Chapter 5

CONCLUSION
Chapter 5

Conclusion

"Women’s question" seems to have gradually disappeared in the Kannada novels after 1930s; but as brought out by the subsequent analysis of the novels, the earlier project of reforming woman’s status has been incorporated into a broader framework which, I have termed as ‘man-woman question’. Irrespective of their inclinations towards different strands of nationalist or critical nationalist ideologies, these novelists lay more or less equal emphasis on reforming man and society on behalf of woman.

Greater thrust in the majority of the novelists discussed here is on ensuring stability of family; even Galaganatha slightly deviates from Anandamatha model in his preference for ‘Grihastashrama’ to life-denying ascetic soliery and development of ‘rigid masculine self’. Women’s participation in his scheme of Vaidika nation is also by their virtue of being the women of Kshatriya clan and not as those metamorphosed to ‘nationalist male’ either in their garb or in imitation. Probably this model has easily given in to further appropriation by A. N. Krishnarao who could at a time argue for companionate marriage even while codifying gender binaries into rigid categories and ascribing gender roles to suit his masculine nationalist enterprise. Karanth, who dismisses all these romanticised and idealised notions, is also not averse to family if it does not turn oppressive.

Difference lies in their notions of power equation and harmony between wife and husband. While the patriarchal nationalists like Galaganatha and A. N. Krishnarao take a patronising approach towards woman, Karanth, Kuvempu, Gokak, Goruru and other novelists ensure that family is firmly founded on mutual respect and harmony than woman’s inclusion as a subordinated member. They bring women within family mould while keeping open the option to remain outside if the set-up turns
exploitative. Woman is construed as an autonomous subject in conjugal relationship. However, these novelists don't desire for any radical structural changes but argue for modifying family for its relative sense of stability and security when compared to the turbulent world outside.

Apart from Karanth, novels by Kuvempu, Mirji Annaraya and Goruru can also be considered as the female narrative for the very reason that despite constraints of their nationalist ideological framework they transcend it at one point suggesting possible emancipation of woman and man from the earlier patriarchal control and moving towards an egalitarian conjugal relationship. Woman is liberated from monolithic mould of 'Arya Mahila' image as well while bringing in woman of different castes and class into the debate. The women in these novels come up with varied modes of resistance against complex mechanisms of patriarchal control. Some of them remain within existing social system like family or marriage while some other critique, resist and seek liberation from them.

Woman as a symbol of resistance also provides an alternative to the 'ideal of femininity' that was being consolidated through the neopatriarchal nationalism. These women on varied occasions—Hemambike, Ratnambike and Gourambike (Rajayogi, Ashanti Parva,) Seetha and Subbamma, (Kamuru Heg gaditi), Veerammaji and Mallige (Chennabasavanayoka), Bhagavati (Chikaveera Rajendra), Sunalini and Bhagirathi (Sarasammana Samadh) , Tara and her mother-in-law Chinnavva (Nisarga), Girije (Sahityaratna) – provide a platform to defy any attempt to fit woman in any monolithic mould of femininity. Probably an analysis of the narrativising 'deviant' women itself provides a base to think of an alternative to idealised femininity.

However, it should not also blind us to the fact that the women, who are idealised in certain novels, such as Gourammaji of Chikaveera Rajendra and Hemambike in Rajayogi, turn the tables on men to expose lack of the very ideals imposed on women.
'Respectability' of Masti on occasions may give more freedom and power than paternalistic approach of A. N. Krishnarao, who while defying hypocrisy behind 'respectability' and 'chastity,' further circumscribes women's right to mobility.

The 'fallen' Veerammaji (Channabasavanayaka) is portrayed as a strong individual when compared to the idealised Ratna (Mangala Sootra) whose strength is derived from being 'ideal wife' and tied to the bondage of domesticity by a new ideology of 'love' or Lalite and Neelasaani who become sacrificial lambs to promote the highest artistic skills of the nationalist/artist.

Most of these writers even while assimilating Vivekananda, Tilak and Gandhi's spiritual and nationalist ideologies, remain liberal towards woman who is as sexualised a being as a man and refuse to desexualise her for achieving any highest ideal of life – either nationalism or spiritualism. They legitimise the sexuality of woman and man as autonomous - detached from the utilitarian and nationalised sexuality just as we don't have 'sensualised nation' in these 'regional' narratives.

These narratives, rooted in their Kodi, Agrahara or Malnad, create a potential space for challenging the hegemonic and homogenising nationalist ideologies which were being popularised by Galaganatha and A. N. Krishnarao through their narratives. The female narratives could take a clinical look at the oppressive forces of the patriarchy colluded with nationalism even while giving a slip to the grand narratives of the nation-building. Through women who are an agent of change and also symbol of resistance the female narratives provide an alternative ground to withstand the onslaught of the cumulative effects of diverse forces such as colonialism, nationalism and modernity on individual life and society as well.

◆ ◆ ◆