to need atonement through suffering.

The murder of Marayya sets the train of incidents in which the already weary public turn superstitious. Marayya was projected as a hero by Kengappa primarily to wriggle out of the legal complications that may arise due to the murder. Inspector Dharmarayappa who suggested erection of a veeragallu and Swami Mokshananda who consecrated it were not aware of the criminal act that had taken place. But the people who had seen the incident of murder and heard the vows of Marayya to come back as a ghost and haunt them had a lurking fear deeply embedded in their psyche, of such
an eventuality. Their fear was further triggered by the ominous words of Mokshananda that the soul of a man who died unnaturally needed to be appeased by performing a tantric worship. Papayya, who practiced witchcraft scares the people further of the consequences. The lurking fear and the bodings of Mokshananda and Papayya gets every one believe that the temple of Marayya exuded supernatural powers.

Appeasing the soul of Marayya becomes an obsession with people. Thimmakka who in the advanced stage of pregnancy needed medical attention but was denied the same due to the belief that Marayya’s soul, if properly appeased, will see her through the crisis. Thimmakka dies in the process not getting medical attention at all. Her death is attributed to lack of faith of her husband Sanjeeva in such rituals of magic.

Kariyanna, one of those who murdered Marayya, spends sleepless nights, gets high fever and becomes delirious with the fear of Marayya’s ghost haunting him and taking his life away. He performs pooja on the midnight of an amavasya in order to come out of the evil spell.

To the villagers Marayya had assumed the status of an omnipotent spirit. People worshipped him with fear and devotion. They sought his influence in curing the ailments of their children and other such favours promising to appease him through sacrifice of fowl, goat, sheep and even a bison.

The villagers preferred witchcraft rather than medical attention to cure their ailments. They preferred the assistance of a ‘soolagitti’ rather than a government midwife for the latter’s hand was not all that auspicious.
There is a clash between the established religion and witchcraft. Papayya, who has lost business considerably after the arrival of Mokshananda, tries to cast aspersions on the people as to the efficacy of Mokshananda’s powers.

‘Swamiji is wise and well versed with Sanskrit alright. But he does not know much about ghosts. That knowledge is for the people like me.’

He offers sure cure to Thimmakka’s ailment, even after Mokshananda’s talisman failed to cure her. However, when Thimmakka died both Papayya and Mokshananda shift the blame on Sanjeeva’s apathy and Thimmakka’s sins respectively.

The author suggests that poor economic status and ignorance could have been an important reason that drove the people to become superstitious. For example, soolagittis were preferred to midwives for the simple reason that the former costed a lot less than the latter.

**CONCLUSION**

Baraguru has been candid enough to say that most of the characters and sequences depicted in the novel closely resemble to some real life characters and situations observed during his childhood (see interview with the author in appendix). The socio-economic situation obtained during the time frame the novel is set into, was akin to most of the villages where the will of a powerful lord prevailed. He highlights the fact that post-independence as well as the post-implementation of land reforms scenario did not see any remarkable change from what obtained earlier. The unholy nexus between the landowners, affluent and caste superiors with the political powers that be and the bureaucracy had ensured the continuance of it.
Changes were resisted upon vehemently, often through violent measures. In such a situation, an organized fight was a distant dream but looked accomplishable with the advent of education and the resultant awareness.

The novel ‘Ukkina Kote’ has been successful in bringing about the picture of a typical village of bayalu seeme where the land was not fertile and facilities for irrigation were limited. The available sources of irrigation readily acquired by the village lords rendering marginal holders dependent on rain god and forcing the ladless serve as their daily labourers or bonded labourers in the households of the lords.
FOOT NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid

3. The popular slogan for the literary movement called Bandaya was ‘प्रजामतीयी शस्त्र, जनसंघ जनमंथन जनसंघ’ quoted in ‘shatamanada sahitya vimarshe’ p-697

4. Ibid p-697

5. A news report in Deccan Herald, Monday, 15th October 2007


8. Ukkina Kote p-9


10. 'सौं अद्वितियः स्वामिनाथे दिग्बिज्ञाने भरते भरते भक्तिमाता स्वरूपे निर्भरोऽवतार शरणां तृणबुद्धीपले जनादेव विनाशे.' Ukkina Kote p-9

11. 'सौं अद्वितियः स्वामिनाथे दिग्बिज्ञाने भरते भरते भक्तिमाता स्वरूपे निर्भरोऽवतार शरणां तृणबुद्धीपले जनादेव विनाशे.' Ukkina Kote p-28

12. Ukkina Kote p-92

13. 'मातृगीति प्रजाः प्रजामतीयी, प्रजामतीयी जनमंथन, जनमंथन जनमंथन जनमंथन.' Ukkina Kote p-29
14. ‘हलसर वाणु अंकित्सु देश, अस्ताल अश्वत्र अण्यथा, युवा रूचिकर नरींचारे.’
Ukkina Kote p-11

15. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः. अतः
दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.’ Ukkina kote p-10

16. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.
अतः अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.’ Ukkina Kote p-10

17. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन; अनुयुक्तिः लयोंम्याश्रयेः. अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः
अनुयुक्तिः अण्यथा, अनुयुक्तिः अण्यथा.’ Ukkina Kote p-40

18. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा, अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा?’
Ukkina Kote p-51

19. Ukkina Kote p-20

20. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा, अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.’ Ukkina Kote p-20

21. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.’
Ukkina Kote p-27

22. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.’
Ukkina Kote p-51

23. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.’
Ukkina Kote p-58

24. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.’
Ukkina Kote p-69

25. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.
अश्वत्र अनुयुक्तिः दानेः अश्वत्र अण्यथा.’ Ukkina Kote p-65

26. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.’
Ukkina Kote p-225

27. ‘हाकायुक्तांश्वर्णकारणेन कार्यम्य? दानेः अनुयुक्तिः २० गांधूभार्ती तैद्यतिः.’
Ukkina Kote p-230
28. "ಹನೆಯತ್ತ ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ಬಂಡುನಿಗೆ ಕ್ಯಾಟರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಬಗ್ಗೆ, ಬೃಹತ್ತರ ಜೀವಿತ ಪ್ರಾಂತ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಆಧುನಿಕ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
29. "ಹನೆಯತ್ತ ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ಬಂಡುನಿಗೆ ಕ್ಯಾಟರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಬಗ್ಗೆ, ಬೃಹತ್ತರ ಜೀವಿತ ಪ್ರಾಂತ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಆಧುನಿಕ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
30. "ಮೊದಲು ಬಂಡುನಿಗೆ ಕ್ಯಾಟರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಬರಹಗಳಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.
31. "ಹನೆಯತ್ತ ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ಬಂಡುನಿಗೆ ಕ್ಯಾಟರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
32. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
33. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
34. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
35. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
36. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
37. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
38. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
39. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
40. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
41. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
42. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
43. "ಕೆಲವು ಮುಖ್ಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗೋಬರ್ಗೆ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿತ ಸಮಯ ಪ್ರದತ್ತಿಯಾಗಿದೆ.
44. 'ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಮಾತ್ರವಾಗಿ ಅರ್ಧನಾಮ ಅನುಕರಣ ಆರೂರು ಹಾಗೆ. ಬಲ್ಲಪಾಲ ಸಂಶೋಧಿಸಿದ ಒಂದು ಅರ್ಧನಾಮ
ಪಡೆದಿದ್ದು, ತುಂಬಾ ಅರ್ಧನಾಮ ಮಾತ್ರವಾಗಿ ಆರೂರು. ಹಾಗೆ ಒಂದು ಎಂದು
ನಾಡು ಬರುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು, ಎಲ್ಲಾದ ಎಂದರೆ ಅರ್ಧನಾಮ ಮಾತ್ರವಾಗಿ. Ukkina Kote p-189

45. Ukkina Kote p-199

46. 'ಕೂಡಲು ಅದು ಆದಿ, ಕೂಡಲು ಕೂಡಲು ಮೇಲಿಂದ ದಿನಿಸಲಿದೂ. ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಇತರ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳ ಮೇಲೆ
ಮೇಲೆ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸುವ ಆಸುಪಾಸ.' Ukkina Kote p-108

47. 'ಆದ್ದರೂ ದೊಡ್ಡದಿಯಾಗೆ ಅದು ಅದರು ಆದಿ. ಆದಿ ಆದಿ ಆದಿ ಮೇರಡು ಗಡಿ ಮೇಲೆ
ಮೇಲೆ ಮೇರಡು ಗಡಿ.' Ukkina Kote p-141

48. Ukkina Kote p-146,147 C]'ÀzÀ 201

49. Ibid p-149

50. 'ಭವಿಷ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಇಂದು ಎಲ್ಲೆರಡೆಯ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭ, ಇಂದು ಎಲ್ಲೆರಡೆಯ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ಅರ್ಧನಾಮೀಯ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯುಂಟುಂದು. ಈಸ್ವಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯುಂಟುಂದು ಗಮ್ಯ ಗಮ್ಯ ಮೇಲೆ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಿದಾಗ ಅರ್ಧನಾಮೀಯ.'
Ukkina Kote p-161

51. Ukkina Kote p-124

52. Ibid p-167

53. ಮೆಳೆಯುವ: 'ಇಂದಿರು ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಯ ಸಮಯದ ನಂತರದ ಹಾಗೆ ಹಾಗೆ ಹಾಗೆ ಹಾಗೆ
ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ ನಂತರದ.'
Ukkina Kote p-169

54. ಮುಖ್ಯವಾದ ಎಂಜಿ 165-166