Chapter - 6

CONCLUSION

Woman is an inseparable part of this world. Her existence completes the creation of earth. But our society is ordered in a system of gender ideology where socio-political, religious and economical status of women is rooted in ground reality.

Indian womanhood perpetuates domesticity and its responsibility as the center of a woman’s life. Individual self and personal desires are ignored to render contributions to the family. Norms of religious institutions subside women, hinder their progress inside and outside the society. Identity, efforts and talents of women remain behind the veil due to lack of awareness and illiteracy to empower themselves. Indian Christian women are also embedded in Indian ethnicity, culture and values. Although they are exposed to new religious belief, Indian traditions are binding in their lives. The ancient customs are hidden and treasured in their attitudes, thoughts and in the way of life with modern outlook. True self of woman is destroyed in an oppressive society with the hold of various institutions. The western social system is also not different regarding woman’s condition. Enforcement of feminine role and maintenance of cultural heritage with considerable binds are in order. But enlightened growing consciousness and education fortify the western woman to analyze individual identity. The opportunity for liberal thoughts, individuality, absence of casteism and the established suppressive codes gives courage which in turn strengthens self-confidence and emancipates the western Christian women. As distinctive voices, they get a way to organize themselves and discover. Their awakened insights and writings on the cause of women promote changes and mobility in the status of women. Many women’s movements, social groups, associations and organizations in the west have provided new empowering opportunities and they have
considered the various progressive interests of women. This has great impact on the Indian women and has opened new pages in their life with confidence and solidarity.

Transformative and reformative circumstances in the lives of Indian women contributed to achieve equality with their male counterparts. The remarkable reforms in western India of the 19th century made significant decrease of the meaningless social suppressive norms. Women were urged to claim certain strategies to subvert customs of social and religious evils. In personal life, they achieved to recognize their aspirations, creativity and concentrate on consciousness. Assertive and growing enlightened mind allowed to make choice regarding life partner, higher education and economical status. Accessibility of the public sphere provided for their contributions there also.

Indian Christian women reframe their lives in the social fabric of India. The new faith proposes to come out of superstitions, offers to engage themselves in selfless services to others and promotes public awareness. Active participation in the individual’s progress and in the development of society and nation enables them. Gradually, Christianity is considered to be a minority group in India. As far as Indian Christian woman is concerned, the social and cultural conditions overlook the status in spite of her great achievements. Even the new systems of modern world seem to adhere to the superiority of men over women in mainstream culture. This minority woman’s issues and rights also seem to fail to get prominence from the government. The insecurities are rising regarding Christian marriage laws, divorce laws and maintenance and protection laws after divorce. So the Christian marriage and property rights and laws should assess the radical changes depending upon the existed social circumstances. Even the contemporary minority women with theoretical knowledge require to address property rights, legal status, rights against physical assault and political participation.
Women are excluded from preaching, imparting doctrinal instructions and other services in the religious institution due to conventions of patriarchal order. The married woman pastor assists her husband in spiritual duty but she is not recognized. The experience of humiliation is torturing women pastors. They are barred to express feelings and vital space in congregation is closed to them. But in the contemporary age, the promotion of ordination of women seems to get some recognition with their assertive involvement in congregation. Even though the leading role of women is visible owing to the women’s movement, the hold of male dominance is not away in their role of leadership. Woman is expected to be the guardian of familial and religious conventional doctrines. Though liberty is foreseen in woman’s religious life, to fill the gap of the secondary role given to her is essential. It is necessary to seek that opportunity with growing self-awareness, avoidance of and condemnation of the inhuman acts. The Holy Scriptures should be re-read from a new perspective and understand the power structure with role models. The cultural and social living conditions of Indian Christian women and western Christian women are entirely different. With this understanding, women’s groups, forums and associations are engaged in lobbying for legal amendments of woman’s laws wherever they find anti-women stand.

The present study depicts the literary representation and issues around Christian and non-Christian women in the novels of contemporary South Indian Christian women writers. They deal with marginalized realities of women in various states of South India. Women’s confinement with love and marriage, family, religion, society and economical and educational limitations are the main focus. The selected literary texts also delineate the existing plight and gender issues among Dalit community, low caste rural community, downtrodden community in urban areas, educated community and upper caste community. Women writers attempt to disclose various absurdities of life in diverse societies but the responsibilities, obligations and bitterness of woman’s life are similar even
in the globalised world. The prevalent inherited social structure encircles women with inequality and injustice and restricts her progressive self as brought out in the articulations of these writers.

Identifying subordination, writers address the various agitations raised against hierarchical impositions in society. Assertions of the untouchables, religious women and combative urban and single women are highlighted with their struggle, challenging attitude and changing prohibited life. The women writers try to raise the voice of woman with the purpose to alter their mindset and to recognize themselves. These novels record realistically the challenged resistance of lower caste woman and the striving life of the poor who are without support. They also hold the mirror to the brave acts of middle class woman who cross the boundaries of suffocating system of religious institutions and the subversive surroundings and to the isolated and individualistic life of the urban woman.

It is not only important to identify the problems of women but also to provide ways to self-exploration and identity. These women writers seek consciousness among the educated, strong-willed, bold, professional and empowered women and their will to establish individuality in this societal life. They present awakened women characters that emphasize effective qualities in the contemporary women irrespective of their cultures. They foreground the achievements and progressive views and stress upon the significant role of women in this world. The exemplified situations and female issues testify the accountability of these authors towards the welfare of the society. These writings by women document their endeavor to project the life of religious women inside and outside the monastery, the courageous lives of rural and downtrodden women in the midst of irresponsible men and poverty, dual self and psychological dilemma between tradition and modern codes in the urban women and the determined women to realize their aims. All this reveals the actual realities to the
world. The mission to incorporate awareness, significance of education, requirement of right upbringing, co-operation of other members to women are some of the views that come to the fore in this analysis of Christian authors.

The women writers selected for this study stress the women’s life and inspire them to make progress with the depiction of varied female images. They record the life events concerning women and explore the possibility of valuable sustainable lives. They consciously represent the ideological commitments in life to deal with the hurt of women. The remarkable creative talent of these writers is devoted to women which marks them as women thinkers. They refuse to portray their female characters as parasitic, instead present them in a gesture of protest with interesting consequences. Both Bama in *Karukku* and Margalitha, the central character of Sarah Joseph’s novel, *Othappu* are trapped in a situation of crisis and strive against the atmosphere created by social norms. The contemporary bold Tamil writer, Bama trespasses the contradictions and discusses the caste identity in her village. She ventures on the road of censorship to reveal the gendered selves of both high caste and low caste women psychologically, socially, religiously and sexually. As ex-nuns, they stand in different contexts but both find solace through serving this human world.

All these interesting and notable Christian women writers with their feminist scholarly effort enter deep into the women’s realities to present various perspectives. They nowhere try to hide the authentic insights of life and thus enlighten the society. They transgress the typical and restricted role to women in their thoughts with courageous narratives. They cover their chosen temporal and cultural spectrum focusing on the lives of women with their testimonies. These writers from varied languages of South India engage to draw the attention of society to certain situations of women of particular communities. The perpetuated social values in every culture curtail women’s creative work. The education and supportive atmosphere of these authors provide them the opportunity to be outspoken on the oppressive state of women. They find their literary records as
bridges to reach women. They protest and condemn the malevolent influence on women in their outstanding articulations. Each of the characters with its vitality as mother, daughter, wife, grandmother, sister, nurse and teacher discharge the responsibility without any hesitation. They submit to the oppressions of various ideologies only to express their preference to change their lives either through suffering or through struggle for their self-hood. Each turbulent circumstance and the awareness to resist them provide an identity to woman. Moreover, these identities are valued through the narratives. Learning, moral ideas, and reforming thoughts are noticeable in their writings.

This study has also examined the Christian and non-Christian women’s lived reality as represented in the literary endeavors of the leading South Indian Christian women writers. It has addressed the issues which these writers find as imperative in the contemporary world. It has concentrated on the Dalit woman, downtrodden woman, religious woman, educated and economically liberated woman, color-discriminated woman and bold woman who find themselves in a tussle to some extent. The analyses of complexities, inner conscious thoughts, adaptability and responsibility, defiant attitude against inevitable norms, achievements, and resolutions presented by these writers contribute to the woman class and to the entire society. They urge to realize the individuality of a woman. Thus the crowning performance of these women writers is impressive.

Indian society has encountered a considerable advancement in technology, science, modern education and the way of life. Even social reforms and movements try to eradicate injustice and inequality in society. In these circumstances, the religious and social mores consciously and unconsciously resist the upliftment of women. So many Indian women writers mark the changing circumstances of women from their limitations to the assertions of identity. And the writings of these South Indian Christian women writers with their religious upbringing offer insight into the life of Christian and non-Christian women. The writing consciously and unconsciously strengthen them to come out of religious and societal legacies.
These contemporary writers focus on the gender bias in their respective regional cultures. They expose the domination of land lords and Dalit men, problems of racism, poverty, helplessness, ignorance, illiteracy, lack of consciousness among lower class women both in urban and in rural areas, impact of religious upheavals on women, controversial moments for religious women and conflicts in the mind of urban woman in the patriarchal society. Though they represent women of various regions with distinct culture, color, traditions and languages, the tears and ongoing hostility over women are not different.

Dalit Tamil Christian writer, Bama shares her experiences such as casteism, discrimination within the religious institutions, crooked attitudes of religious members, the existence of child labor, poverty-ridden life and violence against women, mental stress and economic burden in her books, Karukku and Sangati. Sarah Joseph portrays hypocrisy of the religious institution, and society’s treatment towards an ex-nun in Othappu. The Daughters of Alaha depicts the degraded circumstances and condition of otherness of downtrodden women in the society of Kerala. Even urban educated woman is not spared from patriarchal oppression which is pointed in Dev and Simran and Dangerlok by Eunice De Souza. The progressive path of women to realize her identity is also disturbed by the male dominated power. Married or unmarried women’s discourses of pressurized and disadvantageous situations are recorded in these literary works. Though women are depicted in stereotypical roles, the writers interpret radical thoughts. They bring out the breaking acts of religious norms from religious female members and the defiance of marginalized and low caste women against dominant powers. The sustenance of the urban women and the educated women’s step to redefine her life against all odds is displayed in The Dead Cannot Hear and There is a Dance For Every Song.

These Christian women writers are critical of the repressive realistic patterns of woman’s life. They bring out the views of self-confident women in her
process of seeking individuality. Literature enables them to articulate their courageous attitude. The existing literature of women, for women, by women makes attempts to change the attitudes and deeds of the people in society. This gives way for women writers to strengthen themselves and make them to think at a higher level for the improvement of woman’s cause. Most of our Indian women writers are influenced by western women and they help eradicate women’s illiteracy. They are made to come out of blind faiths, religious bondage and meaningless tradition and customs. They wish Indian women to be self supportive and economically independent and inspire them to lead an independent life. Women staying within the four walls have enough courage to fight against the oppressions and demand their rights. So house-bound women come out to earn and find their own way to be self sufficient. They begin to write and fight for their cause and create writing as an instrument for emancipation.

The Indian social structure accommodates the criterion of transition sluggishly. It is true that the ideology of Feminism has created consciousness of sexist bias. But these writers focus the existing imposition on women and the offensive controls in the contemporary world. They define the external and internal organizations of Christian and non-Christian women in South Indian regions observing the hardships of Dalit women and marginalized women in rural and urban areas; upper caste women issues and inhibitions of female urbanite with portrayals of women both young and old. Along with such description of gender issues from generation to generation, they try to inspire the defending nature in women which are hidden. Their writings give right exposure, sensibility and courage effectively to the countered actualities of life. Their well defined rural and urban images are not gaining success in reality due to lack of education, boldness and deep rooted oppressive traditional and religious holds. It is evident in the ending of their stories.
These writers consider the welfare of society through justice to women as a class. They stress the right nurturing of every human being and call upon to treat woman as a human. The impact of religion in the lives of women at every action is noted in their writings. The dual self of urban women in search of perfection and psychological conflicts around traditional and modern mores are demonstrated to give insight into woman’s thoughts. It allows women to understand the complexities and helps discover themselves. The requirements of education, awareness, facing life practically with courage, economical liberation, and responsible position in the society are highlighted. Woman’s sensitivity to realize her individuality with creativity and endeavor are made clear.

The powerful writings of these women authors uphold the experiences of life. Their way of thinking urges women to sustain with own ideas and identity. The spirit inside them helps to grow above all inhibitions. They take stance through their writings to emphasize change and their contribution is notable in this attempt to make their vision into reality. The necessity of autonomy, self-reliance and self-assertion is highlighted in the works. Their literary writings are themselves a woman’s struggle to defy marginalized status. They invite women to continue this challenge.

The close observation of women’s lives in the perspective of South Indian Christian women authors earns them a place in the Indian literary scenario. As a minority group, Christian women are sidelined from many privileges and there is lack of opportunity to address female problems. But strength of education is a tool in establishing their identity in the plural culture and multiple communities of India. There is no exaggeration to say that the critics give women, who are in bondage at every stage of life, to find a powerful voice to surmount the system. Their concepts strengthen the confidence of women. Depiction of women especially Christian women of all age-groups and their religious, psychological, political, social aspects are revealed through feminist perspective. As Christian
women writers, they touch the deep-rooted values of women within the community and bring forth the ground reality. These women authors’ words of caution are a way of awareness to the entire world of women. Reformist intention in their thoughts responds to the dire need to change the living reality of women. The women’s movement through writings awakens sense and conscience to think over the progress of women.

It seems that these writers have proved themselves as efficient by crossing the encountered challenges of life and psychological traumas. They have unwrapped the hidden truth of woman’s life without deceiving self. Facing various apprehensions at different levels, they have unveiled social throb and criticized crooked inhuman system by representing women’s class. Their engagement with writing about women, urges them to raise a powerful voice against contemporary issues while creating awareness among people. It is inevitable that the existing suppressive contexts of women mute the raised voice. But the determined will of woman tries to seek her own stand and continue their struggle. These authors’ literary efforts extend an invitation to every woman to be clear in their decisions and emphasize liberal thoughts.

These South Indian Christian women writers are distinctive in the Indian literary scenario for their attempt to throw light on a minority group. By doing this they sow the seed of change and new. Thus they also contribute to the woman’s world. The meaning of real role models of Krupabai Sathanandhan, Mother Theresa and others are evoked in the writings of these writers. Woman is required to identify ignorance, face realistic situation with a literate mind and break the fearful wall with courage of conviction and clarity. Crossing the threshold of illiteracy is essential for her. It is a way to come out of subordination and negligence of the various oppressive forces. Along with these views, these women writers stress opportunities for women. In turn, they empower women to go against injustice. They are living instances for every woman to grow herself with
social awareness and social networking which strengthen her. They have committed themselves to raise a kind of social responsibility in woman. Constructive women’s involvement to create a healthy society is also visualized. The threat of traditions to woman’s existence is surmounted with feminist perspectives and social justice. The writers’ literary attempts become implemental in incorporating social change.