Chapter 1

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The thesis is an attempt to comprehend complexities of the relationship between gender and nationalism which have their histories entangled with colonialism and modernity in India. The study makes a case for diverse regional narratives which deviated from the hegemonic nationalist narratives while bringing out intricacies of gender relations redefined during the turbulent period of the anti-colonial movement.

The study points out that some of the novels in Kannada rooted in time and the soil, eschewed grand narratives of nationalism and resisted their hegemony. Study of such deviations in the narratives assumes significance considering that novels are closely affiliated to nationalism in writing the nation. Secondly, these narratives veer away from rhetoric of nation to record intense inter-personal adjustments and crisis in human relationship during the crucial historical juncture; they refract changes in the quotidian facilitated by major structural changes of society-in-transition.

Given the close relationship between the two historical constructs - gender and nation, it is important to note that these regional narratives, in their inquiry into implosions in traditional institutions of marriage and family, come up with a strong critique of nationalism colluded with patriarchy and colonialism that comes in the guise of modernity, both as emancipating and victimising.

Besides, the study notes that some of the Kannada novels which subscribe to hegemonic nationalist arguments on family and marriage open up a dialectic between the diverse configurations of gender and nation. As woman becomes the site for varied ideological debates, the study keeps sexuality and conjugal relationship as a common thread.
The two major accounts of nationalism are one which sees nationalism as a masculine enterprise and another which sees woman as an active participant in nation building. The third account which the study makes a case for is a ‘female narrative’ which not only critiques hegemonic patriarchal nationalist accounts but also goes beyond to critique all homogenising and hegemonic nationalist ideologies.

The assumption behind the study is that differences in the narratives are in consonance with differences in experiencing nationalism, colonialism and modernity at different points of time and in different regions. Hence, development of these diverse nationalist ideologies and their criticisms need to be studied in their historical and material specificities as they vary depending on several variables.

The study has been divided into three more broad sections to cover different areas related to nationalism and gender discourses.

The first section includes theoretical discussions on gendered nation and nationalised gender. These discussions focus on how nationalism colludes with patriarchy in regulating conjugal relationship and woman’s sexuality. The basic premise for the arguments here is that gender is one of the variables like historical circumstances and context which brings changes in the process of ‘inventing’ the nation. Nationalism, in turn, redefines and reconfigures gender roles and relationships for various reasons and in various ways.

Having established the link between gender and nation, the study then proceeds to observe assimilation of certain Western stereotypes of gender, marriage and family through colonialism, both ideologically and in historically specific material conditions in the pan-Indian context. Besides, nationalism which draws its paraphernalia from the West, further consolidates these stereotypes for its own purposes. The process of modernisation initiated by these antagonistic forces also had complex
and contradictory implications on gender relations. Consequently certain notions of gender and nation acquire hegemony. Simultaneously, within and outside nationalism these notions are contested and challenged.

The next section traces caste and regional variations in experiencing nationalism in the South shaping the process of assimilation, exclusion and resistance to these dominant notions of gender and nation.

The areas covered are the regional caste movements; Mysore Princely State’s reform endeavours; debates on gender issues in the works of certain nationalist thinkers and periodicals in Kannada; Kannada nationalism and unification movement – all of which combine to make a social matrix in which Kannada novels of the period were produced.

The study charts the conflicts between different castes and communities which begin to ‘fashion’ their identities, and involve in the ‘modernisation’ process. The regional movements intersect with the nationalist movement, in some cases assimilating and in others contesting nationalist ideologies. These caste and regional variations stunt the growth of nationalism and in the process a deviant tract of gender ideologies emerges in the South Indian context. Dravidian movements, Ambedkarite movement and ban on Devadasi system are discussed in this section.

Intervention of the Mysore Princely State with its mission of modernisation in social reforms is discussed here with specific reference to gender relations and family. Besides, in this section, discussions on certain individual initiatives in these movements and debates in periodicals are followed by a note on the Kannada nationalism and the Unification Movement.
The fourth section examines the Kannada novels that reflect these variations and emerge with diverse configurations and critiques of nationalism and its ideologies of gender. The section includes analysis of the novels by Galaganatha, Anandakanda, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, Goruru Ramaswamy Iyengar, Kuvempu, Mirji Annaraya, A. N. Krishnarao, Ram. Shri. Mugali, V. K. Gokak, Shivarama Karanth and Basavaraja Kattimani.

The fifth section sums up crucial arguments of the study.

Methodology

The selection of novels for the study does not follow literary criteria but their importance as cultural texts in dealing with certain prominent strands of nationalist, gender ideologies between 1920s and 1950s.

However, certain texts outside this time frame are also analysed as companion texts to ensure clear perception of the authors’ views on the issues.

These novels are not dealt with in chronological order of their publication, but on the basis of the themes. Historical novels are taken up to analyse how each author differs from a paradigm already set in the early novels in their approach to the ‘glorious past’, ‘construction of nation’ and significant deviations in their portrayal of women in relation to these themes.

They are followed by social novels which further develop these debates within the different ideological frameworks already made familiar in the previous chapters; it concludes with analysis of a few novels on the freedom movement. Each of these novels deviates from the main paradigm in its treatment of the subject. However these are not classified under any conventional categories as their ideological concerns overlap rendering any such classification inherently limited.
The novels by the writers who assimilate and propagate the hegemonic nationalist narratives are also juxtaposed deliberately with those which critique these very ideologies. The strategy helped to compare and contrast each writer to arrive at a better comprehension of these diverse narratives. Further, conventional categories such as 'Navodaya/Pragatisheela, conservative/progressive are consciously avoided to bring out complexities of assimilation, exclusion and critique of the divergent strands of nationalism, caste movements and gender ideologies in these novels.

**Challenge**

It needs to be admitted here that the attempt to provide a socio-historical background with specific reference to Karnataka in the third section is severely limited due to several reasons including paucity of sources and dearth of critical studies on specific socio-cultural histories of different regions which constitute ‘Karnataka’ in the post-independent period. The section ends with tentative conclusions with certain areas wanting further research.