Chapter 4

DIVERSE NARRATIVES
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Kannada novels by 1920s had certain distinctive paradigms of addressing ‘women’s question’, family and marriage set by the early novels. While the early social reformist novels directly deal with these issues, historical romances reconstruct ‘the past’ and ‘Kadambari Puranas’ reinterpret mythological stories. These novelists shared the ideological concerns of the reformist and revivalist nationalists and their ambiguities and contradictory impulses as well.

As C N Ramachandran observes, these early novels are written from the point of view of ‘critical insider-turned-outsider,’ committed to ‘modernise’ society, with indignation towards its present ‘decadent’ state. These novels have a definite purpose of inculcating ‘morality’ and stabilising family set up.

The first social novel in Kannada, Indira Bai (1899) by Gulvady Venkatarao, set the trend for the social reformist novels in Kannada. The novel, which takes up the question of widow’s remarriage, posits an ideal of companionate, unostentatious marriage in contrast with the ‘traditional’ marriage. Indira Bai, female protagonist of the novel, is a ‘new woman’ who is English educated, yet ‘traditional’.

192 Maheshwari uses the term ‘Kadambari Puranagalu’ to distinguish them from ‘Pouranika Kadambarigalu’ as these novels have mythological stories interpreted with an objective to elucidate ‘proper behaviour’ for woman as a good wife or mother. Maheshwari, Idu Manushiya Odu, 2001, page 67
Her marriage with Bhaskara Raya, an educated reformer and lawyer is also indication of victory of ‘Dharma’ over the criminalised, immoral, superstitious and orthodox society. ‘Dharma’ serves as a ‘secular’ guiding principle for the ‘new couple’ and their moral brigade in achieving victory over the criminal and evil forces representing the ‘wretched’ elements of society. The new ‘enlightened’ couple - hero and heroine - is committed to national causes and emerge superior to others.

The moralistic stance with religious sensibility of the early novelists guides their approaches to issues of family, conjugal relationship and woman’s sexuality. They argue that while virgin widows are eligible for marriage others are to lead ascetic life and be socially useful. Chastity of women, especially of upper castes becomes crucial indicator of state of society – guarding their chastity either by themselves or by male protector, against the evil aspects of society becomes one of the primary concerns of the writers notwithstanding differences in their positions as reformer, revivalist or status quoist.

Kerur Vasudevacharya, in his preface to Indira (1908), expresses fear about ‘excessive’ reformist initiatives of certain organisations and individuals; and this fear is centered around women who may indulge in licentiousness on the pretext of claiming freedom.¹⁹⁴ These early novelists don’t present the complex nature of human psyche as there is no conflict between the values guiding an individual and the ideal society they conceive.

But, by 1920s, the Kannada novelists begin to deviate slightly from these early novelists in both crafting narratives and their approach to these issues. But, a clear deviation from the earlier

¹⁹⁴ Kerur Vasudevacharya, Indira, Mysore: Usha Sahitya Male, 1978 (1908: first print)
models of reformism and revivalism can be noticed by the third decade of the twentieth century. The ‘women’s question’ shifts track to ‘man-woman question’ during this period, with greater anxiety and thrust on disintegrating ‘Indian family,’ crying for an urgent need to reform institution of marriage.

The revivalist trend was popularised by Galaganatha, one of the Kannada novelists who subscribed to Tilak’s nationalist ideologies. His choice of novels for translation from Marathi also reflects his inclination. He translates Harinarayana Apte’s historical romances which serve his revivalist interests, but he doesn’t translate the social reformist novel by the same author as it doesn’t go with his Tilak-model of nationalist ideals.\(^{195}\)

Galaganatha registers his opposition to the colonial and social reformist’s intervention in the ‘religious matters’, in his novel Madhava Karuna Vilasa (1923) and tries to find answers to the present national degeneration by turning to the past.

The novel features his attempts to reconcile the ideologies of aggressive, militant Hindu nationalism with emerging conflicts of castes. He finds the ‘restoration of Vaidika Dharma’ as a solution to both ‘women’s question’ and caste conflicts. As Shivaram Padikkal points out, restoration of ‘Vaidika Dharma Samrajya’ serves his purpose of awakening Kannada nationalist consciousness, and also to achieve unity among different castes within Hindu society without disturbing the religious constitution.\(^{196}\) He elevates Madhavacharya to the position of a nationalist hero who builds Vijayanagara Empire by ‘mobilising’ Kshatriyas (Hakka, Bukka), Holeyas (Durugappa) and also Veerashaivas (represented by Viroopakshacharya), who had emerged as strong contenders for hegemonic power.

\(^{195}\) Apte’s social novel about widow is translated by Shivarama Karanta and Leela Karanta — Yaru Lakshisuvaru? New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 1996 (1959, first print)

\(^{196}\) Shivaram Padikkal, Naadu Nudiya Roopaka, 2001, page 205
by then\(^{197}\); and the ideal is to recover the loss of cultural values such as loyalty to master, endeavour, unity and virility as base of 'nation'.

The novel in an emotive language depicts 'Kamataka Bhuvaneshwari', as an inspiring Mother Kamataka, and whose plight is also symbolised by Padmini, a Kshatriya queen and other women of different castes and classes – who are abducted by lecherous Muslim rulers and face danger to their chastity. Rescuing them is corollary to establishing 'Hindu nation' and restoring 'Sanatana Dharma'.

Woman has specific roles to play in his scheme of nation-making, which are of course strictly on the lines of caste hierarchy. While Padmini and Chinnamma can fight in battlefield due to their 'Kshatriya' status, role of Vaitihotri, an ideal Arya wife of Madhavacharya, is at home, in assisting her husband in his 'holy' deeds.

Woman of each caste has to follow her husband and caste rituals. Though chastity is a value applicable to all women, ideal of 'Arya Mahile' with emphasis on religious rituals is attributed to the Brahmin woman, and next to her comes Padmini who is modeled on Rajput woman and whose fate is closely linked to that of nation.

The novelist says Arya women, through marriage, merge their identity with that of their husbands as a river joins the ocean; and despite hailing from a rich family, she leads an austere life like her husband.\(^{198}\) Though 'Dharma' dictates the husband to seek his wife's opinion in taking decisions, the scriptural rule has no currency as a devote woman can never defy her husband. She has no existence

\(^{197}\) Religious gurus appear as spiritual advisors to Hindu kings and heroes in his novels like Mrinalini, Eswari Sutra, Swarajya Sugandha, Kumudini, Durgada Bichchugatti and Dharma Rahasya. His moral instructions are conveyed through these gurus who deliver discourses on morality, good behaviour and importance of faith in God.

\(^{198}\) Galaganatha, Madhava Karuna Vilasa, Dharwad: Samaja Pustakalaya, 1975 (1923, first print), page 13
independent of her husband. Vaitihotri knows ‘dharma’ and ‘shastras’ so much as to serve her husband in following ritualistic practices, to achieve his noble mission.

Padmini, Kshatriya queen and Chinnamma, (Kuruba woman trained by Madhavacharya to serve nation’s cause) are valiant, a characteristic trait of their caste. However, their valour stops at safeguarding their chastity and be supportive of their men in war field. Chinnamma, who was abducted by Khasim Khan, a Muslim ruler and escapes ‘unhurt’; but as her chastity can’t be proved she will not be accepted either by her husband or by her community. But, Madhavacharya’s mediation and her devotion to her husband Mallasarja finally would make her reunite with her husband. Madhavacharya praises ‘patrivriya’ of Chinnamma while also appreciating the self-control of her husband Mallasarja though he could guess that the woman helping him in Bairagini’s guise might be his wife.199

When compared to ‘Anandmath,’ here the emphasis is more on ‘Grihastashrama’ than on ascetic soldiery. Except during Madhavacharya’s period of ‘tapas’ for nation-building, his wife follows him in every walk of life and his ashram is an ideal Vaidika family set up and the couple is the parental figure of the new nation - Karnataka. Both gender and caste hierarchy remain unaffected except in times of emergency like national crisis.

In his other works, Dampatya, Bhagavati Katyayini (1938) and Nalacharitre (1938) he upholds ‘wifehood’ and familial duties through mythical wife Katyayani. He believes that marriage is the ultimate attainment for woman and through the discussion between Katyayani and Maitreyee he refers indirectly to woman’s freedom and education. Freedom-seeking women affect men and nation adversely as women’s ‘immoral behaviour’ emasculates men and destroys the nation.200 None of these women characters violate the prescribed rules nor do they display internal conflict or contradictions.

199 Ibid, page: 779
200 Ibid, page 78
But, women in Anandakanda (Betageri Krishnasharma)'s historical novels - *Rajayogi* (1935) and *Ashanti Parva* (1935) - are not idealised in the same way though he follows Galaganatha in taking up theme of the Vijayanagara Empire in his search for 'Karnatakatva'. The different competing forces that reconcile in Galaganatha's novels easily, don't give in here and the tragedy of two key women characters overshadows the jubilation over 'restoring the stability of the nation'.

Muslim women who appear on the periphery in these novels are portrayed largely as prostitutes brought to seduce the Hindu king while in Galaganatha's novels the threat to the chastity of Hindu women symbolises urgency of national regeneration. However, the novel deviates from Galaganatha's 'religion-based nation' model in several ways marking a shift in ideological concerns, approaches to nationalist discourses and characterisation.

*Rajayogi* and its sequel *Ashanti Parva* are about mutiny and subsequent change in the dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire during a short span of period and the novelist brings out the turmoil of his contemporary political life through his account of the history. Lack of leadership, the ferment in political life, and impending threat of foreigner's invasion in the novel are analogous to the churning in the contemporary political and social life. Besides, the novelist here seems to draw a parallel between the empire he depicts and the pan-Indian national movement and linguistic nationalism and within this framework he tries to find a solution for crisis of the contemporary political life.

Though growing communalism is one of the concerns, the organic principle of nation-in-the-making shifts from 'Dharma' to 'language' and this is a deliberate choice of the author. Anandakanda is said to have written these novels as a part of counter-hegemonic move, by the friends' group comprising Sham. Ba. Joshi, R. V. Jahagirdar and Da. Ra. Bendre in Bombay Karnataka, against Marathi dominance. Jahagirdar submitted a write up on *The influence of Canarese on old Marathi*
—with special reference to Jnaneshwari, to London University in 1930; Da. Ra. Bendre wrote on
Jnaneshwara Poornvakaalina Kaanadi Vangmaya (Kannada literature of Pre-Jnaneshwara period)
in Marathi in 1933 while Sham. Ba. Joshi wrote Maharashtrada Moola and Kannudiya Huttu,
(1933). Ananda Kanda, drawing inspiration from Galaganatha chose to write novels on the
Vijayanagara Empire.201

The author, through the protagonist of Rajayogi, comments:

The bond with the mother tongue takes precedence over all the relationships. The one who doesn’t speak our language is a foreigner to us; and we are alien to him. Even those who belong to different religion and speak the same language mingle closely; If they are of the same sect, same religion and speak different languages, they don’t even show eagerness to know each other. The linguistic difference has done a great deal of damage in the multi-lingual nation like India.202

While in the first novel Rajashekhara, the central figure of the novel, profusely quotes Sanskrit Shlokas, in its sequel he refers to Vachana.3

The novel also opens a dialectic between two main strands of the nationalist movement—Gandhian ideals of secularism, non-violence, and more importantly, a blend of individual morality and metaphysical politics and militant nationalism of Tilak.203 Unlike Galaganatha’s Tilak model of

202 Anandakanda, Rajayogi, Dharwad: Manohara Granthaprakashana Samiti, 1940 (1935 first print), page 93
203 Anandakanda’s first social novel, Sudarshana written in 1933 has its eponymous character living out Gandhian ideals. As Gokak observes in his preface to the novel, Anandakanda’s strategy is to contrast characters and though authorial intention would be to endorse idealism, it provides space for meaningful debate between antagonistic ideologies.
nationalism where individuals' interests are subsumed under national interests, here they clash and each key character shows immense psychological conflict and moral ambiguity. Instead of 'Dharma', the individual's sense of morality guided by liberal humanism, dictates approach to several issues. It is liberal humanism in Rajashekhara's charity for women 'polluted' by Muslims, who otherwise would have to commit suicide as in Galaganatha's novels. Apart from contradictory pulls of the nationalist movement, women pose another challenge to Rajashekhara's Gandhian ideals of desexualised man-woman relationship and the utilitarian views of woman's sexuality.

The novelists' concern over growth of exclusivist Muslim and Hindu nationalism is evident despite the fact that the Muslim continues to be sketched as threat and the 'Other' in the narrative. Such a tension is depicted through princes of Sangama Vamsha (1446-78 A.D.) Rajashekhara and Peddaraya, and their uncle Immadi Viroopaksha who had murdered Rajashekhara's father to capture the throne. Given the conspiracy by the Mohammedan ruler to conquer Vijayanagara kingdom, there was a simmering discontent among a section of patriotic courtiers like Saluva Narasimha over the ruler's proximity to a Muslim minister, Nasir Khan. Immadi Viroopaksha's decision to marry a Muslim girl causes tension even among the court's servants fearing pollution.

However, a secular Hindu identity is projected through Rajashekhara, who is rightful successor to the king and represents the novelist's Gandhian ideals. Though concerned about the decadence of the kingdom, he wants to lead a secluded life and has no inclination for power while his brother Peddaraya is more aggressive and believes that either of them should be enthroned.

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204 Influence of social novel, 'Antaranga' (1931) can be traced in delineation of psychological conflict of characters in this novel. Devudu Narasimhashatry in 'Antaranga' gives more importance to moral ambiguity and psychological conflict of the protagonist in the novel and there is rupture between individual's sense of morality and that dictated by society.
In the conflict between Rajashekhara and Peddaraya over the dynastic rule, the novel clearly traces the shifting trend from dynastic rule to democratic political set-up. Rajashekhara believes that the king is accountable to people and kingship need not be inherited but can be secured by whoever is eligible. Peddaraya believes that being sons of the king, either of them should be enthroned after Immadi Viroopaksha was killed.

According to Rajashekhara, king can be legitimate ruler only as long he is accountable to citizens. The ruler loses moral authority and deserves to be dethroned when he turns autocratic and fails to protect his subjects. Such democratic ideals in Rajashekhara are manifested in his protest against Immadi Viroopaksha’s decision to evict a gardener in order to provide land for the prostitutes the Muslims had brought to seduce the king.

Unlike Galaganatha who stresses loyalty to the master - the patriarchal figurehead of the nation, Anandakanda stresses the ruler’s commitment to welfare of citizens who constitute the nation. Besides, Galaganatha’s tolerant Hindu identity relies on maintaining the hierarchical arrangement of society. But in Anandakanda’s novel, the impact of growing communalism and its solution are located at the interdependence of these different communities inextricably woven into social fabric and their common daily sufferings.

The ideal of the nationalists to safeguard the Hindu kingdom and restore stability are realised within the structure of novels. But, women provide an alternative ground for discussion on the very ideals of nationalism and power politics. The tragedies of these women characters challenge the patriarchal notions of power, imperialistic and nationalistic ambitions. Both the novels begin with prominent women characters – Hemambike (Rajayogi) and Ratnambike (Ashanti Parva) who
become victims of the contemporary political upheaval and their tragedy dampens the sense of joy and the spirit of victorious nationalists.

Hemambike in Rajayogi is a counterpart of Rajashekhara in the nationalist enterprise in which she herself is an active participant and is instrumental in inspiring the nationalist men. Her self-sacrifice and patriotism is hailed above that of Rajashekhara by loyalist Saluva Narasimha who calls her "Taraka Devate" of Vijayanagara.265

For these women, national crisis is intensely linked to the crisis in family which is of course largely the consequence the ruler's lecherousness and the father's greed for power. Hence, their resolution of family crisis is closely linked to that of nation. Both Hemambike and her mother Gourambike have limited power in opposing Venkatanayaka, who is willing to give Hemambike to the amorous king in marriage; but, these women have devised their own mode of resistance. They don't overtly criticise him, but harbour contempt for his greed for power. Venkatanayaka's selfishness is in contrast with his daughter's martyrdom for nation. He wants her to marry Immadi Viroopaksha so that he will be elevated as 'Dandanayaka' (commander of the army); while Hemambike agrees to marry him, in the interest of nation, though she is in love with Rajashekhara (it is inferred and not explicit in the novel), her mentor in nationalism.

She becomes sixth wife of the king with an intention to correct him through the means of 'Kaanta Samhite' and keeps him off for several days from consummating marriage, through the use of very religious ritual during which the king hunted woman.

265 Rajayogi: Page: 98
When the king asks her, “Isn’t it Arya woman’s virtue to consider her husband as god?” she says, “Mere thinking her husband as god is not virtue! Arya woman’s virtue is to strive day and night to bring in the divine qualities in her husband if he doesn’t have them.” Further she criticises her father saying if her father forgets his responsibility towards nation she should shoulder it.206

Here, Hemambike dictates that woman as wife and mother needs to act as a custodian of culture, virtues and values. She tells her mother to spend the wealth amassed by her father in helping the nationalists and the poor to atone for wrong deeds of Venkatanayaka.

Depicting Gourambike’s sufferings as a mother who loses her daughter and also son-like Rajashekhara for the sake of the nation, the novel, at one level, breeds contempt for both ambitious, selfish political life as well as the nationalist feelings.

Gourambike shares the space created by the cleavage between the greedy husband and the nationalist daughter and Rajashekhara. She criticises her husband’s politics bereft of humanity and affection though Venkatanayaka holds that women lack foresight and are ignorant of politics.207

But, she is not reduced to symbolic representation of idealised motherhood. Such a fixed gender trait dissolves when Hemambike becomes ‘Sati’ following Viroopaksha’s murder by Rajashekhara. Gourambike exercises restraint while Venkatanayaka repents and cries bitterly, though it is prohibited to weep during ‘Sati’.

206 Ibid, page 107
207 Ibid, page 111
The death of Hemambike leaves a dent though the nationalists succeed in their mission by killing Viroopaksha. Probably liberal humanistic and reformist feelings have shaped the author’s mind, who through Dilawar (a convert, Muslim in blood and Hindu in sensibility), says “Sati” system is an evil practice in Hindu society.

Ratnambike in Ashanti Parva is not a nationalist woman like Hemambike, though both share qualities of “Kshatriya woman”—grit and valour. Her joy over murder of the king by Rajashekhara is not derived from her nationalist concern but from her personal revenge for her widowed sister’s death due to the king’s lechery (in its entire structure, this fact is underplayed, leaving confusion about Ratnambike’s actual intentions). Unlike Hemambike, Ratnambike is neither ‘altruistic’ nor ‘martyr’ but she provides a solid ground for analysing gender relations in the socio-political life. Rajashekhara’s disinclination to worldly affairs is challenged by Ratnambike who insists on him marrying her (she had vowed to marry the man who kills Viroopaksha in revenge).

Anandakanda portrays both Ratnambike and Peddaraya, who are in love with each other and set as contrast to each other in their attraction towards Rajashekhara and Kamalambike (Saluva Narasimha’s daughter) respectively, as essentially good but torn apart by contradictory impulses.

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208 In Anandakanda’s short story Samsaravendare Soojigallu, he deals with this theme. A college student Gopal, with his philosophical interests, turns away from marital life. He is made to realise limitations of his views and marry. Anandakanda’s essay, Sahityadalli Ashililate Mattu Pranaya Sahitya, discusses man-woman sexual relationship; he argues sex through refinement becomes ‘pranaya’ and this transformation is a natural process in different stages of human life. He classifies them as ‘Mugdha pranaya’ (‘patanga pranaya’), ‘kama pranaya’ (‘madhukara pranaya’), ‘anubhava pranaya’ (‘adarsha pranaya’) and ‘paripakva pranaya’ (‘adhyatmika pranaya’). He distinguishes between obscenity and sex and doesn’t treat sex as sin; nor does his views of sexuality discriminate gender. His poems like ‘Chinnatteya Maga’ are woman’s expression of ‘pranaya’. Also see Anandakanda, S.V. Srinivasa Rao (ed), Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Academy, 2000; Bелаula; Dr. Betageri Krishnasharma Felicitation volume, Jyoti Hosur, Dr. Basavaraj Malashetti and Ninganna Sannakki (eds), Raibag: Kalagati Prakashana, 1982
They are also set in contrast against Hemambike and Rajashekhara who sacrifice their love for the nation.

When Rajashekhara refuses to marry Ratnambike and advises her to be celibate, she vows to take revenge against him for spoiling her life. In this sense, she resembles Ambe of 'Mahabharatha', who was won by celibate Bhishma for the sake of a king in 'Swayamwara' and became responsible for tragedy of her love life. Unlike Hemambike who married to reform the king, Ratnambike decides to marry Peddaraya to avenge Rajashekhara for rejecting her. The spunky and clever woman could discern minister Eshwara Nayaka's conspiracy to get power which leads to fall of Peddaraya and subsequent anarchy in the kingdom. But she fails to prevent Rajashekhara's murder by Eshwara Nayaka, and also to guard Peddaraya against evil influence of Eshwara Nayaka because of her internal conflict. She turns insane after Rajashekhara's death and at the end of the novel when Saluva Narasimha takes over the mantle of the power she suddenly enters the court hall in a shattered state of mind. The scene, instead of the surface calm of restored stability, disturbs everyone.

In depicting Hemambike, Ratnambike and Kamalambike the novelist has two images of woman – Sharada and Durga. Kamalambike is like Sharada and remains so till the end under the protection of her father and to-be husband Tuluva Narasimha. Saluva Narasimha, who is devoid of the extremes – political ambitions of fathers like Venkatanayaka and Devanna Nayaka or nationalist leader like Peddaraya and spiritually inclined Rajashekhara – becomes an able heir to the throne. As a father, he respects the sentiments of his daughter and carefully protects her when circumstances demand him to make her victim of the king's lust. He balances carefully between his nationalistic ideals and responsibilities as family man and succeeds in rescuing both personal and public lives. Rajashekhara, who couldn't cope with the conflict between his ideals of spirituality and active national and worldly life, fails to protect both 'nation' and 'women' who loved him.
Galaganatha and Anandakanda's approach to history is driven partly by the urgency of asserting a Hindu-Kannada national identity against Marathi dominance and hence their primary objective of writing the historical romance was regenerating 'nation'. However, coming from the Princely Mysore State ruled indirectly by the British through a 'benevolent' king, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar could take a clinical approach to the 'fall of kingdom'. Masti is certainly a better craftsman than the two and hence, he could weave all complexities and beauty of life into the narrative. Mesmerising beauty of ideal monogamous conjugal relationship, overwhelming kindness, sympathy, respect for women and humane treatment of the 'fallen' can easily cloak Masti's subtle ambiguous position towards woman.

If Shivarama Padikkal's classification of early Kannada novels is extrapolated, Masti's novels - Chennabasavanayaka (1949) and Chikaveera Rajendra (1956) - fall in the line of novels by M. S. Puttanna of Princely Mysore State, "which speak nostalgically of an ideal that is being destroyed." Masti, though doesn't directly deal with the enterprise of nation-building, he dwells on it, albeit in a reverse process -- through analysis of the 'fall,' displacement of an indigenous socio-political system through colonisation.

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209 Plethora of criticism on Masti's works have come in Kannada. But for those which are quoted here directly, the rest from which insights are drawn for the discussion are listed in the reference.
210 Shivarama Padikkal, "Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India", in The Emergence of the Novel in India, Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, Vivek Dhareshwar (eds), Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993, page 229. He classifies novels published in Dakshina Kannada as those which speak of an ideal yet to be realised; in Bombay Karnataka those which want to revive an ideal and the third one mentioned above. However, such a classification is inherently limited and probably should be viewed with reference to specific cases; novels and ideological concerns 'peregrinate' from places to place and time to time.
211 As Nagaraj, D. R. observes, "nationalism is a construction from memory," in his essay, "The Nature of Kannada Nationalism" in Journal of Karnataka Studies, 2003, page 149; scattered memories, confined to many different and unrelated frameworks and systems are woven together according to a determinate formula. Masti, Galaganatha and Anandakanda are engaged in this process, but each emerges with distinct views of 'nation'.
C. N. Ramachandran, while analysing Masti’s construction of nation, observes that Masti ‘problematises the very concept of nation and Other.’ Masti’s scheme, including a critique of colonial arguments on history and civilisation, transforms to a larger scale – about a ‘universal’ arrangement of human life. He observes, for Masti nation ‘is a complex system founded on Dharma.’\(^{212}\) Dharma here has several shades of meaning and includes both personal morality and professional obligations. As a character in the novel *Chennabasavanayaka* puts it, “This country suffered in the past because the Kshatriya became softer than the Brahmin and greedier than the Vaishya. The country is suffering now because of the same reason. If Mysore has to save Hindu Dharma, its king has to act like a Kshatriya.”\(^{213}\)

However, Masti doesn’t eulogise here ‘masculine valour’, but emphasises ‘Ashrama Dharma’. It is more clearly presented in a merchant’s words in *Chikaveera Rajendra*: “If a grown-up woman can live in the palace as the king’s daughter, a city remains a city, and a palace continues to be a palace; a merchant continues as a merchant and the king as a king. If not, none of these things can exist.”\(^{214}\) Ramachandran points out that according to Masti dharma constitutes interdependence of socio-political institutions and if any of the institutions violate ‘dharma’ others come crumbling down.

In *Chennabasavanayaka* queen Veerammaji indulges in illicit relationship and refuses to hand over administration to her rightful son thus leading to the fall of Bidanuru kingdom. In the case

\(^{212}\) C N Ramachandran: “Patterns of The Other: Nationalism and Modern Kannada Fiction, with Particular Reference to Masti,” a paper presented in the seminar on ‘The Novel In Search of the Nation,’ organised by Sahitya Akademi, Delhi from February 26 to 28, 1999. The discussion on symbiotic relationship between ‘nation’ and ‘dharma’ here is based on his analysis of the two historical novels. C N Ramachandran doesn’t note implications of Masti’s concept of ‘dharma’ on caste and gender hierarchy; Masti’s construction of ‘dharma,’ even if it meant ‘duties and obligations,’ needs to be problematised.


\(^{214}\) *Chikaveera Rajendra*, Bangalore: Jeevana Karyalaya, 1946, page 74
of Mysore, the king is weak and irresolute, and hence Hyder Ali takes over the reins of administration. In *Chikaveera Rajendra*, the king’s immorality, cruelty and vices are one of the prime reasons for annexation of Coorg, a princely state, by the British.

However, adopting a notion of ‘cyclical’ history, instead of the colonial view of evolutionary history, Masti notes that the ‘fall of kingdom’ in both the novels are inevitable, sometimes a ‘fortunate fall’; as the novelist suggests, the ancient structure, which has developed flaws, is bound to collapse and the new system which comes into place will also meet the same destiny.215

However, norms which dictate ‘duties and responsibilities’ of different institutions are derived from ‘Sanathana Dharma’, ancient hierarchical set up, but refashioned from a liberal humanist viewpoint and revival of these values only legitimises collusion of patriarchy with nation. It will be further clear in Masti’s personal views on man-woman relationship in family which are very much within the nationalist discourse. It is articulated very well in an essay in ‘Bharata Theertha,’ where he sets certain ideals for conjugal relationship:

Women are helpless in all societies. They can only tolerate hardships in life but can’t fight against them while men have the opportunity to fight or escape from them. While man ‘leads’ life, woman gives birth to man and is always under the care and concern of man. She is always subject of sympathy. Hence, it is man’s duty to look after her well and ensure that she doesn’t cry; it is not good for the house if woman sheds tears.216

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216 Masti: *Bharata Theertha*, Bangalore: Jeevana Karyalaya, 1952, page 269 - 275
Citing often quoted (misquoted) 'Na Stree Swatantram Arhati'—he says this is often falsely interpreted as women are not eligible for freedom. According to Masti, the dictum implies, woman should not be left to look after herself... he considers it bad if woman has to fend for herself. However, he says, it doesn’t mean she has to be subordinate. Man (father, brother, husband etc) should look after her. Even marriage is an arrangement made by society to protect woman’s honour. As wife, woman accompanies husband in all phases of his life. For Masti Draupadi, Gandhari, Damayanti and Savitri are ideal wives.

He also postulates that the husband should also be committed to his wife. He also should maintain chastity and even if a woman proposes, he should politely reject in order to save her ‘honour'. Even in narration of Chennabasavanayaka Masti never violates his ideology of woman’s ‘respectability.'\(^{217}\) He chooses words carefully to infer Veerammaji’s affair with court-officer Nambaiah.

Even other characters in the novel refer to the relationship indirectly for one obvious reason—she is a queen; another, the novelist’s attitude towards woman. When the son complains of his mother’s infidelity, Basavappa Nayaka consoles him saying he shouldn’t blame the mother as she is goddess of the house (Mother at house is goddess of the house -- “Mane taayi, Mane devi”). Despite being aware of her relationship the king remained mute as he believed, ‘man should not dishonour a woman.'\(^{218}\)

In Chikaveera Rajendra, a Brahmin wife, after having been released from the king’s harem, makes her husband vow that she should never be criticised over the issue of abduction. There is a

\(^{217}\) However, the Veerashaiva community had protested against Masti for portraying the queen of their community in ‘poor’ light and thus insulting the community. Masti has given clarification in the preface of the novel in its next print.

\(^{218}\) *Chennabasavanayaka*, Page 6
thrust on right conduct of husband/family or society with regard to the victimised and helpless woman.

With a reformist attitude through the Brahmin woman, the novelist stresses that she should be accepted without holding her responsible or without questioning her chastity.

Beyond Masti's own intention sometimes 'gender' categories are rendered as fluid in his novels and hence, any polarised argument on roles of wife and husband can't be made. Masti is vocal about man protecting woman in the non-fiction discussed above, but in his novels women play a greater role in guarding their men and sometimes they are more courageous. The ideal of conjugal relationship in Masti is to be monogamous and respectful towards each other; but this relationship is based on the foundation of the existing patriarchal set up.

In Chennabasavanayaka, Shantavva is an ideal devout wife who is harassed by her mother-in-law, Veeramamaji. But she is also helpless like all other righteous characters of Masti’s novels who don’t translate their moral consciousness into political will and action to rescue the kingdom. Chennabasava Nayaka, who is largely oblivious of his wife, can experience bliss of conjugal relationship only when the couple is away from Bidanuru.

Through Chennabasava Nayaka, Masti upholds...
man's ideal of chastity. Though polygamy and affair with other women are accepted among kings, Chennabasava Nayaka refuses to marry Sannavva whom Veerammaji uses as a pawn and wants her son to marry as a mark of her authority over him. Besides, always dogged by 'Hamletean ethos', he repents for having not shown enough love for his wife, but this realisation comes after her death.

Like Shantavva, Gourammaji in Chikaveera Rajendra is also a devout wife. But, she is stronger than Shantavva as she has a decision-making capacity and individual strength of character, although within the framework of 'pativrata' ideal. Her moral and individual strength is in contrast to the moral laxity of her husband Chikaveera Rajendra who has antagonised the administrators, army men and citizens due to his lust and cruelty. While Shantavva focuses more on rituals - pooja, Gourammaji interferes in administration to lessen the impact of the king's cruelty by her virtues and actions and also as a mother, to save the kingdom for her daughter.

Gourammaji's strength of character is derived partly from her birth in martial race, Kodava community and partly from her firm roots in tradition. Hence, she could withstand the onslaught of colonial culture while her husband, partly due to greed for power, converts to Christianity and makes his daughter follow suit. She takes a priest along with her to perform pooja when the British, after annexation, send her to Kashi along with the king and the princess. She lives adhering to her tradition till her last breath. The values that these 'pativrta' women cherish are those which sustained patriarchy.

Masti certainly glorifies these 'pativrta' women: Shantavva (an incarnation of goddess, as a character says in the novel) commits suicide to guard her chastity while Gouramma, an archetypal mother who could treat women in her husband's harem as children.
The degree of freedom women enjoy within this idealised framework of family and marriage depends on their caste and class position and is hemmed with 'obligations' towards society. It is evident in the case of a sub-plot of _Chennabasavanayaka_ in which Mallige, a bonded-labourer, reaches her goal of marrying the man she loves defying the norms of bonded labour to certain extent. Mallige defies Vastare Heggaditi’s authority in her persistence to marry Saguna. Saguna doesn’t have the courage to face Heggaditi. Finally, when Mallige wins her fight with the help of Chennabasava Nayaka’s influence, she conforms to her position as a servant of Heggaditi. She decides to marry Saguna only in the presence of Heggaditi and in Vastare. Another reason is to show to her society that her marriage was sanctioned officially so that she could lead a ‘respectable’ life in her society.

Despite stressing ‘chastity’ and ‘respectability’, Masti doesn’t treat ‘fallen’ man and woman harshly owing to his belief in essential goodness of human being.

While in _Chikaveera Rajendra_, the king’s cruelty and immorality was traced back to the time of his predecessors, in _Chennabasavanayaka_, through Vastare Heggaditi, Masti seems to suggest that though to err is human, why does he/she err - takes a deeper philosophical dimension. When Veerammaji refuses to heed to Vastare Heggaditi’s advice not to give scope for rumours about her affairs and relinquish power to her son, Heggaditi comments: ‘God in his creation has kept such pleasure in sin.’ Noting Mallige’s joy in marrying the man she loved, Heggaditi comments that Mallige is lucky because she married the man whom she loved. She indirectly suggests that love makes a woman even to opt for hell as is evident in the case of Veerammaji, who, as a 15-year old was married to Basavappa Nayaka in his 40s.
Masti, through Heggaditi, underscores a humane outlook that marriage with the aged husband could be one of the reasons for Veeramaji’s immorality. Analogous to debates on ‘women’s question’, one can discern that Masti’s resolution of ‘women’s question’ is within his framework of ‘nation based on Dharma,’ though with compassion for the deviants.

But, we find an element of ‘feminist’ approach in Masti in countering colonial argument and in his anti-colonial stand. One of such characters is Bhagavati who directly encounters the ‘rational’ Christian Father. Bhagavati or Papa was deceived by Lingaraja, Chikaveera Rajendra’s father. She is also one of the rebels contending for power for the sake of her son Kunta Basava, who is ignorant of his past and serves as an accomplice to Chikaveera Rajendra. Bhagavati, who escapes from the harem when Lingaraja tries to kill her, struggles for over 30 years to make her son the king.

In public debate between Megaling Padri and priest Deekshita over their respective religions, Deekshita defends Hindu religion on a very humble ground. When the Father criticises Hindu religion as pagan and defends missionaries’ ‘civilising mission’, Deekshita argues with a thrust on harmonious co-existence of religions as different paths to reach God.

But when Bhagavati interferes, she shifts the ground of the whole debate and turns the tables on the Father. She criticises the puritanical approach of the Christians regarding gender relations; she challenges their claim for ‘rational religion’, pointing at their faith in Christ as son of god. It is irrational to believe if a woman claims that she got her son from god, she argues.

Further, she says his knowledge of Hindu religion and tradition is based on scriptures and lectures by others. Here she questions the legitimacy of the Shastra - religious discourses. The novelist,

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Chikaveera Rajendra: pages 270
through Bhagavati, vehemently defends 'Sanatana Hindu Dharma' while questioning the rationality of the colonial culture.

Masti doesn’t forget to note that defending ‘tradition’ was necessary in the face of uneven cultural relationship and anxiety of ‘common men’. The naïve audience rejoices Bhagavati’s victory in the debate, as their culture and religion is approved by the ‘White men’. But, Masti notes the cunningness of the British who use their political power to impose hegemony of their religion. Chikaveera Rajendra forces his daughter for conversion with the desire to get the princely state back. But a sense of alienation and rootlessness caused by the colonial cultural domination, and the rupture it has caused in sensibility of the colonised is portrayed through the princess. She loves Uttappa even after her marriage to an Englishman and her daughter Editsatu Gouramma in England symbolises ‘rootlessness’.²²¹

Like Masti, Goruru Ramaswamy Iyengar, though conventionally considered as ‘conservative’, ‘orthodox’ emerges with meticulous details of interpersonal adjustments in gender relations, within family and in society; and in the process he emerges with a radical solution to ‘man-woman question’ albeit, to save family from the crisis.

While Masti finds solution in reviving values of ‘Sanatana Dharma’, Goruru finds solution for the crisis of society-in-transition, through internalisation of Gandhian ideals which is in consonance with his strong desire to retain Brahmin-dominated hierarchical structure. Incidentally, like Masti, he also comes from Mysore Princely State where anti-Brahmin movement was strong and Harijan welfare programmes of Gandhi were taken up with a lot of enthusiasm in 1930s and 1940s.

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His social reformist novel *Hemavati* is set in a village of the Princely State and dramatises application of Gandhian ideals in actual life. The main concern of the novel is Gandhian ideal of uplifting untouchables, but primarily reforming Brahmin society. The ideal of uplifting untouchables is more at the external level—bringing change in their attire, conduct and Brahminising or sanskritisation.222

The onus of reforming the untouchables is on Brahmins as they have to redeem themselves and as a gesture of atonement for exploiting the Dalits for centuries. However, it is an urgent need for two reasons: threat of hegemonic claim of other castes; secondly, to ‘modernise’ Brahmin community to withstand the impact of Western modernity.

The eponymous character of the novel, Hemavati and a woman from untouchable community, Ganasharade, become site of this ‘modernisation’ process. The locus operandi is Hemavati’s family which represents the author’s ideals of Brahmin community.

Ganasharade and her father stand for untouchable community which is object of sympathy and reform; both of them are so loyal that they would not go away even if they are set free. Her father Kala chooses to be a bonded labourer with Ramanna Perumal (Hemavati’s father) just as Ganasharade chooses to be with her mentor, Ananda (Hemavati’s uncle) who takes all the decisions regarding her life. The novelist compares Kala to Guha of the epic ‘Ramayana’ who serves his master Sri Rama.

Besides, there is a vivid description of the decadent Brahmin community – orthodox and hypocrite religious leaders, inhumane and idle women of Kaveri Agrahara - while the Untouchables

222 Shivaramu Kadanakuppe’s analysis of Goruru’s Gandhian ideal of uplifting the Untouchables, in *Samajika Nele*, Bangalore: Kannada Book Authority, 2003
remain always at the background. There are only a few stray incidents when the Dalit community comes to picture.

The Untouchable community is portrayed like a sleeping monster, unaware of its collective strength and dangerous if not tamed and educated properly or not brought under the patronage of a reformed Brahmin leader. During Ramanavami celebration, when Vaidikas attack them in front of Ramanna Perumal’s house, the Untouchables, though were majority in number were asked not to retaliate. In another incident, when Vasu and Sundara, Brahmin youth of the reformist brigade, mobilise them to enter a temple and the Untouchables, in an inebriated condition, attack the Brahmins. In yet another instance when a girl of Untouchable community becomes pregnant because of Ramakrishna, a Brahmin, they attack and assert their community’s ‘honour’.

However, the novelist is not concerned to record how the community receives its Chenni who is reformed to become Ganasharade - completely modernised and Brahminised by her music teacher, Ananda. Hence reforming the Dalit community is not to bring in equality with all its dimensions, but only in becoming ‘acceptable and touchable’.

Goruru doesn’t want fundamental changes in the caste hierarchy, but as a liberal humanist he wants to restore ideal Hindu society by eliminating its ‘bad’ aspects. As music, which is ‘secular’ and ‘transcendental’, is a medium of reform in the novel there is no scope for comprehending inequality with its social, economic and political dimensions. Srinivasa Perumal defeats the rich landlord by attracting crowd through his music to prove music is superior to money; and because of music he becomes rich. Even the bhajana of his son, Ramanna Perumal, has such capacity. When the Untouchables are not allowed to enter the temple during Ramanavami celebrations, a huge crowd gathers in front of his house for his bhajanas. In another incident, when Ananda and Ganasharade
build Valmiki Kuteera, modeled on Gandhian principles, Ganasharade’s music brings the lower caste and the upper caste together. Ananda’s music pacifies thousands of drunken and violent Untouchables who come to assault Brahmins in the temple. Recalling Srinivasa Perumal’s incident mentioned earlier, Ramanna Perumal says: “Man’s nature is always the same and what happened in the past has repeated today and will happen in future as well.”

The novel depicts hostility between the orthodox Brahmin and the new, reformed Brahmin family in the clash between Perumal and the rest of the villagers over the issue of the Untouchables. Vasu, an educated youth, differs from his orthodox father Subbabhatta and falls in love with Ganasharade. However, his attitude has not undergone a revolutionary change and the conflict is superficial. For, he wouldn’t have married any other Untouchable girl who is not beautiful, famous and brahminised like Ganasharade.

Ananda explains the varying perceptions of the son and the father: Vasu thinks marriage is his personal issue and he has imbibed such thoughts through his modern education while for his father Subbabhatta, it is a question of caste, family tradition and religious rituals. His mother and father should be able to accept Kala’s daughter as their daughter-in-law; there should be change in attitude of their family members as well. When Vasu cites example of intercaste marriages in the prominent Congress leaders’ families including Gandhiji and Nehru, Ananda terms it as a question of beliefs.

Here, in the process of reform, the Brahmins need not give up their traditions – largely their rituals, unlike Chenni who had to become Ganasharade. Besides, the reform here follows liberal

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223 Hemavati, Mysore: Usha Sahitya Maale, 1948, page 344
224 Ibid, page 296-301

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humanistic approach with emphasis on change of heart. It is a gradual and painful process for both the parties as made clear through Ganasharade and Subbabhatta.

Ananda, a Gandhian and celibate, finds in Kala’s daughter Chenni, his rightful disciple to teach music. He says music is a god’s gift and is not an exclusive asset of anybody. As the seers searched for a suitable disciple to spread the absolute truth of Upanishats, Ananda finds such a disciple in Chenni and takes years to reform her. The transformation of Chenni into a ‘new woman’ was complete in the sense that there was no trace of her Untouchable descent either in her appearance or behaviour. However, centuries of slavery and exploitation had left such an indelible impression on the psyche of her community that even after years of training Ganasharade, couldn’t construe herself as equal to Hemavati while the latter could easily hug her. It is possible only through the ‘grace’ of the upper caste and change of heart. Only after Subbabhatta changes his mind and turns humane he could acknowledge Ganasharade as his daughter-in-law.

Another incident which makes this amply evident is the Untouchables entering the temple. Ananda, who is a Gandhian acolyte in Goruru says the upper caste at first should approve and later the government should allow temple entry. The novelist also suggests the difference between the aggressive, revolutionary reformists and the liberal humanists. More than Ambedkar, the Gandhian model of uplifting Dalits has inspired the author as the Brahmin hegemony would be intact in the latter model. Hence in the novel, he takes the Gandhian ideals at their face value.

His reformist ideals of Brahminism are further evident in the sufferings of Hemavati, the only daughter of Ramanna Perumal. However, she represents the modern, educated Brahmin woman with a discerning ability. The Brahminical ideals of womanhood are glorified in depicting Ramanna Perumal’s second wife Ranganayaki in contrast with his deceased first wife. Ranganayaki doesn’t have respect
or her husband, and her sister and brother harass step-daughter Hemavati who is, like her mother, obedient, beautiful and righteous.

Hemavati’s miseries aggravate after her marriage because of the greedy mother-in-law and the unemployed and reckless husband, Sundara. In addition to rigid conservative attitude, marriage is the other sphere in Brahmns that Goruru wants to change. He refers to the consequences of ostentatious marriages by vividly describing the near bankruptcy of Ramanna Perumal in the wake of marriage of his daughter, Hemavati. In contrast Vasu and Ganasharade’s marriage is held in Gandhi’s ashram in a characteristically simple manner.

The novel harshly criticises the conservative and hypocritical Brahmin community through Hemavati’s sufferings and in her treatment by the Brahmns when she comes to Kaveri Agrahara as a destitute.

As Hemavati returns from Bangalore after her husband joins the army, the so-called leaders of the Brahmin community try to sexually exploit her, while the community women apprehend that Hemavati will seduce their husbands.

She holds her father, husband and society responsible for her plight; she decides to live independently earning her livelihood. The novelist highlights importance of economic empowerment of the Hindu woman through her. When she works in her own village as maid servant, she thinks women should be entitled to property right. 225

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225 Ibid: Page 232-235; Property right for women was debated in the Mysore Princely State during the early 20th century as mentioned in the previous chapter.
However, without men realising the responsibility of providing protection to helpless women, women's fight to lead a dignified life would be difficult. Though she goes to her husband, Sundara, as a last resort to survive, she refuses to accept money from him when he declines to own responsibility to take care of her. On occasions she thinks that woman should also be given freedom not to marry.

The novelist, through Sundara, upholds husband's accountability and dependence on wife. Sundara was unhappy with his parents for having arranged his marriage with the better qualified Hemavati and wanted to lead a happy marital life with her after earning enough money. However, under parental control he could not realise his dream. But later, through his sufferings in the army camp, he realises that only his wife can give him new life. The novel seems to point out rather ironically that society believes woman should be protected by her father in childhood, by husband in her youth and by children when she is aged. But, here Sundara believes that woman is the protector of her husband in his youth. He repents and comes back to apologise to her.

The novelist, who depicted Hemavati so far as an individual with strength of character and even ensured that she got property, here makes her to give in to 'ideal of wifehood.' Initially, Hemavati refused to accept him and says she doesn't want to face the sorrows of marital life. Her father preaches her the 'Stree Dharma': Woman is like mother. She should forgive man's mistakes. It was justifiable when she rejected Sundara when he was egoistic blinded by the power of money, but now he repents and is pleading for her mercy and hence she should accept him.226

An ideal conjugal relationship is what Gandhi postulates during Vasu-Ganasharade marriage: Husband and woman should treat each other's body as sacred; the husband shouldn't treat wife as a thing to fulfill his lust, and be her friend and not master. Woman should not marry before the age of 20

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226 Ibid, page 337
and man before 25 years of age. Further, he also says celibacy and self-restraint should be followed by the couple. 227

Goruru perceives the strong individualism of the modern society as dangerous to the Brahmin family and the conservative and orthodox practices of Brahmins. Hence in the Perumal family – Ramanna Perumal, Hemavati and Ananda - he finds a solution to reconcile these contradictory pulls to be firmly routed in ‘tradition’ while adapting to ‘modern’ society.

Goruru’s nation is ‘village India,’ and hence with passion he takes up Gandhiji’s call for ‘return to village’. For instance, Hemavati thinks Ganasharade should be in town where her talent will be recognised and the proceeds from her concerts should be spent on the reform initiatives in the villages.

Ananda justifies his decision to go to villages for two reasons: one, there is a need of not only money but also volunteers to serve in the villages. Another and important reason he cites: Ganasharade can’t sell her talent like a prostitute. She is a rural woman who wants to get married and lead a family life. He says ‘Sati Kasturba,’ (Gandhi’s wife) has told her that ‘women need the love of husband and children; marry someone who is sympathetic towards your caste; then your marital life will also be happy and you can serve society as well.’ 228

Goruru’s ideal woman is not ‘urban’ woman, but an educated rural woman like Hemavati and this is his subject of another novella Vatsale. 229 Vatsale, an urban woman is from a rich family and

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227 Ibid, page 327
228 Ibid, Page 284
229 He had written it when he was jailed in 1942; published by Maruti Pustaka Mandira. (Year?) His another novel Meravanige though has amusing details of villagers encountering ‘colonial authorities’, freedom movement, conversion threat – doesn’t develop any of these themes to a whole structure; they are rendered in piecemeal.
is highly individualistic. She doesn’t show respect for her husband Gopala, who has also become a 'slave' to his wife. However, upset over his wife’s attitude, he separates from her. Without husband, Vatsale is shown contempt and disrespect by her own family members. Finally, Vatsale realises her mistake and follows her husband by joining him in Quit India movement. Strangely, Vatsale is inducted into ‘ideal wifehood’ by other women who think they can have ‘control’ over their husbands by being affectionate and loving wives. Goruru shares the fear of other reformists about man and woman’s claim for ‘excessive’ freedom and individualism as threat to family.

Asserting Brahmin identity for Goruru was as important as accepting inevitable changes to withstand the impact of different forces – social reform, modernity, colonial cultural domination etc. while for Kuvempu bringing ‘Shudra identity’ within this hegemonic framework of reformed Hindu culture was as important as accepting Hindu national identity.

(Kuvempu operates on two planes, which are of course mutually connected - to assert an ‘Indian identity’ against the colonial domination; and to assert the lower caste identity against the internal hegemonic forces like priestly castes. )

Both Goruru and Kuvempu fashion their community identity not on the exclusivist, aggressive mode of Phule or Ambedkar as is evident in the case of anti-caste movement in the Mysore Princely State. For them reforming their own community appears to be more important. And, in Kuvempu, such fashioning of ‘identity’ has the possibility of liberating both the communities from the narrow and exclusivist identities. Just as Ananda in Hemavati can be a Brahmin – nationalist, in Kuvempu, Hoovaiah can be both – a Shudra and a nationalist, who can also become ‘universal’ as the geographically fixed, time-bound national/community identity fades in the concentric circles of identity.
However, both Goruru and Kuvempu differ from Masti in their observation of gender exploitation which is common to all castes in varying degrees. ‘Dharma’, refashioned by Masti doesn’t have a solution for emancipation of woman though it dissolves ‘rigid gender categories.’ In Goruru and Kuvempu the critique of their communities also involves emancipation of women from the clutches of caste, religious and social mores. Hence, both Goruru, (though with limitations) and Kuvempu, in the process, liberate woman from the monolithic mould of ‘Arya woman’ constituted by all - the reformists, revivalists and status quoists; and simultaneously equip women with capacity for resistance to the earlier patriarchal values.230

Kuvempu, initially, in Kanuru Heggediti (1936) finds a solution for caste and gender questions within the large framework given by the early reformists – a Hindu culture purged of its diseased aspects. There are colonial/national binaries of ‘high culture/low culture’, ‘modern/primitive’, civilised/ uncivilised, Indian spirituality/colonial material modernity’ operating behind his worldview. He associates superstition, religiosity and inhuman practices with those who reject modern (English education) and culture, rationality and progress with the English educated reformist protagonist.

The novel mirrors all the conflicts and complicated responses to colonialism; but, writing after 30 years, in Malegali Madumagal (1967) he sheds this early reformist framework for presenting

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230 Kuvempu’s play Shudra Tapasvi is redefining an epic story to construct a ‘Shudra’ identity. Hence when we say ‘revivalist interests’ probably with each writer we need to specify the cultural values the author wants to revive. Interpretation of the ‘past’ by these early authors need to be studied for better perspective on their stance as reformist, revivalist or that exceeds these categories. Inspired by Gandhi’s Harijan welfare programmes and Vivekananda who had advised the Maharaja to open schools for the Untouchables, Kuvempu wrote a play, Jalagara, in 1927. Nenapina Doniyalli, Mysore: Udayaravi Prakashana, 1993, page 589
an all-inclusive, ‘evolutionary’ (not in Darwinian sense, but evolution of ‘self’) universal vision of mankind (Vishwamanava prajne).\(^{231}\)

_**Kanuru Heggaditi** captures Malnad (just as Thomas Hardy’s Wessex) in its transitional phase—remote influences of colonial administration, missionary conversions and nationalism manifesting in a few mundane aspects: ‘Bharata Mata’ and nationalist leaders’ portraits hung along with gods and goddess’ pictures on the wall; the Vokkaliga (agrarian) community has developed a faint sense of shame for consuming alcohol due to awareness created by the Malnad Abhivruddhi Mandali of Mysore Princely State and and preaching of Christian missionaries. Besides, modernity has also set in with the advent of bicycles and availability of foreign beverages including coffee and wine. The feudal set up with its superstitions and cruelty was largely intact though there were faint signs of change.\(^{232}\)

But, sweeping reform activities begin with the return of Hoovaiah and Ramaiah from their colleges and the feudal set up begins to develop cracks. However, the ‘critical insider,’ English educated Hoovaiah with modern and national sensibility becomes an alien to Malnad and there are other aspects in the intricate design of life crafted in the novel which his limited reformist sensibility don’t reach – Hoovaiah in his trance, in his opposition to superstitious beliefs and practices appears as a ‘pavada purusha’ for low caste people of the region while priestly class perceives his erudition in ‘Sanskrit, Upanishats’ and rationality as a threat. Hoovaiah is indignant towards the exploitative

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\(^{231}\) C. N. Ramachandran (Bayalu-Roopa: 2006), Sumitra Bai (Vichaya: 1995) and K. V. Subbanna (Kuvempuge Putta Kanmadi, Bangalore, Kannada and Culture Department, 2006 page 14) argue that Kuvempu subscribed to ‘Advaita philosophy’. At this stage of research my understanding of philosophy is limited and hence, unable to put Kuvempu’s vision of life in this framework.

\(^{232}\) T. P. Ashok also observes how the Malnad in the novel was slowly opening to colonial modernity in ‘Kuvempu Kadambari: Eradu Adhyayanagalu’, Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana, 2004
priestly class and benevolent towards the lower caste (bonded labourers) which is exploited by both the priestly class and the feudal set up from which Hoovaiah comes. His reform activities are limited to condemning the hegemonic priestly class while the economic changes which are required to liberate the other castes/class remain outside the purview of the reform.

At the end of the novel, Gandhian ideal of sanskritisation and colonial ‘progress’ was achieved. A liquor shop was in a dilapidated state; hospitals, school, post office and shops were coming up; motor cars, buses were plying; even freedom fighters used to come and give lectures; the educated read newspapers and spoke affairs of the world; ‘maari harake’ (animal sacrifice), ‘devvada pooje’ were replaced by ‘cultured’ practices of worships; the lower caste colonies were neatly arranged; they went to hospitals for treatment instead of going to priests and finally, ‘civilisation had entered the jungle.’

Kuvempu’s own approach to modernity is inconsistent and ambivalent: Narrating an incident in which Hoovaiah saw a man speeding in bicycle on mud road of the village, the novelist says the bicycle-rider symbolised the coming onslaught of aggressive modern civilisation on Malnad. Hoovaiah, as T. P. Ashok observes, is a ‘phenomenon’—an insider through whom an external agency is bringing in changes in Malnad. Hoovaiah’s limitations are also limitations of the contemporary social reform movement.

Hoovaiah differs from other educated youth including his brother, because of his new sensibility. His brother Ramaiah could neither internalise ‘modern’ values that his brother represented, nor could

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233 Kuvempu Heggaditi, Mysore: Udayaravi Prakashana, 1995 page 638-637
234 Ibid: page 306-308
he accept the values of the decadent feudal system, but collapses as he was caught in the vortex of
tese contradictory pulls.

Rajendra Chenni, placing Hoovaiah as one of the alienated heroes in the tradition of Kannada
fiction, observes that starting from the first social novel Indira Bai, the alienated hero immersed
himself in true modernity through his English education and returns to his traditional home only to find
himself antagonised by it. He therefore becomes the site for the struggle in which ‘false’ tradition is
rejected just as ‘false’ modernity is, and something new between the two worlds is imagined, however,
inadequately. Hoovaiah “is the archetypal figure in Kannada fiction of such a fissured being,” Rajendra
Chenni points out, stating that Hoovaiah’s modernity is somewhat fragile and incongruous in a feudal
society in which his uncle with all his evil can at least be understood. Hoovaiah’s idealism is partly
tempered by the earthy realities of the village and partly remains incorrigibly alien.

An able response to both Hoovaiah’s ‘modern’ sensibility and resistance to the dominant
feudal values come from Seetha. She not only shows adaptability to Hoovaiah’s modernity but also
outshines him in her flexibility to adapt.

She outshines Hoovaiah even in her activism and protest against oppressive system and
finally grows ‘equal’ to Hoovaiah in their journey of evolution of ‘self.’ Seetha’s evolution, when
compared to ‘uncouth’ Subbamma, is possible as the novelist indicates, due to her ‘high culture’ and
her potential to internalise a new sensibility. Hence, when she was forced to marry Ramaiah against
her wish – she could protest (hysterically) and even write ‘letter’ to Hoovaiah (for the first time in her
life).

233 Rajendra Chenni, Introduction, Return to Earth, (translated by Padma Ramachandra Sharma) Bangalore: Sahitya
Akademi Centre for Translation, 2002, page xxiii
Subbamma represents the world of ‘low culture’ which her ‘uncivilised’ economically poor Nelluhalli represents when compared to Muttalli and Kanuru.

When she realised that Chandraiah Gowda had come with a marriage proposal not for Hoovaiah but for himself she didn’t protest though she was disappointed, for obvious reasons: her poverty and lack of ‘refinement’ that Seetha had. When she came to Kanuru as third wife of the aged Chandraiah Gowda she was as ‘alien’ as Hoovaiah. She soon imbibed Chandraiah Gowda’s greed, dominance, cruelty and selfishness of which she herself was a victim.

Though she could realise her own ‘uncivilised’ manners when she saw the ‘civilised manners’ of Hoovaiah and Ramaiah, she was unable to change because she didn’t have that sensibility which Seetha had; and also because Chandraiah Gowda suspected the change in her behaviour as a mark of her infidelity and became more violent towards her.

Mode of resistance to Chandraiah Gowda’s cruelty also changes from Seetha and Subbamma in tune with their ‘refined’ sensibility and economic status. While Seetha, with her parents’ support, refuses to come back, Subbamma, who suffers poverty and unsavoury criticisms at her village, grabs the opportunity to come back when Chandraiah falls sick and looks after him for the very reason.

Her ‘fall’ is hastened by her association with ‘kusamskriti’ (bad culture) of Gange, Chandraiah Gowda’s concubine and Rangappasetty, a mason. Chandraiah Gowda, who had sexual relationship with Gange and was cruel, dies with a twinge of regret. But Subbamma meets with an ignominious death (after consuming poisonous medicine to terminate her pregnancy). Even the responses of other

236 Ibid, page 40
237 Ibid, page 131 - 132
238 Ibid, page 157
characters display contempt more than sympathy—Ramaiah thinks she brought shame to family and commits suicide while Puttanna cleanses the ‘immoral foetus’ and blood-stained body; Hoovaiah becomes frustrated due to death of Ramaiah and Subbamma.

Sumitra Bai, analysing the characterisation of women in the novel, observes that though Subbamma became another ‘Chandraiah Gowda’ after she gained power, she still remained victim of exploitation. She was sexually exploited by the mason and that finally led to her tragic death. Apart from the sexual exploitation there is another reason that led to Subbamma’s tragedy: Seetha, who was ‘cultured’ could restrain herself and engage in ‘platonic love’ with Hoovaiah, while Subbamma was more close to ‘nature’ (associated with instinctive and ‘physical culture’) than ‘civilisation’ that Seetha and Hoovaiah represented and didn’t have ‘potential’ for ‘redemption’.

Subbamma’s sudden rise in her economic status without any realisation of ‘self’ is also a reason for her tragedy. Subbamma is subject of the ‘unstable’ development process: She was poor and exploited till she married Chandraiah Gowda; she becomes an exploiter; while escaping from Chandraiah Gowda’s cruelty she returns to her poverty-stricken village to suffer insult; with Chandraiah Gowda’s death she regains her ‘power’ and falling into the trap of mason and Gange her ‘powerful’ status becomes ‘dubious’.

Subbamma, unlike Seetha, provides ground for narrativising an alternative model to ‘femininity’ and ‘feminine virtues’, for the very reason that she is neither a ‘new woman’ nor fits into the well-defined models of ‘femininity’.

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239 Sumitra Bai, Vichaya, 1995
Likewise, Gange, though placed at the lower stratum, is also a victim of unhappy marriage, male conceit and was unwittingly caught in a vicious circle of exploitation.

However, the narrative to some extent shows the possibility of overcoming such stratification; Seetha and Hoovaiah who adopt the ‘Buddhist’ philosophy show one of the several possible solutions. There are others who don’t live with them in their ‘ashram’. Just as Belara Soma can change his dress code, Brahmin boys also join Hoovaiah in his ‘Buddha Mandira’.

Kuvempu himself could dismantle such stratification in his next novel, Malegalalli Madumagalu, where his vision and philosophy of life undergoes sea change. Though the novel clearly shows influence of Vivekananda and Aurobindo the novelist is attracted by not their emphasis on ‘valour’ but by their philosophies which offer a possibility of ‘spiritual evolution’ to all. The novel itself is decentralised – without any hero/heroine like Hoovaiah and Seetha; even an ordinary Subbanna Heggade becomes a ‘vishwa praje’ and Aita-Pinchalu of lower caste become ‘Shiva-Shivani’. The subtle moralistic stance of the earlier novel gives way to a more fluid approach to man-woman relationship and a complex view of sexual relationship hemmed with personal morality, religious, social and caste restrictions.

Seetha/Subbanamma binaries also dissolve with Chinnamma and Timmi standing almost on an equal plane. Woman of all castes are victims of exploitation at multiple levels of the hierarchical society. The women of lower castes are both economically and sexually exploited and those from upper castes are also exploited due to practices such as widowhood and ‘koodike’ (a practice in the community to arrange marriage of single, widowed/separated woman and man; the system, in practice, was exploited to serve the interests of men.)
Women also collude in exploitation depending on their positions and circumstances in society. Some of them have nobility of their ‘motherly’ qualities and sympathy towards the exploited. They have their own mode of resistance and hence their position as ‘victims’ is not fixed. For example, Timmi and Chinnamma’s act of eloping with Gutti and Mukundaiah respectively.

Timmi’s marriage with Gutti was prohibited as they were bonded labourers while Chinnamma didn’t have freedom of choice as per her caste norms. (Masti in his novel considers a bonded labourer coming back to Hegaditi as mark of ‘respectability’ and ‘loyalty’ while here escaping from their masters is an act of resistance.) When they elope with their lovers, Chinnamma has fear of criticism from society while Timmi is afraid of her father and the master. Both Timmi and Chinnamma move from their subordinated position to equality with their marriage to Gutti and Mukundaiah respectively. As K. V. Subbanna notes, the novel ends with Chinnamma waiting for Mukundaiah symbolising Malnad waiting for an arrival of new culture and new life.  

The novel, even while giving an elaborate account of sexual cruelty, depicts a sexual relationship that is liberated from cruelty of these various mores and dogged moral consciousness of civilisation through the couple like Aitha and Pinchalu. Pinchalu, who couldn’t have denied sexual services to her landlord Mukundaiah if he demanded, is not dogged by ‘moral consciousness’. Mukundaiah’s dream of love life is shaped to certain extent by the couple whom he compares to Shiva-Shivani. As D. R. Nagaraj observes, Kuvempu’s approach to sexual relationship between man and woman is within the framework of his notion of spiritual development of personality; sex here is not mere natural desire that drives men and women but both cultural and social, and hence, consummation of sex.

240 K. V. Subbanna, Kuvempuge Putta Kannadi, 1995, page 70-71
within the socially sanctioned marriage is idealised through Chinnamma-Mukundaiah and Aitha-Pinchalu as that which can lead to spiritual evolution of self.

Another such feminised narrative is *Nisarga* (1945) by Mirji Annarao. However, the novel is not a magnum opus like Kuvempu’s epic novels, but its significance lies in its portrayal of woman as a symbol of resistance outside the nationalist and colonial discursive fields. However, it should be noted that here exploiter is also a woman, which prevents any easy approach to analysis of gender disparity. As Tanika Sarkar observes, the middle-aged mother of grown up sons could be a powerful matriarch and elderly mothers-in-law could command and oppress young wives. Woman at a later stage in her life gets more attached to lineage, caste and class and becomes a complicit subject of patriarchy.

Tara’s mother-in-law Chilmavva stands for such an exploiter who prevents the couple from meeting each other and consummating their marriage. Tara, however, fights almost single handedly while her husband, father-in-law, parents and finally Anatha whom she loved, remain helpless.

Though the novel doesn’t give a clear account of their conflicting consciousness, it can be discerned that Anantha, who despite his education, fails to gather such potential for resistance from within. Tara, even after her ‘koodike’ done with male interest, continues to love Anantha till her death, defying social norms of ideal ‘wifehood’. The novelist, without taking any moralistic stance, depicts evils of traditional marriage practices such as child marriage and ‘koodike’ in Jain community while upholding natural desire and love that Tara represented.

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One of the reasons Shyamaladevi Belgaunkar cites for an urgent need of women writers' intervention in addressing ‘women’s question’ is that male reformers, despite being sympathetic towards women, have mucked up the whole project and ended up with mockery of women like prostitutes and Dalits. When she made such comments, probably she might have kept in mind her contemporary writer A. N. Krishnarao (Aa. Na. Kri.), a farrago of Western and sexist nationalist ideologies.

A prolific author with a belief that ‘arts’ (literature, drama and music) can be the medium for reform and national regeneration, A. N. Krishnarao was inspired by both Western authors like Bernard Shaw (whom he profusely quotes) and his contemporary activists like Pandit Taranath and D. K. Bharadwaj, in ‘attacking bourgeoisie, middle class hypocrisy, especially, with regard to sex and chastity’—an issue he feels should be urgently addressed to set right woman’s status and family. His site of reform project is also urban-centered middle class family while he is nostalgic about ‘idyllic village.’

Besides, he was active in most of the cultural and political movements, including the Freedom Movement, the Progressive Movement and the Unification Movement of the period. The study of his novels between 1930s and 1950s can trace his growth from the reformist to the Kannada linguistic nationalist. The thick details of his engagement in all these movements are constitutive of the structure of his novels, often almost verging on a narcissistic obsession.

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244 Mounting criticism on his novels about ‘obscenity’ pushes him to vehemently vindicate his treatment of the subject in his novel. Besides, he was caught in several controversies which have bearings on his novels. His self-interview, Nammanu Naane Kande, Bangalore: Kusuma Prakashana, 2002, (1944 – first print); autobiography, Barahagarana Baduku, Goa: Vishwabharati Prakashana, 1972.
His social novels are all almost woman-centered: *Jeevanayatre* (1934) and *Nagna Satya* (1950) (followed by its sequels *Shani Santana* - 1951, *Sanjegattalu* - 1952) deal with the issue of prostitution, while *Mangalasootra* (1940) is about his ideal of ‘good wife’ and *Hosalu Datida Hennu* about his views on ‘woman’s entry into public life’.

His novels on artistes, *Udayaraga* (1934), *Sandhyaraga* (1935), *Natasarvabhouma* (1940) *Sahityaratna* (1943) can be studied separately to analyse his imagination of linguistic nationalism.

Aa. Na. Kri’s novels have repetitive patterns and characters are etched almost in the same mould easily giving into generalisation. The stereotypical representations of gender in his novels can be classified into the broad categories: Women are generally victims, or ‘pati rakshaki’ (the one who is devoted to her husband) or ‘pati bhakshaki’ (the one who distracts her husband from his goal). The men in the novels are ‘exploiter’ (who harasses women) or ‘reformer’ (who rescues the victimised women). He consolidates the colonial binary of man/woman and home/world.

He mucks up his ambitious project while crafting them into novels – not merely because of dearth of literary merits or personal reasons - writing was his means of livelihood, but also with belief that literature can be instrumental in bringing social reform, and hence, he maneuvers plots and characters for his propaganda; and, due to limitations of his sexist nationalist ideologies and lack of deeper understanding of complexities of the subject he is dealing with. However, his lengthy prefaces of explanations accompanying each novel exhibit a great erudition on these subjects. But there are discrepancies in his proclaimed ideals and portrayals.

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244 Galaganatha has made these classifications on the basis of woman’s virtues as wife. Detailed analysis in U Maheshwari: 2001, page 50-51
Though woman’s sexual exploitation is his subject, his primary concern is to protect family—the supreme symbol of the glorious Indian culture: “Indians have realised it a long ago that family is important for development of person and progress of nation. Mahabharata has propounded that a nation is an evolved family. It can be said that family is the epicenter of all innovations in Indian culture.”

Inhibitions, religious and social mores on sex have caused certain ‘diseases’ like prostitution which has threatened the stability of family. He sets forth his agenda in the afterword of ‘Jeevanayatre’ very clearly and though his novels on prostitution are taken up as part of his ‘progressivist’ campaign later, his basic formula doesn’t change much.

While appreciating the West’s importance to individuality and rationality, he says, despite the claim of being great, Indian culture suffers from discrepancy between preaching and practice. He says women can’t contribute to the nation as they are uneducated and made slaves of custom. They can’t produce men of high standard as their status is low. Hence, he calls for reforming women’s position by banning early marriage and advocates education for women. He underlines the need for reforming the institution of marriage based on orthodox religious norms and conventions in order to address women’s issues.

He brings sexual relationship to centre the of discussion condemning false claim of ‘respectability’ by the middle class and terming stigma attached to sex as damnation. Marriage, according to him, should be viewed from three aspects of sexual relationship: procreation, fulfillment

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of natural desire and fostering perfection of man's highest artistic skills. He analyses how the relationship with woman can serve different purposes for man: While woman as mother and wife consoles man's excitement and brings peace, as a companion to an artist woman encourages talent and inspires the creation of work of excellence. Ironically, while condemning the 'orthodox' mores on sexual relationship, he reifies woman as a sexual being and consolidates the rigid gender roles.

Another ground on which he attacks conventional marriage system is lack of freedom to choose one's life partner, especially for woman who doesn't have right over her own body. He endorses his view quoting Bertrand Russell (from his *Marriage and Morals*): "Marriage is for women the commonest mode of livelihood and total amount of undesired sex endured by women is probably greater in marriage than prostitution." 247

Besides, lack of freedom to break free of unhappy marital life mainly due to ideals of 'chastity', 'patrivritya' imposed on women are other evils of traditional marriage set up. He identifies, albeit superficially, hegemony of patriarchal ideologies propagated through poetry, religion, law, society and tradition over women who are deprived of equal rights and freedom. If an educated woman is married to a stupid person, then there are only two solutions for her: suicide and prostitution, he argues.

Two reasons for women taking up prostitution, according to him, are desire and poverty. A woman, due to either imposed widowhood or lack of satisfaction in the wedlock, tries to fulfill her natural desire for sex, and gets into flesh trade. He further argues, as widow remarriage is not allowed more women are attracted to Christianity and convert to that religion which treats them more humanely

247 *Jeevanayatre*, page 112
and gives chance for remarriage. If the Hindu religion sanctions widow remarriage and gives margin for woman 'fallen' once to rectify her mistake, such conversion into other religion can be avoided and prostitution can also be checked. 248

He says if woman was given a chance to earn her livelihood without having to sell her body she would not become prostitute (Ironically, none of the 'reformed' prostitutes take up job in his novels). He argues 'Devadasis' are offered meretricious position in society only to keep them as prostitutes and hence it is a social evil to be eradicated, (none of his novels on prostitution deal with issues of Devadasis though reforms were underway in the Princely State; hence the prostitution he deals with is only what appears on surface of society as an illegal commercial activity.)

While upholding personal morality for man, he adopts moralistic stance towards 'fallen' woman. Though 'woman' is at the center of his novels — largely as a victim — she herself is denied any agency to change either her status or society herself. In his preface to Nagna Satya he doubts woman's claim for freedom in the West though he observes that Western women have ably handled war crisis and proved their mettle in man's domain. But, he doesn't believe woman's activism can make life comfortable and hence for solution he turns to Indian philosophy and culture which has entrusted man with responsibility of providing protection to woman as father, husband and son. Upholding superiority of 'Indian family,' he exhorts man to take up initiative and be responsible towards woman. His solution for prostitution is in his quote from Alexander Kuprin's novel on issue of prostitution, Yama: 'If woman's youth had been formed under conditions of kindness, care and a minimum competence, she might be not only a happy mother, but a beloved sister and a treasured daughter.'

1 Jeevanayatre, page 92-93
Another solution is to criminalise the institution of prostitution and bring into judicial purview all those who perpetuate this crime. The rich who exploit prostitutes and pimps, those who rent houses for the prostitutes, and poets and artists who glorify prostitution all should be held guilty, he argues.

Though he successfully brought the issue of chastity, sexuality and male cunning to open debate through his novels, solutions he has offered within the structure of the novels are no different from those of other 'conservatives', whom he attacks in his speeches and writings. One of the criticisms on his novels was for legitimising extramarital affairs and depicting prostitute as wife and wife as prostitute. However, this is a strategy - to put 'old wine in a new bottle', to impart his refashioned 'pativrita' values for women and there are a lot of contradictions in him while handling the issue. Lalita in Jeevanayatre is married to 'stupid and effeminate' Ramakrishnaiah and hence, she is attracted towards his lawyer, Swami. Though she is aware that Swami is a womaniser, she is loyal to him, because she has accepted him as her husband. They together advise Ramakrishnaiah to remarry. The husband here is portrayed ironically as a man 'incapable' to be an able companion to his English educated wife. But his reason for supporting their affair is – if he doesn’t, Lalita may become a prostitute – due to poverty and desire. A very absurd logic indeed, but there is no other reason the novel cites or infers for his act.

Sundara in the same novel is pushed into prostitution partly due to poverty and by a Hindu scholar for his selfish desire and later supported by a rich aged man, intellectuals, social leaders, editor of a magazine and a lawyer. However, here the novelist raises certain pertinent questions on the

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249 Anakri, Mysore: Kannada Rajyotsava Tarasu Pratishtana, 1997, page 135
State's responsibility for welfare of women, and decadent Hindu social customs inviting conversions. Finally her problem is resolved by reuniting her with her brother, Swami.

But in the novels written during the 'Progressive Movement', exclusively to highlight prostitution as a social and national evil, a question of exploitation, illegal commercial activity run by unholy nexus of various forces in society. Women have no other reason to get into prostitution except poverty, lack of male protection, male conceit, desire and deprivation of sex.

For example, Achchamma, a widow in Nagna Satya gets into prostitution -- first due to natural desire and male conceit, and is later trapped in the vicious circle; Kamala is forced into sex work after she parted her ways with husband with whom her greedy mother had an affair; Venkati, Nagu and Balu, whose husbands can't earn enough to feed all in the family.

None of these women, who are largely portrayed as 'victims,' ever try to emancipate themselves; a 'benevolent' client or a male reformer comes to their rescue. Achchanuma's problem is resolved with a generous rich man, Shivaraja agreeing to take care of her and her child. His children and workers also accept her without any conflict, due to Achchamma's feminine virtues — being devoted, submissive with a sense of gratitude for the man who gave her protection in his family life.

But in the case of Kamala, the novelist seems to suggest that unless she is under constant support of an 'ideal man' she will slip into the trade and has no individual strength to stand and protest; neither can she understand her reformist writer Srinatha's love and loyalty; hence, Srinatha's entire objective of writing is to ensure that she is given money and prevented from continuing the trade. He requests Kamala to be his 'wife', but in vain; he begs her client to 'leave' her to be with him; but she is so helpless that she couldn't help continuing her trade when he is not physically present with
her; all that she could do is to continue to have affairs with more men to avenge her mother and with peculiar sense of guilt, and finally to die of sexually transmitted disease. The depressed Srinath commits suicide, but after educating another prostitute to give up the trade, go back to family and serve her parents-in-law.

The novelist's single-point solution to prostitution is clear: Women won't go astray if 'protected' by men. Interestingly, his novels were criticised harshly by his contemporary authors in various periodicals, compelling him to vehemently vindicate his position and write his book *Sahitya Mattu Kama Prachodane.*

 Critics including Masti and Anandakanda appealed to the 'young writers' not to indulge in producing 'provocative' literature and passed a resolution in this regard at a meeting. A. Na. Kri. lists such other books attacked though they 'aimed at sex education': 'Dharmasambhava' by Pandit Taranath, D. K. Bharadwaj's 'Dampatya Vijnana-Santana Vijnana', Devudu's novel 'Antaranga' about relationship between a priest and 'basvai' (devadasi); Dr. Gopalakrishna's 'Premakala' over which even court was moved in 1943.

A. Na. Kri. sincerely condemns such 'censorship' as it marked an unhealthy approach to sex and covers up sex-related problems. But, he doesn't develop his argument on any such ideological ground; instead, like a lawyer arguing his case in the court he cites 'evidences' for such writings on 'shringara' in the literature across the world, in ancient literature, in folk literature and in the works of his contemporary writers; he also cites examples from articles by women published in women's

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250 *Sahitya Mattu Kamapracodane*, Bangalore: Vahini Prakashana, 1952
periodical like ‘Sodari’ appreciating him for exposing ill-treatment of prostitutes. Besides, his novels themselves don’t stand to prove his ‘educational objectives’, due to graphic details of woman’s naked body and sexual activities which constantly shift focus away from his stated ideals. What drew him appreciation was his portrayal of ‘ideal Indian woman’ in Sandhyaraga and Mangalasootra.

Meenakshamma in Sandhyaraga, is devoted to her husband so much that she encourages her husband Srinivasa Rayaru for the second marriage and even looks after his second wife Savitri affectionately. While Savitri wants her son to become an English educated officer, Meenakshamma wants her son to help the poor. Further, advising her daughters-in-law she describes woman’s duties in family: She explains how woman should treat her husband, understand his nature and behave to suit his requirements. Even if the husband has shortcomings and is into bad habits, the wife should be committed to save the family. She should be skillful in managing both the husband and the family in such an adverse situation. Meenakshamma, as a mother-in-law also represents woman as bearer and transmitter of cultural and moral norms. Of the two daughters-in-law, Jaya becomes the ideal wife of Meenakshamma’s son Laxmana, by enduring all the difficulties and after her death she becomes ‘Goddess of inspiration’ for Laxmana, who excels as musician.

In contrast, Padma, daughter-in-law of Savitri is ridiculed as she emulates her English educated, egoistic husband Ramachandra in her behaviour. She learns English, goes to ladies’ clubs and has no

251 Upset over harsh criticism which even disturbed his family life, he came out with a series of novels – ‘Grihalakshmi’, ‘Anugraha’ and ‘Ashirvada’ - portraying ideal housewife, ‘pativrita women’. His wife in her memoir says that she objected to her husband writing about ‘prostitutes for whom at least one of the customers would show sympathy and understand her difficulty; and prostitute is not dedicated to any man like house wife who toils hard but gets no sympathy’. Later, he came out with these novels, she recalls in ‘Nanna Patiswamiya Sahityaradhane’; Rasachetana; Sha. Mam. Krishnaraya (ed), Goa: Goa Kannada Sangha, 1970, page 21. Probably a separate study on ‘sexuality, literature and cultural politics’ in Kannada may help in analysing the incidents mentioned above along with similar incident of banning Radhika Santwanam by Muddupalani.
regard for family and doesn’t look after her son. Ramachandra and Padma lead to the disintegration of the ideal joint family.

For A. N. Krishnarao, these Brahmin women represent the real culture of India. In his novel, Mangalasootra (1940) Ratna epitomises his ideology of ‘new woman’. In preface to the second edition (1945), he claims that the real strength of India lies in characters like Ratna of Mangalasootra and Meenakshamma of Sandhyaraga. Ratna is well educated and so devoted to her husband that she tries to commit suicide after his death; she blesses her younger sister at the time of her marriage to live like Savitri who brought life to her dead husband.

Though A. Na. Kri. is concerned about exposing ‘ill-treatment of women in society’ through institution of prostitution and unhappy marriages his resolution is not complete ‘emancipation’ of woman. He condemns the conventional marriage system, but postulates a nuclear, companionate marriage in which ideology of ‘love’ replaces the religious norms to ensure bondage of women in the ‘comfort’ of domesticity. He claims not to be ‘hidden legislator of mankind’ but a ‘critic of reality’, and ends up being a rigid moralist.

Masti and Goruru desire refinement and ripeness of human self through marriage and render, to certain extent, gender binaries dissolvable, in A. Na. Kri., despite lofty ideals, a new nationalist patriarchy gets consolidated with private/public and man/woman categories becoming rigid.

He firmly advocates that ‘family’ is woman’s place and any trespass will lead to her violation of ‘chastity’. He writes Hosalu Datida Hemnu to drive this point home. As the title itself connotes, the novel is about the woman who ‘crosses’ the limits of her cultural, moral and family norms and ventures into politics which is an exclusively a man’s domain. The novel is set against the background
of the Freedom Movement, the upheaval created due to new electoral set up of the British administration based on the caste-system during the last few years of the Freedom Movement and struggle for establishing 'responsible government' in the Mysore Princely State in 1950.

The novelist oscillates between his sympathy for Subhadra, who is married to a man against her wishes and moralistic stance towards her joining 'immoral, corrupt world of men in public.' She indulges in politics and becomes 'corrupt' and neglects family. Srinivasmurthy, in contrast to Subhadra, is committed to the nationalist cause and family values. However, to be tempted by a woman like Subhadra is an obstruction for his social works. He not only avoids Subhadra but also tries to abstain from having friendship with women students in the college. When Subhadra proposes, he advises her to lead a 'respectable' family life with her husband. The novel ends with a note that despite her fame and prominence in politics, her 'real happiness' was at home.

Analysing A. Na. Kri.'s novels on artistes, C. N. Ramachandran says all of them have a repetitive pattern -- the hero is a gifted artist; he is seduced by a 'temptress'; he 'falls' and deviates from his goal; because of another woman's sacrifice and love, he is redeemed. As an artist novel they don't merit high, according to Ramachandran, for these novels don't show conflict within artists' consciousness and growth in their personality. However, these novels can be read through a different framework -- analysing dense details of the Unification Movement that serve as a background of these novels. More than development of their personality and conflict between their values and society, the artistes here strive to unify 'Karnataka' through their art forms.

\[252\text{Bayalu-Roopa, 2006, page 48}\]
However, his first two artist novels — *Sandhyaraga* and *Udayaraga* — have such nationalistic ambition only in protean forms while his novels after 1940s mark steady growth of the ‘Galaganatha model’ of aggressive Kannada nationalism. Besides, A. Na. Kri. writes a series of historical novels on the theme of ‘Vijayanagara’ and these nationalistic ideologies are popularised through Kannada cinemas after 1950s. Trajectory of the linguistic nationalism in the post-Independent India centered on fear of invasion and dominance can be traced in these novels.

In *Sandhyaraga*, pride for language is in protean form with Laxmana and his younger brother Gopala, a budding nationalist youth portrayed in contrast with his brother Ramachandra and his wife Padma whose ‘English manners’ shatter their ideal joint family. Gopala who obtains English education but upholds ‘tradition’, endeavours to popularise Vachana, Kannada literature and culture through his brother-in-law’s magazine ‘Veera Karnataka’. He popularises Vachanas through Laxmana’s concerts. In *Udayaraga*, Mani opens a new school for painting for Kannadigas at the end of the novel.

However, *Natasarvabhouma*, written in 1940 gives graphic details of the plight of Kannada speaking community scattered in different provinces and urge to unite them and inculcate pride for mother tongue. The protagonist’s ambition to reform Kannada theatre is to reaffirm a ‘Kannada identity,’ through ‘digvijaya’ of Raja’s drama company in and outside Karnataka. The novel, with great anguish depicts Tamil and Telugu dominance in Mysore province, Marathi hegemony in north Karnataka and the colonial culture and language in the coastal Karnataka.

253 M. Madhava Prasad’s study of Rajkumar’s growth as iconic hero of Karnataka, in his essay ‘Cinema as a Site of Nationalist Identity Politics in Karnataka’, *Journal of Karnataka Studies*, 2003-2004, page 60-85
254 A. Na. Kri. was a staunch Kannada activist and details of his campaign for Kannada make background for all these novels.
The ideal of the novelist is to create awareness among the Kannadigas in these regions and to restore the sovereignty of the Kannada culture and language through art forms. When Raja is honoured with ‘Natasarvabhouma’ award, in his speech he passionately says:

In the ancient times seers like Vidyaranya and Chanakya served the country to gain its sovereignty. However, religion today can’t contribute to development of Hindustan as people are divided over its plurality. Both religion and art need ‘tapas.’ As religion can’t bring together all communities and it is more individualistic (vyakti nishtha), why art shouldn’t be given a chance? Art transcends all boundaries – place, community, caste, language...

A. Na. Kri.’s concern for Kannada language and contemporary cultural politics among the intelligentsia divided over caste and other political interests and dominance of Hindi form substantial part of his novel ‘Sahityaratna’ written in 1943. He is more vocal about his fear of ‘Kannada interests’ being largely sidelined due to overwhelming nationalist interests.

Like Raja inspired by a British actor to serve for Kannada cause, protagonist Murthy’s nationalist consciousness is awakened in Shantiniketana: where occasion demands that he defend Kannada against aggressive Andhra nationalist (who hates Kannadigas because they claim that Bellary is theirs and Krishnadevaraya, king of Vijayanagara Empire is a Kannadiga) and proud Bengalis. His journey to discover ‘Karnatakta’ begins. But he already had a ‘rich heritage’ to enlighten him on

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255 Natasarvabhouma: Page 106-107
256 Krishnarao had a conflicting relationship with B. M. Sreekantaiah and R. R. Diwakar over Kannada Sahitya Parishat giving preference to Hindi and he resigns from Parishat following his criticism of Diwakar’s speech, See Nannannu Naane Kande.
'essence of Karnataka' such as *Karnatakada Kaipidi*, *Karnatakada Gata Vaibhava*, *Karnatakada Veera Ratnagalu*, and *Never To Be Forgotten Empire*.

The novel uses the jingoistic, Hindu nationalist semantics to describe Murthy's emotions for Kannada. As Vivekananda upheld 'Indian culture' in Chicago, Murthy determines to uphold 'Karnataka' across the world.\(^{258}\) The rest is narration of his encounter with aggressive Marathis in Belgaum and treacherous Kannadigas and how he unites people in eight districts of the Mysore province who were divided over castes. Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held in Belgaum in 1929 becomes for Murthy a second 'Shantiniketana';\(^{259}\) Along with his campaign for Kannada, Murthy involves in progressive movement and strives for workers' cause in Bombay and thus positing an ideal of unity in diversity. The novel ends with Murthy dreaming a project of 'Kannadada Samskritika Digvijaya', to awaken Kannada consciousness and pride among Kannadigas.

Murthy's supporters include his friend Gundu and a widow Lalite whom he marries after parting with his first wife Girije. Girije is portrayed as detrimental to Murthy's career as she doesn't share his interests. Lalite, who shares Murthy's interests and supports him, is an ideal wife like Neelasani of *Natasarvabhuma*. Neela stands as a moral guardian whenever Raja deviates from his goal. However, Girije in *Sahityaratna* and Anwari in *Natasarvabhma* are negative representations of women who obstruct the hero's growth. Both Lalite and Neela, though equally talented, sacrifice their 'self interests' to support the nationalist heroes.

Sequels of *Sahityaratna*—*Gajinamane* in 1953 and *Kannadammana Gudiyalli* further consolidate masculine Kannada linguistic identity through Murthy growing as a heroic son serving the


\(^{259}\) Ibid, page 84
cause of ‘Kannadambe’, Mother Kannada, who is portrayed as shattered and sorrowful due to effeminacy of her sons.

*Karana Purusha* written in 1939 by Ram. Shri. Mugali also narrativises linguistic nationalism and projects a ‘masculine Kannada identity’. The novel portrays an image of Kannada community waiting for a nationalist hero, ‘Karana Purusha’ who would mobilise Kannadigas. But the primary preoccupation of the novelist is whether marriage hinders man’s growth as a national hero.

Obviously nationalism is here a masculine enterprise and woman can be included only if she prepares herself to serve this larger cause like Lalite and Neelasani of A. N. Krishnarao’s novels and Vaithothri of Galaganatha.

The novel begins with the marriage of Vamanna, a nationalist youth, with Padma, daughter of ‘Mamaledara,’ a servant of British government. Even on the day of wedding, Vamanna regrets his failure to follow the ideals his science teacher in the college had put forth: Man should not fall prey to the temptations of ‘traditional’ marriages; if he marries he should marry woman who is suitable to his needs of nationalist ideals; otherwise, he shouldn’t marry and become a ‘perfect human being’.

He is further frustrated by imagining ‘Kannada Devi’ as symbolised by an aggrieved widow Sugunabai, who becomes destitute after her husband’s death and comes to take refuge in Padma’s parents’ house.260

Vamanna’s attempts to prepare his wife Padma to be ‘new woman’ also becomes futile as she is ‘traditional’, lacks sensibility to understand Vamanna and has no interest in learning English or reading literature.261

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260 *Karana Purusha*, Bangalore: Sahitya Bhandara, 1939, page 22
261 Ibid, page 16
A combination of A. N. Krishnarao's concocted Western and nationalist ideologies of companionate marriage and Kuvempu's spiritual India (or Aurobindo's mystic India) can be seen in *Samarasave Jeevana*, by V. K. Gokak. The voluminous novel encompasses all the phases of Kannada novels between 1930s and 1950s; and traverses from hamlet Moggavi to nationalists' hotspot Bombay and later to England. As Keerthinath Kurthakoti observes, Gokak's works reflect all the new movements in Kannada and like 'other important writers, Gokak is also a figure of Kannada renaissance, eager to fulfill the cultural needs of the Kannada people.'262 His novel reflects the pressure on the contemporary Indian youth both in India and abroad, to fashion an 'Indian identity'.

Its first part, *Ijjodu* (written in 1935) shows the reformist influence and deals with religious institutions holding sway over one's life and the new educated generation gradually challenging such control.

And subsequent chapters written between 1944 and 1953 cover the second generation youth's exposure to nationalist movement and aspiration to join ICS; and in the last part, reconciliation of tradition/modernity and Indian spiritualism and Western materialism as represented by different characters in the novel. The novel has also accepted uncritically, the colonial argument of the English education = progress and attempts to balance it with spiritual India by blending material prosperity and spiritual progress of self. They form background for debates on problems of marital discord. Though several unhappy marital relationships have been resolved in different ways, the three couples - Sheenu/Susheela-Alice, Vishnu/Prameela and Narahari/Kusuma - who constitute the core of the novel are discussed here.

262 Keerthinath Kurthakoti, 'Sunday Herald' supplement of *Deccan Herald*, an English daily, April 1995
Sheenu was brought up in a family which has opened up to modernity and differs from other 'conservatives' of Moggavi who are still dictated by the religious institutions. He marries Susheela who is a devote wife, though not able to respond to new aesthetic sensibilities of Sheenu for whom the West is model.

His friend Vishnu, brought up in his sister’s house under the British loyalist brother-in-law’s control, falls in love with 'extremely modernist and liberal’ Maharashtrian girl Prameela and worships her as ‘Devi’.

And, the ideal couple is Narahari, a nationalist educated young man from an orthodox family and Kusuma - a ‘new woman’ and daughter of ‘modernist’ father who is unhappy with ‘orthodox, uncouth’ wife and finds conjugal happiness with a ‘chaste’ concubine.

The crisis in their marital life comes when all the three couples had to part for some years – Sheenu and Vishnu go to Britain to take Indian Civil Service (ICS) while Narahari goes to jail for taking part in the Freedom Movement. (Joining ICS or the Freedom Movement were the two ideals before the middle class educated youth.)

Sheenu and Vishnu had to cope with threat of seductive ‘free love’ in the West apart from suffering racial discrimination and ‘fatal loneliness’. As Vishnu says on an occasion, the heartbroken Indian youth either commit suicide or indulge in licentiousness to beat the oppressive feeling of loneliness and alienation. Without falling into ‘foreign woman’s trap’ and remaining ‘chaste’ till returning India itself is like passing ICS.
Sheenu fails in ICS and marries Alice who appreciates his aesthetic sensibility and passion while Susheela in India could have premonitions of her husband's infidelity. Susheela resorts to a sense of resignation without compromising her devotion to husband.

Vishnu, who was intensely nationalist like Narahari, also fails in ICS but continues to remain faithful to Prameela who ironically had 'fallen' into infidelity by the time he returns. Meanwhile, Kusuma gradually evolves as an ideal nationalist wife, first with the help of her father and later supported by Swamidasa, modeled on the mystic nationalist Aurobindo. The idealist Narahari, with the help of activist Ambadasa and guidance of Swamidasa, dreams of building an ideal society/nation which harmoniously blends all the contradictory forces that swayed the educated Indians of the period.

Sheenu, who feels guilty about his infidelity to his first wife, finds a solution in her death with the wishful thinking that he would be her loyal husband in the next life. Besides, Sheenu, who once thought he should have been born in Athens and not India, feels 'guilty' for having not contributed to 'nation' like Narahari. However, Narahari offers a solution suggesting the couple to uphold India's glorious culture through their paintings. Alice, who had accused Indians of polygamy and suspected that Sheenu would not return to her if he goes to meet his Indian wife, is completely transformed to see 'Mahasati' Susheela on her death bed, blessing the couple without a pinch of jealousy. Alice agrees to popularise 'glorious Indian culture' in the West.

The author's ideal is put forth by Narahari who considers Sheenu and Alice as the cultural ambassadors of India abroad. He is of the opinion that while Western culture fosters progress in social life, Indian culture is superior for spiritual development of individual self.²⁶³

²⁶³ Samarasave Jeevana, Mysore: Suruchi Prakashana, 1952, page 1070. Gokak himself had been to England and had come into contact with Marxist thinkers and progressive writers. The novel reflects his varied experiences in Maharashtra and England.
Vishnu, who is heartbroken to see his wife Prameela’s infidelity, is joined by her after her redemption - like legendary ‘pativrata’ Ahalya joining Gouthama. However, the novelist portrays Prameela as torn between her individual conscience and social morality. The author is inconsistent in his approach to sexuality and morality which is evident in the case of Prameela. He seems to be sympathetic towards Prameela who couldn’t restrain her natural desire and doesn’t completely accept social morality. But his nationalist moral sense is clear in him taming the aggressively individualistic Prameela into a domesticated wife on the model of Kusuma.

Kusuma, however, is not a docile wife like Susheela and neither is she vehemently individualistic like Prameela. She strikes a balance in being ‘independent, yet loyal’. As Swamidasa tells her, she grows like ‘Arundhati’ a mythical wife – a star herself and not mere follower of her husband - who is independent in her development of spiritual ‘self’ and becomes able supporter of Narahari, who is to become ‘prophet’ of India.264

‘A female narrative’

Shivarama Karanth stands apart from all the above novelists in Kannada in several ways. The way he raises the issues such as modernity or ‘man-woman question’ differs as much as the possible solutions or reconciliations offered within the structure of the novels. Reasons are many, including his way of looking at life, aesthetics of poetics and commitment to authenticity.

He was critical towards all the ideologies of his period though he himself was part of many of the movements including the Freedom Movement and Harijan welfare. As Rajendra Chenni succinctly

264 Gokak had met Aurobindo in 1949 and was deeply influenced by him. *Narahari: Prophet of India*, a sequel to *Samarasave Jeevana* was published in 1972

265 Rajendra Chenni uses this phrase while analysing Shivarama Karanth’s novel *Marali Mannige, (Return to Earth)*, Padma Ramachandra Sharma trans., Bangalore: Sahitya Akademi, Centre for Translation, 2002
puts: "At a time when the fervour of nationalism and attempts at cultural assertion had encouraged nostalgia about Indian spiritual traditions and its heroic past, Karanth consciously developed an earthy ‘materialist’ view of human life."266 Karanth doesn’t write about larger than life heroes but about ordinary men and women with immense human capabilities of gradual maturity in life than any ‘easy transcendence’. He resorts to realistic mode of narrative as realism for him was a certain kind of vision of life which is an alternative to the idealistic, spiritualistic and romantic traditions, Rajendra Chenni observes.

His novels between 1922 and 1947 record all the three phases of society-in-transition: Choice between deteriorating value systems of the traditional set up and vague values of the forthcoming modern society; choice between the seeming assurances and values of the colonial culture and administration along with the modern education which were beginning to be internalised by society and the unsettled life with new awareness of ‘self’, nationalist consciousness which has led to love-hate relationship with the colonialism and process of building new society with its new socio-economic and political systems.

His novels offer a broad spectrum of responses from almost all sections cutting across generations, class and caste to issues of tradition, modernity, colonialism and nationalism. In his early novels—Devadootaru, Nirbhagya Janma and Kanyabali, we find an angry reformist young man indicting society for its social evils such as child marriage and widow’s question; gradually his inquiry into these issues gets deeper and subsequently he begins to explore alternative value systems or

266 Rajendra Chenni, Return to Earth, 2002, page xix
varied designs of life. He puts to acid test Gandhian ideals while imbibing Gandhian sociological imagination to a certain extent.

His first two detective novels — *Vichitra Koota* (1923) and *Bhoota* (1924) were written under the influence of Venkatacharya’s translation of Bengali novel *Parimala* and Sexton Blake’s detective stories. He wrote a satire on social, economic, religious and educational systems in *Devadootaru*, following the example of Samuel Buttler’s *Erehwon*. *Nirbhagya Janma* (1925) seems to have been written when he came under the influence of Gandhi.267

However, his deviation from the early reformist, revivalist and later nationalist strands can be traced in his ‘reformist’ novel *Kanyabali or Sooleya Samsara* (1932). He rejects any idea of monolithic ‘Hindu culture,’ revivalist or reformist ideals in his later phase of the novel-writing. Being vehemently individualistic, he observes that every individual has his/her own values and beliefs either derived from his/her tradition or formed through his experiences of life; it is the faith in his/her values that gives him/her strength and he/she toils hard with a sense of indebtedness towards society; however, individual revolts against society when rights to basic comfort in life are denied.

*Kanyabali* takes up the then prevalent issue of child marriage and widow remarriage. There is a difference in the way Karanth frames the ‘women’s question’ here. He doesn’t share ‘the fear of woman’s unbridled sexuality’ nor the ‘honour of family/community/nation’ at stake, but finds it as

267 The novel was published in his magazine ‘Vasanta’, but was not reprinted. It takes up the issue of prostitution which he portrays as a blot on society and in contrast to prostitute is an idealised wife Bhagyalaxmi who spins charaka and leads a life of hardship. Her father-in-law who had led a hedonist life, repents when his son follows his suit and asks Bhagyalaxmi to spend his money for uplifting prostitutes, taking the help of a ‘person who would take up this mission to clear the blot on the Hindu society.’ Prof G H. Naik has collected up to 17th chapter. See *Sthitiprajne: A Collection of Critical Essays on Language, Literature and Culture*, Hampi: Kannada University Prasararanga, 2007, page 296-300
basically an unfair treatment of women as an individual deprived of the basic right to fulfill her desire for sex and hunger, although he considers prostitution as an indictment of Hindu society.

The plight of 16-year-old widow, Malathi, is set in contrast to the marriage of her brother Mahesha at the beginning of the novel. Prafulla, who falls in love with Malathi, represents the dilemma of the youth who sympathizes with her but lacks courage to marry her (later, when he saw her as a prostitute, he commits suicide out of guilty consciousness). Her analysis of the mythical Rama-Sita relationship itself is an indication of her thoughts about the whole myth of chastity and double standard of morality: Rama is a fool to leave Sita after having suffered and fought to reunite for so long; and if Rama was accused of having an affair with Shoorpanakhi what Sita could have done.

Malathi deserts home and gets into the flesh trade out of starvation. Can marriage be an easy solution for her, as most of the reformists have suggested, or bringing her back to the family fold? Mahesha and Veeresha, both educated, offer these solutions only to be rejected by Malathi. Here Karanth differs from the other novelists. Individual conscience and sense of self-respect are of paramount importance than sympathy or social approval for her life. As her mother Sharade, on her death bed, realizes why a widow should care for society which has turned blind to her sufferings.

Mahesha, owning responsibility for her plight, asks her to return home. Veeresha, though he doesn’t treat her as a mere commodity, doesn’t have courage to accept her as ‘wife’ in public. Malathi refuses his offers on the grounds that her individuality and self-respect are not guarded.

Karanth’s approach to issue of sexuality and conjugal relationship undergoes further changes in his next novels following his intense engagement as a Gandhian activist in social life and his in-depth study of the issue. He writes in his autobiography, how he was carried away by the Gandhian ideologies
of sex for reproduction and life-long ‘brahmacharya;’ and later realised how difficult it is for an ordinary man to follow them and how ‘unnatural’ they can be. As a result he makes a deep inquiry of sex among animals and human beings; it has further changed his perspective on conjugal relationship.

In an interview with U. R. Ananthamurthy, Karanth says he always had doubts about issue of morality and immorality. Through his inquiry into animal’s behaviour he understood sex is natural instinct; he says that the sexual behaviour of human beings is different and complex due to their intellect. A human being is a ‘manodehi’ -- with intricate relationship between body and mind.

*Kanyabali* shows that woman, as a human being, should not be deprived of sex while his later novel *Sarasammana Samdhi* (1937) takes a serious view of sexual component of conjugal relationship associated with social, religious and personal morality; *Mai Managala Suliyalli* explores complexities of sexual relationship of human beings on a conceptual level. Woman provides space for his analysis in all these novels which also blur the thin line between categories of ‘chaste’ wife and ‘prostitute.’

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268 *Huchu Manassina Hatthu Mukhagalu*, Bangalore: S.B.S. Publishers Distributors, 1995 page 52-75. He gives an elaborate account of how his Gandhian idealism underwent changes following his efforts in uplifting prostitutes, his association with touring theatre troupes and awareness on homosexuality and other practices prevailing among many men; and his close acquaintance with Gandhian followers who themselves couldn’t follow ideal of celibacy; and about Shraddhananda seer’s influence and his practice of ‘brahmacharya’ in youth. He writes, when he asked Gandhi about marriage of a young girl from prostitute’s family, Gandhi advised her to practise ‘brahmacharya’ for ever in life. Karanth says he was disappointed that Gandhi has a limited understanding of human nature and seemed to believe all are capable to follow what Gandhi practised. Karanth had read in his youth, among others, Gandhi’s *Self-Restraint vs Self-Indulgence*, British sexologist Havelock Ellis’ works on psychology of sex and advocacy of companionate marriage and Judge Ben Lindsey’s *Companionate Marriage* (1927) about American youth’s sexual life (Karanth didn’t agree with many of their conclusions, though learnt from their observations of sexual inversion prevailing in society). This has certainly led him to treat subject of sex with grave concern without romanticising, spiritualising or denouncing it and his novels provide space for his exploration of the subject.

269 *Karanth Prapancha*, Udupi: Karanth Abhinandahan Samithi, 1969

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Sarasammana Samadhi reveals how marriage and family which provide institutional framework for fulfilling sexual desire themselves, ironically, suppress the desire. The novel explores from multiple dimensions that woman, who has been considered property of man and hemmed with notions of chastity and ‘pativrita’, becomes victim of male-dominated traditional marriage system.

The novel takes a critical look at the subordinated position of women who deprived of possession and property and rendered almost slaves of men, and it brings out that husband and wife in such a relationship can only suffer discontentment in marital life.

Though family is projected as a safe haven for woman, it can turn into a torture chamber with insults and lack of sexual and intellectual companionship. However, women in the novel are not docile and meek sufferers depicted on the model of mythical heroines like Seetha or Savithri.

Bhagirathi goes back to her parent’s house in protest against insult by her father-in-law who asked his son not to be too intimate with the wife soon after the wedding. She resolves not to come back until her husband, Hirannaiah, gathers courage to protest against his father and acknowledges her with due respect. Though she falls in love with an educated and inquisitive youth Chandru, heeding her father’s advice, Bhagirathi agrees to live with Hirannaiah who yearns for her companionship and comes to her defying his father, finally.

Sunalini, another educated woman, becomes frustrated with her husband Annappa Kamti who is obsessed with his business and has least regard for her intellectual yearnings. Incompatibility and insult by the mother-in-law and the husband further aggravates her suffering. At one point of time she even ponders on the ‘practicability’ of marriage:
It is a mere illusion that a man and woman, strangers till the day of wedding, can lead a happy life by becoming husband and wife. Man’s preference to woman’s body over her mind will render him a butcher in a slaughterhouse and woman, a sacrificial cock for man’s lust.\textsuperscript{270}

However, like Hirannaiah, Annappa Kamti doesn’t realise his mistake and is too engrossed in his business and controlled by the mother.

Sunalini, following a routine quarrel, dares to tell her husband that if he ever decides on another marriage she will not budge from her house as its rightful owner and instead, would avenge by having affairs with other men there itself. As there was no possibility of them reuniting, solution for the marital disharmony in her case is separation. Here Karanth doesn’t take a patronising or normative approach in the resolution of their problems – the women themselves take crucial decisions and find solutions for their problems. As is evident in the case of Bhagirathi and Sunalini, Karanth seems to prefer the continuation of marriage if there is scope for egalitarian relationship and accepts divorce if such reconciliation is impossible and marital discord reaches an impasse.

Karanth doesn’t associate any of these qualities with ‘modernity’ or ‘tradition’. Apart from parental control, religious and social regulation, the novel also observes ‘modern’ ‘educated’ men can also be insensitive as in the case of Seetharamu who behaves lasciviously with his village wife soon after their wedding, without befriending her or giving any room for gradual development of affection or love.

Chandru, an educated youth searching for an able companion for life, becomes a witness to most of these horrifying ruptured marital relationships. A shocking revelation comes through him at

\textsuperscript{270} Sarasammana Samadhi, page 108
the end of the novel that Sarasamma, worshipped as ‘Mahasati’ and worshipped by both an unhappy wife and husband for solutions to their marital problems, was herself a victim of unhappy marriage. Sarasamma’s spirit tells Chandru that she didn’t like her ailing husband Neelachalayya and was in love with another man. But she was forced to become ‘Sati’ and burnt on her husband’s pyre. (In Madiddunno Maharaya [1915] by M S Puttanna, ‘Sati’ Arundhamma is glorified as symbol of chaste Arya woman worshipped by the idealised woman of the novel, Seethamma.) Karanth, distancing himself from glorification of the monolithic ‘Hindu culture’ and without being nostalgic about the ‘ancient values’, could critique hypocrisy and gender discrimination more aggressively. Instead of prescribing a set of codes either retrieved from ‘the glorious past’ or proposed from a nationalist utilitarian point of view such as to ‘build a prosperous and virile nation’, Karanth seems to hold a complex view where individual morality assumes priority rendering uniform and easy solution for all cases, nearly impossible.

He portrays a variety of either fulfilled or unhappy sexual relationships within and outside marriage, in different socio-economic and cultural conditions in several of his novels, and only a few are cited here.

As Karanth observes, sex as a natural desire is beyond control of any of these social mores and has capability to make wife/husband forget negligible differences, as in the instance of Nagaveni of Return to Earth: Despite having been deceived several times, and contracted venereal disease by her husband Lachcha earlier, “bound by her sense of morality and amity, she forgot everything else and let him share her bed. The intense hatred towards him was forgotten.”

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271 Return to Earth, page 222
The novelist, in case of pre-marital relationship, can clinically observe circumstances in which the woman becomes susceptible to seduction. Belli in *Chomana Dudi* was both economically and sexually exploited. Besides, there is difference between her love for Manvela and her sexual exploitation by Mingela. As evident in the case of Manjule-Lakshmana Teertha in *Mai Managala Sutiyalli* marriage need not be a pre-requisite for meaningful sexual relationship; but in *Bettada Jeeva Gopalaiah* and Shankaramma could lead a happy marital life with all its inexplicable beauty, because of their mutual love and harmony of both body and intellect.

Karanth, who is humane in all such circumstances, turns satirical towards free love in the case of Jannu-Jalaja, Lachcha-Jalaja of *Return to Earth*; and sexual relationship driven by selfishness in the case of Enna Bright, Sumana Bai and Shankararaya who has deserted his wife and was pretending to be a seer in *Sanyasiya Baduku* or in the case of Indumanti who seduces Vyasa with selfish motive in *Moga Padeda Mana* or perfidious act of Girijie (Kusuma) of *Hettala Taayi* who gets child out of extramarital relationship.

A further analysis of Karanth’s epic novel *Return to Earth* gives better comprehension of changes in conjugal relationship from generation to generation (from 1850 to 1940) due to several factors including modernity, colonial administration and the consequent changes in value systems.

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272 There are other dimensions to Belli’s relationship with Manvela. As her father Choma himself realises he postponed her marriage, because, after his wife’s death, Belli managed the household and she was sent to that ‘deadly plantation’ to clear loans. She falls in love with Manvela. Naive young girl could not resist the natural force of her desire though she had a sense of guilt. For Choma it was difficult to accept his son’s conversion after marrying a Christian girl or Belli’s ‘immorality’; for Belli, not deep-rooted in tradition like her father, it is just another possibility to fulfill their dreams to get a chance to plough land and also to marry Manvela. The author distances from taking sides, though is sympathetic towards Belli.
The novel is set in Kodi, a hamlet near Dakshina Kannada in which all the characters, except Lachcha, discussed here are deeply rooted. It is strictly regional and refuses to yield to the euphoric notion of nation building, as Nagaveni tells her son in the novel, the Freedom Movement is not for the poor who have no idea as to the source of their next meal.

Nevertheless, implosions in the ‘region’ due to socio-economic changes finally would offer a broad view of the country’s transition from its traditional roots to new horizons opened up by modernity, and how finally tradition and modernity combine to form a different system. Here modernity and tradition do not become antagonising forces and neither ‘tradition’ nor ‘modern’ remain the same finally as the novel breaks normative duality between modernity and tradition as two opposite strands of existence.

Rama Aithala, caught in the drudgery of agrarian life sees a sign of liberation in modern world as his neighbours Sheena Mayya and his sons did. But his expectations shatter as his son Lachcha becomes gambler and womaniser, and alienated from Kodi after his English education. Lachcha’s son Rama of third generation returns to Kodi neither completely disappointed with modernity nor being attracted by any supreme value of traditional life—modernity in its materiality has its own problems: Rama was unemployed and confused but for guidance of his mother. Hence when he returns to Kodi it is not the same Kodi in which his grandfather and grandmothers lived—just as he took up farming, but cultivated commercial crops like tobacco as against traditional food crops.

For the women, the novel seems to suggest, there is no emancipation from Kodi as it can survive only because of them, whether acknowledged or not, in all the generations. However, it is conveyed not in an imperative tone to keep woman eternal slave of domestic bondage, but as a
matter of choice which modern, educated Nagaveni from a liberal upbringing indicates.\textsuperscript{273} Besides, Nagaveni differs from the wives of the first generation in her exercise of freedom and capacity to take decisions.

Rama Aithala exercised unrestrained control over both his first wife Parothi and second wife Sathyabhama. When he decides to remarry as he didn’t beget a child from the first marriage, he tells his neighbour about his first wife’s reaction (which he has taken for granted):

Sheena, you don’t know the system of arbitration we have in our house. Among us it is one and only one master. The husband saying one thing and the wife saying something else — that has never happened in our family till now... As far as such things are concerned, our Parothi is a real Seethadevi. The only thing lacking in her is that God did not will her any children.\textsuperscript{274}

But what holds the conjugal relationship of Rama Aithala and Parothi is their religious sensibility and traditional beliefs. Karanth doesn’t glorify her wifehood for having accepted second marriage of her husband though he is sympathetic and observant that she is bound by traditional beliefs and circumstances. Parothi, being childless, finds another marriage a requisite to get a son to carry out their final rites and to be ‘vamshodharka’ — for perpetuity of the family. The narrative neither endorses nor repudiates such religious beliefs, but opens up dialectic between strength and limitations of such beliefs in her life.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{273} In Karanth’s another novel \textit{Mai Managala Suliyalli}, for Chandri English education and job opportunity offers an avenue to ‘emancipate’ herself from her family tradition of prostitution.
\textsuperscript{274} \textit{Return to Earth}, page 61-62
\textsuperscript{275} T. P. Ashok observes this while analysing conjugal relationship in Karanth’s novels.
Parothi is helpless when compared to her widowed sister-in-law Sarasothi, a source of strength for the couple and who has freedom to walk out of the house in protest when she was ignored. But, Sarasothi is not a glorified widow leading an ascetic life as any symbol of purity. For, Karanth has already taken up and addressed the issue in Kanyabali; besides, the daughter-in-law Nagaveni herself was living almost a widow’s life as her irresponsible husband Lachcha was always away from home. She was aware of her sexual deprivation. Though Parothi and Aithala’s second wife Sathyabhama are docile, together with Sarasothi they can counter the male dominance. Their inner strength comes from their hard work and endurance. Karanth’s commitment to social realism makes him refuse to give his women freedom that was not yet a part of the lived experience of his times though he assesses and appreciates their value system even when he doesn’t share them.

As Rajendra Chenni points out, Karanth creates a female narrative in which the women’s capacity to take on both the male arrogance and nature’s fury often turns Rama Aithala into a childish blunder.

The choral voices of the women muttering in the kitchen, speaking in the paddy fields or whispering on the deathbed powerfully deconstruct male notions of success and power. Such is the presence of the narrator that with his patient description of the repetitive acts of women’s labour—farming, cooking, procreating and conserving—he bends the reader’s

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276 In his other novels like Karulina Kare and Sanyasiya Baduku, wives, with the help of aged and altruistic women like Sarasothi, continue to remain chaste and endeavour to sustain family when deserted by husband. It may lead to a persuasive argument that Karanth idealises desexualised and aged women, but it is difficult to agree after analysing his approach to sexual relationship of man and woman. Probably faith in values to retain beauty of life amidst hardship can be considered as an ideal that these aged women represent for all; or, they can also be considered as remnants of matriarchy. But I desist from ‘essentialising’ these complex characters here. If exaggerated, probably all these women brigade and men with ‘feminine’ sensibilities of Karanth’s novels may make a strong feminist group opposing patriarchal oppression in all its forms.
power of empathy towards the women. He is able to convince the readers that somehow essential humanity with its gifts of survival and sufferings resides in the women’s world, though inevitably confined as far as the first generation is concerned.277

Decision to send his son Lachcha to a government school is also taken by Rama Aithala while the women oppose it as Lachcha has to sit with the Untouchables.278 For Rama Aithala the English education seems to elevate his status in society while for the women it is a sign of decadence.

However, Lachcha’s ‘fall’ later is not due to ‘corrupting nature of modernity’, but due to greed, hypocrisy and lack of commitment to any values.

Lachcha, in contrast to his father, is lascivious and much against his father’s expectation to earn money by obtaining English education, he pushes the family to the verge of bankruptcy by spending the wealth of the family acquired through relentless efforts of the women brigade and Rama Aithala. As against his wife Nagaveni who hails from an urban area but gets domesticated to Kodi by the ‘deities’ of the house, Lachcha, who had witnessed the family reeling under poverty turns his back to Kodi for the glitter of the city. However, he doesn’t represent modern values as there are others from his generations and elders, like Nagaveni’s father (an advocate) and her brothers (English educated and employed).

To live in Kodi was a choice for Nagaveni, who had modern education and she chose not to leave Kodi on any occasion, rejecting even parental support as well. Her decision was grounded on

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277 Return to Earth, page xii
278 V. S. Shreedhar in his unpublished thesis observes that here women are not just victims of tradition but act as its conduit. They wouldn’t have differed from Sankappaiah’s mother who refused to allow the Untouchable Choma to plough the land in Chomana Dudi.
her sense of self-respect and self-reliance. She is not as docile as Parothi or Sathyabhama as she can vent her anger against her husband. She differs from them in her aesthetic and ‘modern’ sensibilities. As Rajendra Chenni puts it, ‘Rama of third generation is the child of the sisterhood of women of the Aithala family and has internalised the feminine sensibility.’

Rama represents the third generation for which ‘traditional values’ have lost currency, but new values have not been shaped. Probably Rama with his mother may be one possible solution to the fissured world of Kodi, as their modernity doesn’t ‘alienate’ them completely from their community. They could probably be ‘modern’ without being ‘alienated’.

The novel ends with another Sarasothi coming to Kodi through ‘wedding’: All the wives of earlier generations in the novel have entered into life of sufferings and hardship through marriage and the third one has different connotations even when suggesting some sort of continuity:

“The next day, there was dust everywhere in the yard. The urgency of constructing the pandal! The hurried preparation of happala and sandige! Padumumoru’s Shanbhog was sitting in a place attending to the essential things which had to be done. Rama sat cheerfully in the verandah.”

Nagaveni saw Rama sitting smiling and said, ‘Rama, her name and your Doddaaji’s name are the same!’

‘Like my name and my grandfather’s are the same!’

As Polanki Ramamurthy notes, it is an epic of happala and sandige and a classic that celebrates the great sustaining power of the ordinariness of life.

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279 V. S. Shreedhar in his unpublished thesis observes that here women are not just victims of tradition but act as its conduit. They wouldn’t have differed from Sankappaiah’s mother who refused to allow the Untouchable Choma to plough the land in Chomana Dudi, p 439

280 Polanki Ramamurthy, Marali Mannige, in Karanth Manthana, page 219
Novels on the Freedom Movement

Karanth, in *Return to Earth* makes a passing reference to the Freedom Movement that shook the life in 1940s. Rama returns to Kodi after a brief involvement in the freedom movement. His other novels *Oudaryada Uralalli* and *Mugida Yuddha* deal with the nationalist movement with Karanth’s characteristic realist mode of narrative. When compared to other novels like A. N. Krishnarao’s *Amara August*, Ta. Ra. Subbarao’s *Raktha Tarpana* and Basavaraja Kattimani’s *Swatantryadedege* and *Madi Madidavaru*, Karanth doesn’t valorise the nationalist heroes and martyrs, but adopts a clinical approach in analysing growing corruption in the political life, with a sense of ‘Gandhian morality’. The novel also takes a rather pessimistic, disillusioned note of post-Independent political life which, of course has become a dominant theme of Kannada novels after 1950s.

Just as Kodi survived largely because of the women brigade, Radhakrishna’s wife Satya becomes an anchor which holds together family during the tempest created by the nationalist movement. However, Satya again is not a sacrificial goat offered to retain stability of family, but represents a set of values, a different world which her husband deserts often with lofty ideals typical of the nationalist youth of the period.

As discussed earlier, in *Karana Pursha*, woman, unless she becomes a supporter of her nationalist husband, would be an obstruction. Here Karanth dismisses such idealisation. Similarly in Basavaraja Kattimani’s *Swatantryadedege*, though the protagonist’s goals and objectives are obscure, a village wife is trained to become his companion while his urban educated friend, Shanta rejects marriage (again with very vague hints of her romantic love in the novel) to become an active freedom fighter.
However, Satya emerges different from all these women due to her awareness of her position that she is dependent on Radhakrishna for entering the political movement. She plays a supportive role, not only for men but also for other women freedom fighters of the distant Uttara Kannada. Karanth recognises and legitimises women’s ‘indirect’ services and sacrifice for the nation-making. He delineates an ‘authentic world of the quotidian’ which Satya inhabits and later disillusioned Radhakrishna takes refuge after going to places.

Satya before entering the turbulent and uncertain world of Radhakrishna through marriage, was facing a different kind of problem: As she was born in ‘inauspicious Moolanakshatra,’ it was difficult for her parents to find a match in the traditional society. Ironically, her parents plan to get her married to Radhakrishna as he didn’t believe in ‘superstitions’ of the traditional life and was ‘modern’ in his outlook. Radhakrishna is not a scapegoat, for, he had dilemma if marriage would be a hurdle for his nationalist activities. His doubts are cleared after Satya, who is from orthodox family, accepts all his conditions – to follow him in his works on uplifting Untouchables, freedom fight and poverty. Besides, he was ‘naturally’ attracted towards her.

The rest is the story of Radhakrishna’s public activities and Satya’s quotidian services. The author, at one point of time, ironically, says Radhakrishna feels that ‘weaving’ and ‘charaka’ are ‘feminine task’ (Hennu kelasa) and he is eager for works befitting man – like opening a national school and a school for Untouchables. Satya repeats another ‘Nagaveni’, without taking parent’s

281 Oudaryada Urulalli, page 79
support but with the help of an orphan Shyama to face difficulties and challenges caused both by nature’s fury and poverty.282

Radhakrishna, who begins his career as a freedom fighter with Gandhian ideals, is gradually disillusioned about how local leaders mislead the youth in the name of ‘Gandhi’ and his non-violent principles; he is also disappointed after having been deceived by the corrupt and selfish leaders like Prabhu Dev and Nanda. Besides, he finds that the Freedom Movement is not well-planned and the local leaders like Bannatti lack commitment. From the beginning even Radhakrishna, like Vamanna of Karana Purusha, had patriotic feelings and a strong urge to participate in the Freedom Movement. But he didn’t have a clear idea of what and how to fight against the British authority. Finally, he admits before Satya that he has lost faith in both Gandhian ideals of non-violence and non-cooperation and also in the violent sabotage acts of the extremist nationalists. There is a lack of guidance and leadership. After Dayanandaraya, (who is depicted after a freedom fighter Karnad Sadashivaraya), lost his property and became bankrupt due to the greedy nationalists, Radhakrishna doesn’t find any ideal nationalist leader.283 Karanth had aptly comprehended the problem of the freedom movement in Karnataka, which didn’t have a leader who could ably represent the whole of Karnataka at the pan-Indian level.

282 Though Radhakrishna is not a negative image like Shankararaya of Sanyasiya Baduku, Satya belongs to diverse group of wives toiling hard to sustain family, in Karanth’s novels. Sumitra in the novel had support of Rukmai who is portrayed in contrast to Shankararaya who becomes ‘Sanyasi’ to escape facing life. However, Satya doesn’t have support of any aged woman, making one to strongly suspect if Karanth has glorified her ‘valour’ as an ‘ordinary’ wife. However, it is not a surprise when we observe how Karanth’s most of the novels unravel immense human possibilities of ordinary men and women.

283 By 1940s there was not a single strong local leader from the Congress to lead the whole of Karnataka. See Chandrashekhar’s Dakshina Bharatadalli Vasahatushahi Sangharsha. Most of the novels on the Freedom Movement have such confused and often misled nationalist youth in the novels like Karana Purusha, Inamdar’s Moorabatte and Basavaraja Kattimani’s novel Maadi Madidavaru and Swatantryadedege, and Sriranga’s Kumara Sambhava and Purushartha.
Unhappy with poor response to the movement in Dakshina Kannada Radhakrishna goes to villages in Uttara Kannada where the political agitation was intense and several families, including women, were arrested. In Nagashettihalli, where the entire village life was disrupted and women had gone to jail, Radhakrishna serves as a volunteer and sends orphaned children to his ‘ashram’. Despite her poverty, Satya happily agrees to look after the children, as a gesture of her contribution to the movement though she can’t directly participate in the movement like the brave women freedom fighters of Uttara Kannada.

While Radhakrishna’s world of ideals crumbles, Satya and Shyama could sustain the family life and continuity of ordinary existence with their hard work, commitment and love for Radhakrishna who finds solace, finally, in the world of Satya and Shyama - which is Karanth’s ‘feminine world’.

Another novel which acknowledges woman’s participation in the nation-making directly is *Maadi Madidavaru* by Basavaraja Kattimani. However, here these women are modeled on ‘warrior woman’ of Galaganatha’s historical romances.

*Maadi Madidavaru* is a sequel to his earlier novel *Swatantryadedege* in which at the end, Shanta goes to All India Congress Committee meeting in Pune. Here Hema is returning from the AICC meet with a resolve to join the Freedom Movement against her father’s suggestion to get married. The novel is about those who responded to Gandhiji’s call for ‘do or die’ and became martyrs during the Freedom Movement in 1942. During the Quit India Movement, several freedom fighters in Belgaum had systematically planned to go underground and carry out sabotage activities to
disrupt the British administration. Jayaprakash Narayan, a nationalist leader, had called it ‘Kamataka Pattern’. *Madi Madidavaru* is an authentic account of this movement.284

Hema, who joins an extremists’ team led by Gandhian-cum-socialist Shekhar,285 differs from other educated girls in her commitment to fight against the British. She also differs from her male counterpart Vishwanath, to whom she says: “Until I am in this movement, I forget that I am a woman. In my view, I am not a woman and you are not a man; we are soldiers in the war.”286 Hema, who dies while escaping the arrest, is a perfect ideal of warrior woman in the extremist group which the novelist passionately depicts.

Kattimani’s understanding of Gandhian ideal doesn’t go beyond the naïve views on village India. Like Hema’s father, the senior Congress leaders are criticized as weak and the freedom struggle for them is to get arrested and go to jail. They will not mind joining hands with the British administration for personal gains. These leaders in the urban areas are more interested in becoming ministers while the real fighters of villages rely on their labour. Such views and biases have gone into his portrayal of Hema, Shekhar and Vishwanath, who become martyrs at the end of the novel.

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284 Y. B. Himmadi, *Chalejav Chaluvali Aruvattara Nenapu Mattu Basavaraja Kattimani Smarane*, Bangalore: Kamataka Sahitya Academy, 2003, page 29. *Swatantradege*, (which roughly means, towards freedom) connotes emancipation of women and farmers from exploitation. Shanta though finds opportunities for woman’s liberation during the Freedom Movement, is as inconsistent as the protagonist Shekhar with his zeal to emancipate farmers. Both the novels operate with the binary of village/town.

285 Leftist ideologies were so feeble that while some writers could make a hybrid of ‘Upanishat’ and Marxist ideologies (for example, A. N. Krishnarao); in Kattimani it is concocted with Gandhian ideologies of ‘village India’. However, different political affinities are not discussed here. But Kulakunda Shivaraya (Niranjan) was committed to Marxist ideologies. As C. N. Ramachandran in his essay mentioned earlier, observes, for Niranjan the Other was not only the colonial power but also the exploitative class within the country and outside the country. Niranjan’s novel *Chirasmarane*, depicts a phase of the Freedom Movement as it shaped itself in a village, Kayyuru in Kerala. It documents that the freedom struggle began in true sense at the grassroot level with the involvement of humble farmers and workers.

286 *Maadi Madidavaru*, page 157