AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The present study is an attempt to highlight the close connection between History and contemporary literature. A perceivable research gap is observed where, mostly, artifacts, inscriptions, coins and documents were considered to draw inferences and arrive at conclusions on various concepts of History, leaving contemporary literary works not sufficiently explored. The study undertaken is an attempt to bridge the said gap.

Feudalism, a medieval concept, which was an arrangement for administering land, declined gradually with the emergence of a powerful centre. Although feudalism as a structural entity is non-existent now, the feudal intent and tendency have continued to exist, influencing thereby the whole web of relations in the society. The study undertaken here pertains to a time frame between the last few decades of the 19th century and the entire of the 20th century, with modern Kannada literature- modern Kannada novel to be specific- as the main source. It encompasses selected novels during the pre and post-independence eras.

There have been 5 significant schools in modern Kannada literature namely, 1. Navodaya (the new dawn), 2. Pragathisheela (the progressive), 3. Navya (the modern), 4. Bandaya (the rebellion) and 5. Dalita (the down-trodden). Eight novels from Six authors namely, K.V.Puttappa, Rava Bahaddoora, Shivarama Karantha, Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Geeta Nagabhushana and Devanoora mahadeva have been selected for the study.
The selection of the authors is made in such a way that they not only belonged to various schools of literature but hailed from different geographical locations in Karnataka and belonged to various sub-segments of the society as well. The findings of the study indicate inter-alia that the land holdings were disproportionate and people with large holdings reigned supreme. The marginal holders, the landless and the poor had to make do with bare subsistence. Here was a situation where the tiller did not own the land and the owner did not till it. The system caused severe exploitation of the poor and their subjugation to their economic superiors. Further, the caste system made the affluence of the rich hereditary vis-à-vis the continued sufferings of the poor. There was underdevelopment, poverty, and ignorance, illiteracy that marked the rural scenario. Untouchability, the bane of Indian society, existed, condemning the Scheduled castes to perform despicable menial jobs and to live in sub-human conditions.

The characters and sequences of these novels may have been camouflaged, but the events depicted thereat can not be dismissed as imaginary as countless such incidences take place day in and day out. The atrocities, exploitation, usurpation of poor man’s lands, murder, mayhem and rape of the poor and the under-privileged have all been common occurrences in the society. Literature, therefore, can not be created from a vaccum which in fact mirrors life during a chosen time-frame. The richness of information the novels contain can, therefore, be used to elicit information on the contemporary social, political, economic and cultural aspects of life.