Chapter - 2

FEMALE RESTRAINTS AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVELS

A novel is the reflection of social, political and other issues of a particular age. Writers project the conditions of the people in the literary landscape. Women writers, who are considered as the story-tellers from generations, make an attempt at the realistic presentation of women, experiences of their life, their issues and dilemmas. Social restraints are acts of forcible subjugation and control over the feelings. Female restraints are present in a patriarchal system.

Patriarchy is that social organization which produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female. It is a political concept in that it governs power-structured relationships in which one group is controlled by another.¹

Patriarchy emphasizes on gender oppression. It takes a strong hold on man’s and woman’s psyche. In much of patriarchal literature, woman is viewed as a symbol of self-sacrifice and the various suffering faces of women are explored. Though woman’s role is significant in maintaining social order in society, she is treated as Other. Her behavior, emotions, attitude, desire are determined by social norms in a male dominated world. She is relegated as inferior. She has to perform the role of socially defined images of a good daughter, a wife, a sister and a mother. Without transcending their traditional atmosphere, she silently accepts the sex-related attributes:

A historical investigation reveals that the patriarchal system came to India with the Aryans and it was a Brahmanical practice. The Dravidians were Nayyars in South India and their family system was matriarchal. Studies on Dravidian ethnic survivals suggest that the matriarchal character of the old Dravidian family was substantially compromised under the influence of patriarchal culture instances of the social metamorphosis began to raise in literature right from the early centuries of the Christian Era.²
Age old norms of patriarchy threaten the rebellious thoughts if it appears in a woman’s mind. With secondary position in the sexist bias of patriarchal society, she is not free to think of her own desire, an independent life or career of her own. Women writers delineate the sub-ordinate position of women characters with their acts of breaking the silence. Man controls woman’s social, political, sexual, economic, physical powers and makes them victims in the existent crude patriarchal set-up. Simone De Beauvoir says:

So man is master of a reality that is all the more worthy of being mastered that it surpasses him.³

By the male formulated rules of the social structure, man is treated as superior to woman. Gender, caste, class, race and religion determine the role of a woman in India. Her identity and position are neutralized in the Indian context due to male domination and female subjugation. In the Indian social patterns of sexuality, we can find sexual asymmetry also.

Woman is marginalized, rejected and dislocated in the oppressive stereotypical society. Real power is not accessible to women in the outside world. Intellectual and physical powers of women are degraded in the dominating structure. Even woman’s role, her behavior and personality are determined by the stereotypical expectations and beliefs.

Man wants to exercise his supremacy over woman. In addition to this, she is subjected to any kind of adjustment. From the cradle to the grave, woman lives with the dos and don’ts of the age-old norms of the conservative society. She is ascribed to a minor status denying the individual identity. She is not allowed to have her different style of life and career but accepts the male dominated subversions.

Social code in India expects that a woman should be obedient, self-sacrificing, subservient and supportive. Social and cultural values establish
stronghold on the life of woman and she becomes victim in the male centered world. The crude patriarchal set-up exploits woman because of her social differentiation and expects to be emotional, kind and private, whereas man is a rational and a public person. The social mentality of man subdues woman and inflicts violence on her. In this direction, gender discrimination in society assigns subaltern position to women. The image of mute woman is the consequence in the ethically bounded patriarchal system. So prejudices and dominant beliefs towards woman reflect her as a stereotypical figure.

Attitude of the people is shaped by the socially constructed values. Woman’s role in the system of male hegemony is associated with femininity and the latter is devalued. She is bound to have feminine qualities. But social institutions tend to support the superiority and domination of man, who enjoys his independence. Woman is naturalized with passivity and servility in the malevolent culture. Irrespective of the class, caste and color, woman accompanies fear, dependence, and pre-ordained role in all walks of life. She encounters various faces of exploitation and victimization in the state of constant fear.

Kate Millet opines that the interior colonization of women by men is a more powerful segregation. As a result, woman strives hard to live up to the assigned virtues and rules of the social ethics. The aspect of woman’s oppression arises when they confront hardships in life as battered wives, toiling mothers or rejected daughters within and outside the domestic surroundings.

In the male-oriented society, the individuality of woman is concealed within the traditional norms. From childhood woman’s life is conformed to the patriarchal image of femininity. Even the thoughts of rebellion against the fearsome constraints of womanhood are defeated by the male-dominated norms. In spite of modern thoughts and new values, the image of woman, her identity and her relations with men are governed by age old norms.
Mental inferiority and Otherness are the myths associated with women, which shows misogyny in the social life and in the literary landscape.

According to Carter, author of *The Passion of New Eve:*

> Myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice.\(^4\)

Reinforced female stereotypical traits in the epic resulted in male domination. The Indian mythology provides many epitomes of the role models by exemplifying female behavior. Devoid of good qualities, she is presented as submissive, dutiful and controlled. The prime examples of woman's chastity, devotion, benevolence of mythological figures perpetuate woman's role in society. These images of womanhood persist in the lives of women which permeate the virtuousness of endurance and self-sacrifice. So the cultural credentials control the lives of the people.

The religious woman model Sita, the dedicated wife of Rama, is placed to prove her chastity. Laxmana, who is younger to her, orders not to cross the line when he goes in search of Rama. It depicts men's power to delimit woman's action in every sphere of life. Savithri and Sita both follow husbands with their suffering devotion and remain under their control. In Christian mythology, we see the figures of venerated and fear of flesh in the images of Virgin Mary and Eve. And in Indian mythology, Sita and Soorpanaka are presented.

We confront the presence of patriarchal bias in ancient mythological stories of India which represent mythical figures like Sita, Savithri and Anusuya to inspire woman to follow ideal womanhood. "Pativratha" (a devoted wife image) is embedded to woman and expected to keep her within constricted place. Sita is a symbol of chastity and self-sacrifice. She suffers due to the mistrust of Rama. Savithri is also maligned and analyzed as a devoted wife. Thus these mythological images show the unprivileged and the suppressed life of the woman.
Chapter – 2  Female Restraints as Depicted in the Novels

The Biblical history also projects the repression and inferior position of women up to the time of Christ. In Christianity, there is a traditional paradigm of male authority and female submission in marriage. This is maintained by an interpretation made by the religious institutions. They placed women to the secondary role. The Biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden leads to the discussion of female suppression and male domination.

Eve was not created for herself but as Adam’s companion and drawn from his side.5

Eve is mocked as the disobedient woman and maligned as the source of the fall of humanity. She is succumbed and trapped in the hands of Satan. The inferior status of woman is described as Eve is crafted out of a rib of Adam by the Creator. Her creation is not even claimed as independent. She is subjected to insult.

These are the words of God to Eve:

Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.6

The passages in the Bible are evident that women are denied of their privileges and are suffered with the circumstances. Lot, an inhabitant of the sinful city of Sodom, is the only person to escape during the destruction of city with his family. But his nameless wife is cursed by the Lord for her disobedience. As such the onslaught of the woman is evident in the Bible. Man holds the privileged status in the mythology and in modern fictions also. A woman is deprived of her property and speech to anyone and not expected to leave house in the absence of the husband. She is treated as slave and regarded as unclean after the birth of the child. Man has the authority to punish her.
Simone De Beauvoir states:

Ruth merely found herself a husband. Esther gained the Jews’ grace by kneeling before Ahasuerus, and even then she was only a docile instrument in Mordecai’s hands; Judith was bolder but she too obeyed the priests and her exploits has a dubious aftertaste: it could not be compared to the pure and shining triumph of young David.7

This section tries to examine the effects of discretion and repression of woman in the patriarchal system. Established patriarchy allows man to enjoy the power and subjugate woman to the role of marginalization. The public and private realms of life of a woman are controlled in this patrilineal structure. She is under subjugation of men at all stages of life. Women never think a breach with traditional and social values. They find glorious moments through exhibiting their virtue as benevolent mother, wife and daughter. Hierarchical relation between men and women passes the sense of protocol from generation to generation and generates patriarchal society. The present attempt analyzes various facets of a male centered society in South India and its devastating effect on women. These South Indian Christian women writers project the ubiquitous presence of male domination in the private and public areas of life. They discuss the male defined structures and institutions and its consequences on the lives of women via their characters.

Feminine subordination is reflected in literature which persuades male dominations. It allows women to speak about their experiences in life. Irrespective of caste, class, religion and social position, woman is embedded in the sub-altered state. Even today, in literature women are depicted as controlled and expected to maintain the image of womanhood because the patriarchal relation serves as the ideology in the pages of writers. In relation to this, they present the interior and exterior conditioned life of woman in our society and how the prevalent ideas in our environment subordinate the position of woman.
This chapter intends to foreground constraints and persecution of women in the selected novels of South Indian Christian women writers. Bama, Sarah Joseph, Eunice De Souza, Alice Saldanha and Mridula Martis - these women writers make their sincere efforts to exhibit the agony and plight of women of their respective cultures where male chauvinism, tradition and myths continue to exist. They sketch woman's desire, fear, dilemma, role and experiences in all the walks of life. They analyse how the social standards of male domination expect the reconstruction of womanhood in woman and try to keep her within the subservient sphere. Deprivations and suppressions are identical for women, but these writers attempt to display differences in their regional value systems and situations. This throws light on the various perspectives of the selected women writers regarding the essential conditions of women and their lives. They reveal how various factors marginalize woman in their way of progress and expose the miserable plight of woman within the circle of accepted social standards. Their writings illustrate how women are physically and mentally fettered within the grim traditional cultural spaces. Even in the arena of age-old literature, the sole projection of men and detached and repressed state of women are represented. The state of double standard of morality exists between woman and man. The literary writing deplores the poison in women's lives and the violence of women perpetrated by men in various facets of life.

This research tries to examine and analyze the works of selected women writers to represent the male supremacy in their own cultural models of society. They put their pen to paper to expose the complexities of woman's position, societal treatment and their inner world. There is noticeable impulse among these woman writers to comprehend and sketch the gendered experiences of the women. They incorporate their emotions and views of issues.

The women writers try to interpret how the age-old womanhood image is re-interpreted and undervalued the life of woman. Their female characters
confront the perilous journey of life and succumb to the expected inhibition. Pertaining to this, the authors explore the effects on woman due to the established protocols of behavior.

Bama, a Dalit writer finds catharsis of her persecution and extremity of distress through her writings. She discusses life like woman characters to depict their oppressive hold of inhibition. Her creative works reveal how she and her women community are disturbed and distressed by the gender and caste discriminations. Particularly, she defines the victimized status of women in her community. Her literary works furnish many women characters which are under the imposition of dominated social organization. She pictures the Dalit women, their relationships, their hardships, circumstances in the dominant patriarchal and upper caste society. She stands out for the attempt to expose the distressing memories of women in her community regarding the aspect of love and marriage. She notices how caste, class, and gender hierarchies and power monitor the lives of women. She tries to draw the attention of the readers towards the lives of older, elder, and young women within the dominant culture.

Sarah Joseph has got charisma and spirit to espouse the depressed women. She uses her pen to the women and for their upliftment.

The fictional world of Sarah Joseph is a panorama where she portrays women in her discriminative and self-conscious phases. She is a living voice of feminists in Kerala. Her literary writings exhibit her realistic thoughts on the subjugation of women and their aggressions for survival. Her versatility is visible in the portrayal of each character which paves the way to picture the various predicaments of women in society. Even minute gender problems are viewed by this leading writer.
The prominent contemporary Indian English novelist, Eunice De Souza presents the secluded metropolitan life of a lecturer, Rina and lonely life of Simran who is living out her days with her husband’s reminiscence. This author weaves the images in her works which touch the mundane lives of people. As a descriptor, she ventures the tussle and torments of the urban women. She strikingly articulates patriarchal domination and marginalization of woman even if she is married or unmarried in the seeming independent state of urban life. She has made use of the protagonists to capture the colonized mind, loneliness, and uncomfortable situations with the presence of imposed conventions on woman. For instance, the cigarette in a woman’s hand appears as superficial liberty. But she has to face the world at her own cost at every facet of life.

2.1. **Constraints of Women within Love and Marriage**

Marriage is the traditional and age-old institution of society in the world. And love is the powerful universal aspect. The world exists with the presence of love.

> Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.⁹

Marriage is a sacred bond between one man and one woman for life. It is treated as divine institution in Christianity and adultery is considered as crime.

The compatibility and companionship between two people without discrimination bring meaning to marriage. Equality, mutual adjustment and feeling of sharing are the essentials for a harmonious marriage. But it seems to be impossible in the crude patriarchal society. Woman enmeshes herself in the responsibilities of the household without individual identity and marginalizes her desires. Hierarchies in marital relationship signify man as the owner of woman. Inferior perception of the wife places her in the subservient status against the husband.
The subjugation and exacerbation of women are present in the aspects of love and marriage. Unable to withstand the harassment, woman finds herself in such shackles of ethos. The supremacy of man in the married life is propagated by customs and these dominated rites make a hurdle between the compatibility of man and woman. And woman strives hard to shape her married life reconciled to the virtues. Through the supremacist ideology, marital relationship ignores self-identity of a woman. Thus the mental and physical inhospitable terrains of woman characters are visible in the novels.

Marriage rituals from the centuries thrash women to the secondary position. This agency musters the power structure over woman. The laws of Manu discusses woman’s legitimate married life is like a river that loses itself in the ocean. But many feminists criticize marriage as the symbol of male privilege. Though women get the right to divorce, property and political powers in contemporary patriarchy, the institution of marriage makes them to accept the assigned domestic services. They are made to think that their destiny is within the family. Betty Friedan opines this state as “house wife syndrome”, where women are totally isolated from the society and their interests are limited. Self-fulfillment, self-realization and achievements are relegated to woman within the family after her marriage. There are many restrictions to channelize women towards family and power relations between man and woman are unequally distributed. In many circumstances, she suffers from mental illness due to the repressive nature of marriage.

Bama, a celebrated Dalit Christian writer, presents authentic harsh events of her village. Her writings display the existing constraints of women in her community and illustrate the ailments and torments in the established social standards. She alludes to practices of male oppressions in the marital life of women. Women characters’ presentation at the critical juncture of caste and gender articulates real critical experiences. She interprets miserable shrieks of women and their lives that are governed by the oppressive hold. Man in this
community is portrayed as the authoritarian of the sexual, economic, political and physical power. This eminent author lets her readers to be aware of the beauty and the brutality of the lives of women who are confined within the enforced taboos.

In *Sangati*, Bama addresses the women's thralldom and suppression in the gender biased society. She is conscious of the existing difficulties of life and provides sensitive insight into the woman's discriminations due to the sexist bias. She displays hard working women of Dalit class and proves herself as an ideal writer in exposing their grim and traumatic conditions of women. This work stands as crucial in understanding and reflecting the inferior status of women. These Dalit women are exploited at the hands of their own men. Narrating such facts, the author appears as a mouth piece of the lamentations of women in gender and caste oppressed society.

Further this remarkable feminist literary work *Sangati* deftly represents infinite violence and disgruntled situations of women within different age groups and within different classes. It discusses the containment of the feelings of Dalit women in everyday happenings in their community.

Bama's maternal grandmother, Vellaiyamma marries Govindan in her teenage. But he deserts her and leaves her alone to shoulder the burden of the responsibility of the family. It appears as ironical, because though he lived in patriarchal community escapes from the obligations of life. Velliyamma is made to face farce in life and is looked down by the village people. On the other side, the upper caste women pretend to be pleased in their marital life. But they are also violently persecuted within the four walls of the room. These oppressed women show the presence of a false jubilant marriage to the outer world. Considering their state Solayamma remarks:

> Look at the upper classes though. What good does their wealth do them? Those women submit to their men all the time and are as shut in and controlled like snakes locked up in boxes.\(^{10}\) (S.p.111)
Situations may be different for upper caste women and for lower caste women, but turmoil inflicted on them are the same. In their marital aspect, cultural rules and social codes play an integral part. In upper caste, conditions of bride’s parents become miserable in order to fulfill the demands of dowry. Even when she enters the husband’s home, her position is desperate. She is bound to be a domestic slave. Then this privileged upper class people are scared to give birth to a female child and look it as encumbrance. Even they go to the extent of killing if a girl child is born. Bama manifests the troubles of the rich class women who appear under the guise of full freedom. Because sometimes their patriarchal situation is concealed to the outside world. They are like confined birds in the golden cage where they are made to forget to fly freely. Purnam, a character in the novel mentions that they are deprived of the freedom to swim outside and have fun. The crudest and humiliating lives of widows among the community of landlords are also unfolded. A widow is barred from wearing flowers, kunkumam (red powder, used to make a mark on the forehead as a sign of auspiciousness), turmeric and jewels. The woeful tale of Kuppusami Nayakkar’s widowed daughter may be noted. She does not even get proper food in her husband’s home. Widowhood is seen as the symbol of desecration of women. The author thus effectively conveys the resigned sufferings of the upper caste women who are barred to express their distresses. Utter misery of these women’s is comparable to the mythological figure Sita. Though she is the wife of great king Rama, she faces chastising test several times in her life. With the presence of such brutalization, however Dalit women are made to believe that upper caste life is best.

The author drags the attention towards child marriage illustrating some tales of women. Her Grandmother (Paati) forced Bama’s mother to some man in marriage by discontinuing her education. She describes:

Keeping young women at home is like keeping a fire going in your belly.... (S, pp.9-10)
The traumatic marital story of Bama’s Periyamma (mother’s elder sister) is also evident, who enters marital life early. She is sexually and domestically assaulted by her husband. By torturing physically, he tells:

She is my wife, I can beat her or even kill her if I want.
(S, pp.10-11)

These events bring before us the despotic authority of the male as husband. However, the idea of forcing little girls to marriage earlier is evident in the Paraiya community. In the meanwhile unwedded girls are no where safe and face traumatic sufferings not only from their own men but also from the upper caste men. The narrator explains the toils of spell-bound victims like Mariyamma and Paralokam. Arokkyam also reveals how her granddaughter is victimized in the hands of the owner’s educated son. She says:

Whatever a man does, in the end the blame falls on the woman. (S, p.26)

Mariyamma has escaped from the molestation of an evil land owner but his foolishness, the village court’s domination and oppression, and the villager’s unfair talk lead her to the painful, unhappy marriage. She protests to marry Manikkam who is a drunkard and a gambler but the elders pay scant attention to her protest.

In *Karukku*, Bama brings a tragic tone while narrating the real anecdotes of domestic violence and sexual assaults within the wedlock. Thaayi, who is beautified like Naicker (the dominant caste) woman forced into marital life with a man whom she accepts without willingness. Her life is filled with despair and disaster because of the physical ill-treatment from her husband. He has harassed her so wretchedly and tells:

Look at her neck—you won’t find a single hair left. I cut her hair off to put down her pride. (S, p.43)
The sagas of cruel treatment of husbands both inside the home and in the streets reveal the brutal acts towards enslaved wives. The author portrays the instance of Rakkamma who is kicked by her mate. Another pregnant woman demands money to manage her home. But she becomes the victim of the violent temperament of the soulless husband whom she married out of her individual choice. So her parents show no helping hand to their depressed daughter.

Male Dalits in the Paraiya community are cruelly exploited and dehumanized by the upper caste men. The writer eloquently explains how their suppressed anxiety, frustration and inadequacy of power are shown by sexual perversion, beating the wife, children and drinking. In The Subjugation of Woman: Women’s Liberation and Literature, John Stuart Mill discusses that in India even the poorest male thinks himself as fortunate assigning the status of inferiority to his wife. Physically assaulting her, he finds chances to release his frustrated ego and extends his domination. Such psychological problems are not only the part of men but also visible in the lives of the women. The author writes:

I have to say that even if all women are slaves to men, our women really are the worst sufferers. It is not the same for women of other castes and communities. (S, p.65)

The low caste women are brutalized by both upper caste men and patriarchal domination of men within the community and bear a double cross as a Dalit woman like black (African) women. In this connection, Bama has made an attempt to present the stories of women who are possessed by Peyi (evil spirit). At the same time, she makes it clear that this is the mental illness which makes women to suffer due to the turmoil within the marriage by managing their families from dawn to dusk. A girl is also curtailed of her freedom when she comes of age and fear is filled in her mind for everything. This created terror makes her scapegoat of psychological violence, for instance Manacchi, who is possessed by the spirit of Chettiar’s wife or Irulappan’s wife Virayi, who is haunted by Esakki.
The conversation of the author with her grandmother and mother contributes to show the influence of the Hindu doctrine of Pativrata (one who is vowed to her husband), where woman is expected to be chaste and binds her in marital confinement. Paati reveals this by telling the story of a pregnant lady, Anantamma who eats her meal before her husband’s arrival. The author’s mother says:

It’s not so easy to get away, once you are married. Once you’ve put your head in the mortar, can you escape from the pestle?....(S, p.44)

Thus the novelist touches upon contempt and violence within heterosexual relationships not only at the physical level but at the psychological level also, where woman is neglected and mocked. She foregrounds the testimonies of sufferings in which Dalit women’s bodies are burdened with domestic, agricultural and sexual labour.

The narrator beautifies the ritual of a young girl coming of age. Such a girl is alienated and has a little hut like room inside the house. It convinces how she is considered as impure and she succumbs of menstrual taboo. With the representation of pathetic condition of Maikanni’s mother, the existence of child marriage within the community is criticized.

Bama witnesses the battered wife, Pecchiamma from Chakkili community. She ends up her marriage and marries another man. The narrator regrets for not having such choice of ending the baneful, oppressive marital life in Christian Paraiya community. On the other side, this chance gives way to the Hindu men to marry another woman deserting the first wife. It is kind of exacerbation of women.

Illustrating the glorification of the wedding custom, Bama traces out the risks and toils of the parents while arranging the marriage. She notices if a blessed tali is tied in front of the priest, a woman has to face throughout her life and cannot
be expected to come out of the marital bond in Christianity. She has a parasitic existence obeying the orders and looking after the desires of her husband. An abandoned wife is also abused among the wealthy class. In the Paraiya community, there is a practice of Parisam (monetary gift given by the groom’s parents to the bride) in wedding ceremony. Gradually the educated people of this class accept the upper caste’s evil system of dowry. Love marriages are looked down in this community. It is a taboo for young men and women and gives way to complications in this village. A girl is not allowed for intercaste marriage. A Paraiya educated girl’s love story with a Palla boy and her bitter experiences from the patriarchal power is evident. Thus Bama writes:

They say that if a man marries outside his caste, it is nothing. But if a girl marries outside her caste, the honour and pride of the whole community is lost. (S, p.109)

A woman is not given the authority to make her choice like a man. Whatever may be the type of marriage and marital life, patriarchal system allows male authority to justify woman’s life. Marriage is deemed necessary for the life of woman in India. If a woman decides to remain single, she is ostracized socially and culturally. She is regarded as abnormal and ill-fated. But Bama’s decision reminds the words of Nehru:

Marriage is an important thing in life. It may make or mar one’s life. And yet marriage is something smaller than life. Life is a much bigger thing....

In this way, this Dalit Christian Tamil Writer articulates the predicaments and grief of women of various communities particularly Dalit Christian women with her close experiences. Being unmarried, Bama shares the traumatic experiences with the readers. Social obligations and the system have not allowed her to get a rented house. She notes:

How old are you? Are you married? Why haven’t you married yet? Are you going to marry at all? Why not? They will keep on pestering away like this. (S, p.120)
She is not in a situation to purchase a house with a limited income. The people gossip about her behavior. She demonstrates how the society stare an unmarried woman as a common property. She leaves the church order with a broken heart at the age of thirty three. When she returns home, her parents meet with difficulties to find a suitable boy. The villagers hurt them with their talk. A woman is required to accept the destiny of marriage. She has no freedom to think and is checked with tali round her neck just like nose-bridle to cattle. She brings out the circumstances where a woman is expected to be a loyally devoted and a chaste wife with accepted traditional domestic duties. We encounter the image of silent sufferings with suppressed individual desires and feelings. She is made to consider her husband is manifest God.

Bama’s autobiography, *Karukku* depicts her life as a student, a teacher, a nun and a Dalit woman. Whatever may be the society, people consider woman’s destiny is marriage. Even Bama is forced by her parents to discontinue education. They are scared if she is highly qualified, they will not find a match for her. As an educated woman, she tries to redefine her individual existence without expecting support from the siblings and friends. Later it becomes very hard to live alone in the outside world after coming out of religious order. So she compares herself to a wingless bird. Her parents are tensed about her. She writes:

> At the time that I entered the convent, I was like the strong core of a teak tree. Both in mind and in body, I was as firm and steadfast as that. But when I came out, I had lost all my strength, and was as feeble as a murunga tree that blows over in the wind.12 (K.p.103)

In the convent, she has a very comfortable life with status and money. When she enters the real world to pursue her life in solitude, she faces grimaces and evil expressions of men. Vulnerability covers the courageous heart of Bama. In this insensitive world, woman has to tackle constant sufferings as a single woman, a married woman, a widow, a Dalit woman, a rural woman and an economically independent woman.
The award recipient, Sarah Joseph in her novel, *The Daughters of Aloha* depicts female experiences of the downtrodden in patriarchal structure. The vitalities in this literary work are the impact of urbanization on the subaltern mass, dislocation of the underprivileged, power politics between male and female, disdained status of women and their struggles. Like Bama’s *Sangati* in this unique novel, the three generations of women display obscured and subjugated state of women in their cultural setup. Eight year old, Annie is not only the narrator, but also a character who gives glimpses of the sustained pathetic traumas of women in the marginalized place named, Kokkanchara. Sarah’s sketch of female figures and existing situation in the novel are not entirely imaginative. She says in her interview with Gita Hariharan that she has realistically acquainted with them.

The author eminently makes the readers to understand the victimization of the working class women, lower class women and poor women. The women characters represented in this fiction reveal deplorable and unexpressed turbulence in the unbearable place of Kokkanchara during the post-independence era. We are exposed to harsh realities through the eyes of a school going lass, Annie and the reminiscence of her grandmother, Mariya. In one way or the other women have restrictive roles, designated and controlled by various forces.

Sarah Joseph’s characters find unhappiness within wedlock. It never appears a blessing in disguise. They go through morbid existence in their journey of marital lives. Her female concern intends to show the poverty oppressive situation and the suffocations where women suffer as disgruntled wives.

Marriages are considered as sacred institution in India. The females of Sarah Joseph in *The Daughters of Aloha*, seek illusory aspect of happiness within the fold of marital relationship. Each marriage proves to be a representation of the distressed state of a woman. Depicting the married lives of many women in the family, the fiction conveys unending sufferings. The marital life of Mariya is not peaceful. Her husband Anthony never gives a sense of security and support to this struggling lady. The factual problem of a deserted wife is traced out in the novel. Kocchurodu, Annie’s mother finds her marital life as unsuccessful. Her husband,
Kocchappa leaves her when she has given birth to Annie. This forlorn condition makes her to face the uncouth attitude of the people. The martial disharmony rises in the life of Kunjan Compounder and Kocchumary. Because the intimacy of the Compounder, a married man and Kunjile, a widow midwife creates maladjustment in the marital life.

So B.N. Singh opines:

> Another subtle way through which the patriarchy operates is the institution of marriage which creates an illusory of false consciousness, giving a false sense of security to women.  

Sarah Joseph portrays how the poverty-stricken condition victimizes the beautiful women in the confinement of wedlock. Early marriage is palpable in denying a girl’s choice to select a partner for her life and in her ignorance of sexuality. At the age of fifteen, pretty Kunjile enters the arranged marital life with Itti. Her father without any second thought pushes her to the hideous world. The silent girl, Kunjile within a week goes through sordid marital life with her impotent husband. The novelist remarks:

> Was it a dream? Was it a real? Was there a person named Itti living in this world? Kunjile exclaimed sitting with parents, sisters and brothers wearing once again her old dress. She was as if an actress in a play?  

Itti’s parents have exploited this poor girl to fulfill the marital desire of their unhealthy son. After his death, she is discarded as widow and her father dies helplessly with penitence. His wealthy parents fail to rescue the entrapped life of Kunjile. The same poverty in Anthony’s family strikes bitterness in the life of Cherichi after her wedlock with a priest named Fr. David.

Prof. Parvathi Aithal and Dr. Mini Prasad opine, Cherichi marries a rich priest and compared to other families in Kokkanchara she leads a sophisticated life for the outside world. Her received gift from Fr. David gives a hint of marital imprisonment. She accepts the stoic sufferings, mental trauma, loss of identity and
liberty within the wedlock. This Cherichi is immersed in desolation. Being a religious man, his militant and rigid attitude towards the wife alienates her from herself and from the parental family. She expresses her situation:

Being the life-partner to a priest is like sleeping on the crucifying cross. (TDOA, p.89)

Sarah Joseph has attempted to present the effects of the patriarchal institution of marriage. In addition to this, the problem of dowry demand appears as the violence ridden issue to the bride families of Kokkanchara. The church arranges the ceremony of group marriage at its own expense to reduce the burden of the poor families who have unmarried daughters. But at the final stage, all the grooms demand dowry indirectly through the elder people. An aged Devassi decides to sell his residence to a lawyer to arrange the marriage of his six daughters. Even Varidu and Sathyavantha Rapayee accept the same path. It emasculates the lives of the lower classes and this cruelest system oppresses women. It is like selling daughters in the marriage market. Conservative and religious Kocchurodu brings same predicament to her sister-in-law Chiyyama. Bridegroom, Kunjippalu and elders have examined Chiyyamma just like a commodity. By explaining the traits of the groom, they demand dowry. After marriage, she is ostracized from the parental home and not allowed to meet them when they fail to pay the dowry. The author includes the instance of incompatible marriage of Nonu. Fr. Laser harasses her with inscrutable physical torture and this estrangement makes her to escape from that unbearable situation with her baby. The callous attitude and rigid restrictions of the husband prove this marriage a nightmare. Chinnama, the last sister witnesses the perilous lives of her married sisters and rejects the groom sent by the priest. She notices absence of happiness in her sisters’ marital life. And she is deceived by a hopeless person in love and Kunjile terminates her pregnancy. Frustration courts her, so she searches for peace of mind by joining a religious group.
In the marital life, these female figures face tension and anguish. Thus the aspects of poverty, unquestionable state, beauty and evil of dowry inflict darker violence.

Jancy James gives out the view of Sarah Joseph:

She steers clear of ideological and propagandist obsessions and focuses steadily on the deprived, marginalized, underestimated, misinterpreted, and misused women.\(^{15}\)

\((O.p.xviii)\)

Othappu expresses the patriarchal prejudices between man and woman relationships. It reflects the story of Nun Margalitha who violates the rituals of congregation to realize God outside the religious institution and finds priest Karikkan as her life partner. Sarah Joseph says:

Not for a Catholic priest, unlike his Syrian Christian counterparts, the comforts of marriage and family life. The Church had willed celibacy for him. A Mar Thomas or C.S.I. priest could marry, run a household, have a wife and children and carry on with his ministry. Not so, a Catholic priest. He had to live alone in the vicarage adjoining the church. The Roman Catholics insist that their priests have no contact with women. For them, wife, children, and home are all forbidden worldly pleasures. Even if he did not follow any of the other rules, a Catholic priest was most sternly required to avoid ‘woman-pleasure’.\((O,p.105)\)

The Roman Catholic priests are bound by strict celibacy and the nuns are cloistered three folds: by celibacy, poverty and humility. But Margalitha breaks that ritual and desires life of spirituality with sexual experience. Karikkan and Margalitha accept each other outside the society's organized institution of marriage. This unmarried couple is excluded by their own families and society. Margalitha's passionate love towards Karikkan exhibits her firm mind. She discovers a kind of spiritual joy in love making. She seeks God and peace with
body and soul which appears impossible with clothe scheme of things within religious order. So the author puts the feelings of Margalitha in her words:

Through his body, she could go beyond Karikkan. It taught her that love was a flow of peace from the inside to the world all around. God is peace. (O, p.106)

The love of Francis Karikkan is endowed with fear and his mind is unstable. In contrast, Margalitha confides her feelings in Karikkan and believes him as trustworthy. He believes in platonic love but Margalitha thinks perishable body and imperishable soul are inseparable in love which opens the world of bliss. The fallibility of Karikkan is visible in many incidents like deliberately forgetting 'sari' at the shop counter and his suspicious attitude towards Augustine and Margalitha. His fear is displayed in the words of the author:

Even though it was with fear that Karikkan's mind accepted the pleasures that Margalitha led him to,(O, p.169)

Karikkan finds himself on a slippery stone and introduces Margalitha as his sister to Kasseessa’s mother when she considers him as a ray of hope in her life. So the novelist writes:

A cyclone of contempt swirled inside Margalitha. To her, ‘sister’ seemed the meanest title in the world. It was a piece of falsehood that Karikkan had invented. (O, p.85)

Margalitha's name is connected with Kasseessa's name during her stay at his home. In such commotion, Karikkan is not courageous and fails to rescue Margalitha. Mutual understanding, trust and supporting each other are the pedestal things of a couple's happy relationship. His faith shakes pertaining to his query over the relationship of Margalitha and Agustine.
Discarding the Vicar post, Francis Karikkan faces his parental home with Margalitha. Consequently, he loses his father and is outcasted from all the blood relationships. This entangles him in a bizarre situation and Margalitha is held responsible for such confusions. So the narrator tells:

As he watched her, he both loved and hated her. (O, p.211)

When Karikkan's life detaches from the web of kinship, Margalitha plays the role of a consoler discharging his duty as a life partner. Later this unmarried couple finds their life as languish and helpless to seek livelihood. As a partner Karikkan shrinks to extend moral and economical support to Margalitha. Evil thoughts and suspicion in the mind perpetuate him to flee from the responsibility of his duties towards his companion. If we go through the New Testament, we notice that Mary is blessed with a child through the Holy Spirit and her husband wants to divorce her secretly. In the case of Karikkan also, news of the baby in the womb of Margalitha appears as a nightmare and the novelist says:

Karikkan felt as though his world was turning upside down while he stood amidst its ruins. (O, p.212)

Instead of sharing happiness with his partner, he is scared of the society and financial status. He looks Margalitha in the eyes of the community where she stands as a mere sex partner and accuses the unborn child as the fruit of sin. Responding to his mother's pleading, he escapes from the responsibility and fails to perform his duty as a father and deserts Margalitha.

Margalitha fails to find peace in Karikkan’s relationship. She moves through the journey of loneliness and predicaments. The feeling of love varies in their attitude within their unmarried wedlock. As an escapist into the strange
world, he once again lacerates the heart of Margalitha through his letter. Latha Anantharaman sums up their relationship in her own words:

The relationship between Karikkan and Margalitha is dissatisfying from the first to the last. He is cowardly, unable to render the slightest support, moral or financial, and when he faces social ostracism for having moved in with an ex-nun, he suffers a moral collapse and flee.¹⁶

Sarah Joseph leaves the unforgettable character, Rebekka in the minds of the readers. Her fettered life which is fore grounded with mental and physical brutalization speaks of sexual oppression inflicted by the husband.

Marriage is a means to combine two souls. It is a ceremonious bond to the two bodies into spiritual harmony.¹⁷

But the marital life of Rebekka proves to be unsuccessful. The author calls the pair as "incongruous". Puthukkal Thomas Vaidyar is a fat man of thirty-seven and much older than her. The novelist writes:

In age they were worlds apart. They were male and female but that was all. They were as alike as an elephant and a vegetable. (O, p.29)

The poor parents arrange her marriage irrespective of her wishes and she has given into marriage at an early age. There is absence of compatibility between the couple. She feels suffocated by the putrid smell of medicines which her husband uses to treat mad persons and it is his livelihood. She even dislikes looking at him.

Rebekka's calling her husband as Vaidyar creates suspicion. Vaidyar is an educated fellow but for that little thing he creates a world of misery for Rebekka. He enquires of her past life and characters and turns his home into a closed fortress. He is very indifferent to her desires. His cruel treatment goes to such an extent that he applies a large portion of the antidote to her eyes. The failure of
Vaidyar to achieve marital harmony is visible in his life. He never proves himself as a loving father to his two daughters. Though he heals many patients, his suspicious attitude is not healed by anybody. Frustrated Vaidyar is not able to concentrate on his work and the whole family is pushed into poverty. These circumstances double the hardships of Rebekka to earn livelihood by joining a theatre company. Bearing unbearable ill-treatment of her husband, Rebekka's marital life is shown as complicated.

In the same novel, Alice, wife of Paul, is a submissive woman. Her humility is not considered by her husband. The dominance of Paul is seen in their relationship which creates fear in Alice.

Thus the novel projects the various facets of disgruntled lives of Christian women in their relationship with men. Their sufferings due to suspicion, misunderstandings and dominance of men are evident. They are subjugated with a sense of fear.

Eunice De Souza in her novel, Dangerlok attempts to project the state of a single woman in the metropolitan city of Mumbai. Rina Ferreira, a middle-aged lecturer of English, encounters loneliness and male domination at every level in her day to day life. The woman’s marginalized situation is visible in the periphery of the patriarchal society through the portrayal of this protagonist Rina. She has independence, economic freedom and is highly educated but a shadow of insecurity and ignorance lingers on her personality. The parrots in her residence mirror the ensnared condition of this urban woman in a malevolent world. Men are always in an advantageous position whether married or unmarried whereas women are concerned, the whole world conspires about them and imposes moral values and customs. In her routine life, she remembers the word “Dangerlok” (cruel world) giving instance of the clerk’s refusal to give stamps in the post office. She notices the encroachment of such absurdities at every stage of life with her mug of jungle tea and cigarettes.
The solitary life of Rina Ferreira is shared by two male characters named, Jay and David. She expresses her need of Jay’s presence, but he ignores the interest of the middle aged Rina. David is her lost lover, resides in America. He reads the day to day events of her life by letter. In reply, he pours out his women’s affairs with Rina. But only when he is drunk that is in an unconscious state, he proposes his love and concern for Rina. It is in no way appears as genuine love but one’s desire for physical intimacy not merely emotional attachment.

Through the eye of this protagonist, Eunice De Souza conveys the bounded niche and conditioned situation for women in the so called civilized city. She knits various incidents to show the wretched women’s lives in Mumbai and the created conventions that women follow. Rina visits the club for a drink and the hill stations with her friends. There, she finds how the woman is ensnared not only in the past but in the present also. So woman finds herself insignificant in the male world. Men ignore the identity of women and show interest in material prosperity. She says:

And of course they talk about stocks and shares, yachts, cars, food, cricket. (D, p.22)

Rina’s observant mind notes her colleague’s negligent attitude towards his wife. She is sympathetic to the maidservant’s hardships to build a house without the support of her husband in order to protect her young daughter from the cruel eyes of the boys. She argues that woman is denied to take decision for anything even though she has a nice father and security for her life. The episode of Vera’s embroidery work of stiff rose and unyielding leaves reminds the reader of the husband’s neglect of wife’s creativity and his expectation of docile attitude.

My dear, one of the nuns had said to her in the kindest way possible in her last year of college, you must marry or become a nun, otherwise you will be lonely when you are old, and there will be no one to look after you. (D, pp.26-27)
The above citation makes us to understand the system where woman’s consciousness is made to accept the stereotypical role anticipating protection. She is bound to enter the institutions of patriarchal power and the myth of male security to a woman is created in the mind.

There is a parallel between her life and the parrots. She wants to free the conditioned parrot in the forest. But she is not confident about it's being alive in the midst of crows. In the same way, she feels uncomfortable in the outside world and keeps herself away from the drudgery by staying in her flat in Queen’s Diamonds building. The meeting of an old friend Julian reminds of her lonely life which has made her desperate and distressed.

She decides to annoy herself further by thinking of the ways in which her family annoys her: the aunts who think that because she is single her time is at their disposal, the endless conversation about illnesses and problems. (D, p.56)

She tries to express the helplessness of a single woman and the attitude of woman who stands as the representative of patriarchy advocating established norms. One of her colleagues shows curiosity to know about her. It shows how the male world expects woman to be suppressed and to be within the centre of the patriarchal world. The autonomous life of this woman is intrigued by the conditioned and restricted rules of patriarchal society. For instance a five star hotel announces a prize for her but it imposes a condition that she should receive that prize with her spouse. Ultimately, the existent system upholds the patriarchal rules. The maid servant says:

You’re so lucky not to be married. It’s a big nuisance, marriage (D, p.108)

Eunice De Souza discusses the accepted life of an Indian woman. The maidservant of Rina is burdened with family responsibility besides husband’s harsh treatments. She thinks, marriage denies the peaceful life to woman. By
looking at the marital plight of languishing Meera, De Souza is convinced that not only illiterate women are the victims of oppression in the hands of husbands even the educated women find themselves in the consigned circle. The girl neighbor of Chopra is regarded as bad and kept, because she is visited by her Boss. The double standard of society expects woman to be within the established moral grounds, otherwise it goes on treating her as Other. When this girl gets married, the furious Chopra declares her as ‘respectable’. That shows how the norms of the patriarchal order make woman to accept them and keep her appreciating.

*Dev and Simran* by Eunice De Souza helps to visualize the urbanite life of Simran. The novel captures the everyday married life of Simran and her dreary situation as a widow and a mother who has lost her child, Sara. Simran finds unsatisfactory relationship with her husband. She says:

> Had my marriage to Dev been a Grand Passion? Hardly.\(^{19}\)

*(DAS, p.32)*

There is no deep-rooted love in their relationship. She enters the marital life as the family wants to get rid of her. Their marital relationship moves like mechanical life in that city. She notices, there is absence of intense longing of her husband and he is unable to touch her emotions. So Maya tells:

> Sim would come back after a weekend spent with her parents and Dev would look up from his bridge game or the cricket match on TV and say ‘Hi! Good weekend?’ and go right on doing whatever he was doing. ‘Can’t he manage a hug at least?’ She would complain. Dev would say, ‘what’s the big deal? We’re together, aren’t we?’*(DAS, p.15)*

When Sara dies, Dev never thinks to console Simran and there is a communication gap between them for months.

Simran feels:

> We managed, somehow, Dev and I. Would things have changed, for better or worse, had we been given another ten years together? Would it have worked better if I had married some other guy? *(DAS, p.131)*

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Simran misses her husband after his death and tries to make him present in the letters. But the above lines at the end of the novel reveal that she has expected boundless affection and concern from his husband. Marriage appears as security to her with illusionary happiness. Later at his death bed, Dev sums up their relationship by revealing about the investment papers and about the insurance.

*The Dead Cannot Hear* is an absorbing novel written by Alice Saldana about a Brahmin girl named Sujatha. She is thin, short, and dark skinned daughter to a fair parents. Apart from the elder brothers and sister, she is treated as a curse to their upper caste family. She is humiliated and denied of love due to her dark looks. Thus loneliness haunts her in the familial relationships. Traditional customs of the community of her parents lead her to enter the marital life. Her parents are ashamed of her black complexion and with great risk, they find a Brahmin boy. On the one side the parents want to get rid of her and on the other side the bridegroom agrees for the marriage with unusual ambition of a substantial dowry and a flat.

Marriage becomes a major turning point in a girl’s life, changing her situation drastically at many levels – anthropologically, physically, emotionally and in existential terms.20

Sujatha has natural longing for love from the husband which she loses in her parental home. But the marital life fails to bring the happiness and the prior alienation continues without any change. On the first day of her marriage, her life partner Sanjay hurts her by expressing the dislikes and says:

You neither look like a man or a woman.21 (*TDCH*, p.28)

His scandalous relationship with another woman and his untouched emotions horrify her at that moment. So she is persuaded to commit suicide. Even if this marital discord is known to her parents, they never support her due to their accepted societal norms. Sanjay abandons her within a short time for the sake of his woman. When he demands divorce from her, she feels herself as outcaste in
front of her community. However she manages to lead her life by engaging in painting and tries to get over her mental agony. Again her life is intruded by the detached figure of Sanjay. He wants to return to her life when he encounters deception. But she puts an end to their relationship.

Alice Saldana shows the isolation of a dark skinned girl within the close relationships. She is discriminated at the hands of her own people because of her black color. However the author tries to represent the suffering of a girl who is discarded as ugly and finds herself in a quandary.

2.2. Confined and Stereotypical Roles of Women in the Family

Family is the primary unit of society. This is the traditional and ancient institution with cultural values. This universal institution is knitted with emotions and commitments. It constitutes husband, wife and children and their conduct is trained. A cordial and good human relationship is necessary within the family. But various dichotomies and hierarchical structures are present in this system. The subservient position of woman as wife, mother, daughter and sister is visible in the patriarchal family. The dominant atmosphere of this institution conditions her desires, mind, sexual and social behaviors. The causes of woman’s continence are poverty, illiteracy, economic requirements, and social conventions. Kate Millet states:

Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; and a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole.22

Family is the main source for gender discrimination. Female members are oppressed within the family. Gender feminists regard this unit as hostile camp for the women. Sex role of a woman is domestic service in the familial relationship. Where as the father plays the role of head of the household and enjoys socio-legal rights. There is also psychological division which is attributed to man and woman. On the one hand woman is seen as domicile, meek, timid, kind, docile, servile, whereas on the other man is rational, strong, capable and courageous. Women are
not expected to take independent action within the family. She is identified with others and her feminine role gives rise to many disorders. Thus this social institution plays as the root cause of woman’s oppression. Many feminists disparage the family as the political unit which shows power-ridden structure.

This section depicts women writers’ characters in their novels within the personal relationships of the family where the picture of sexual inequality, gender discrimination and varied travails of women are visualized. Of course woman has legal rights and freedom but in practical life, the milieu of direct and indirect patriarchal order assigns subservient role to her.

Bama focuses on the untold miseries and suffocations of women within the repressive force of the family. She portrays the feminine sensibility of Dalit Christian women in her novel, Sangati. As a woman, she makes her attempt to reveal distressed situation of women at various levels within the framework of the family. The discourse of vulnerability of Dalit women at the hands of their brothers, husband, and father is presented. Norms of our culture define the role of a woman and her duties as domesticity, motherhood, managing the family obligations and accepting the subjugation of the males. Along with these aspects, the novelist draws our attention to show how the Dalit women financially support their families as agricultural and building laborers.

In her village, unlike upper caste women, the Dalit women bear the economic burden of the entire family without expecting the earnings of the male. Because even though a man is the bread-earner in the family, he never considers his responsibility to give his earnings to the home. Bama appears as a minute observer of the indifference between the life of a Dalit man and a woman. Burden of life and torments are more terrible for Dalit woman. Dalit men are also humiliated and socially berated from the upper caste men. Their sulking frustration is showed with their brutalization on women in the family.
They still control their women, rule over them, and find their pleasure. Within the home, they lay down the law; their word is scripture. (S, p.59)

Abject poverty and insecurity make a Dalit woman to manage her household by going outside for hard wages. The narrator proves herself to be a feminist by explaining the hegemonic routine of the male in the Dalit family. Their physical assault, violent abuse, drunkenness, and sexual torture are confined to women. The Dalit women single-handedly work hard to get meals for their livelihood. Their tireless and arduous dual pressures of work lead to mental trauma. In relation to this, the writer witnesses the violent domestic quarrels publicly. She states:

A woman’s body, mind, feelings, words and deeds, and her entire life are all under his control and domination. (S, p.68)

Although Bama’s community women are economically independent perpetuated by the lowly situation, they are emotionally and psychologically controlled by the male power. No honor and identity are fostered to a Dalit woman in this system.

The novelist prefers to bring out the issue of health problem with the representation of Mariyamma, Pachamukipillai and Maikkanni’s mother. In a poverty-ridden family, people are not supposed to get a meal for a day then how can they get nutritious food or drink? The character of Mariyamma is considered as evidence where she has not menstruated though she is quite old. The practices of menstrual taboos are also inflicted on young girls. Many poor women are victimized to maternal mortality due to lack of medical care during pregnancy and crude method of sterilization. Sole earner, the mother is not able to take step for sterilization, because it stops her to do heavy work at the fields.
In the Dalit families of Paraiya community, the dominant male is irresponsible and his manliness is showed by having extra-marital relationships or marrying after the death of his wife. The realistic picturisations of Mariyamma and Maikanni document the condition of the eldest daughter in the family who is assigned with the role of a mother. Mariyamma, a motherless child, takes care of her sisters by doing works in the fields and as a laborer for digging well. In the case of Maikanni, she is a wage-earning member with exhausting responsibilities such as going to the match factory, looking after the children and performing domestic chores. While her father deserts the whole family for another woman. No village panchayath interrogates men’s evil doings which in turn perpetuates patriarchal power to man.

Women are imposed with patriarchal standards and their lives are unceasingly tedious with hard work. There is no difference if a male is alive or dead, their shoulders have to bear the economic burden. The novel, *Karukku* traces out such fact by presenting the episode of intercaste riots where men folk are charged by the police. In this critical situation, Dalit women take care of their children attending their work at the outside.

Bama unfolds the women’s subjugation even in the upper caste. Unlike a Dalit woman, the wealthy woman has a parasitic existence. She has to depend on her husband for money and accepts herself like a satellite within the domestic world. The writer’s perspective on gender discrimination within the family is noteworthy. Kate Millet discusses:

Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. Every moment of the child’s life is a clue to how he or she must think and behave to attain or satisfy the demands which gender places upon one.23
In the Dalit Christian family, the sexual temperaments are different for a boy and a girl. Preference is given for the birth of a male child. This is brought out realistically by episodes in the novel such as breast feeding the male child with far more concern and allowing a grown up boy to play and have food. A girl’s life is devastated and enclosed with household chores and taking care of the babies. Her movement is restricted. Bama puts in her words:

We aren’t allowed to talk loudly or laugh noisily; even when we sleep we can’t stretch out on our backs nor lie face down on our bellies. We always have to walk with our heads bowed down, gazing at our toes. (S, p.29)

Woman is not allowed to go near sacristy in the church and to play roles in the drama during the festival day. Even if her loving Paati brings any eatable to the home, she desires to give them first to her grandsons. Thus different kinds of controls are enmeshed to the girls which appear as crude and unjust. The work of Karukku draws our attention towards the distinction of games between girls and boys. Bus driver, shop owner, policemen and even husband roles are played by boys and exercise their dominant power over girls in the games.

The above facts convey that woman within the stifled family system as wife, mother, sister and daughter is ostracized as mediocre. As a Dalit Christian woman, Bama has witnessed the frightening trap of women in the hold of phallocratic culture. Every woman in her community stands as a provider of the family without identity and accepts her role as a household mother and a baby machine.

The famous novelist of Kerala, Sarah Joseph explores the existence of male domination and discarded status of women within the family of her region. The Channere family in Othappu mirrors the established dictatorship of the male members. Women in this family have limited roles, freedom and are restricted to domestic duties. They are happy to follow the opinion on any matters. They are
pleased with the distorted values which destroy their self-identity. Their lives are connected with the wifely submission against discretion. John, the brother of Margalitha has superior attitude and a woman is always looked down by him. For instance, he dislikes when Rebekka rides a cycle and opposes her act of joining a theatre for livelihood. The entire family and relatives forbid her entrance. He thinks:

Women raised in good families do not go to town broadcasting their woes. They take care not to let their misery and hunger show on their faces. (O, p.24)

Both Paul and John upheld the patriarchal notion in the family. The rebellious act of Margalitha by violating the norms of the convent has provoked her brothers to treat her execrably. She is locked up in the dungeon without food and water. Her unnerved scream has no place for those soulless brothers. She is unconscious in the Channere Home and her brothers object to send for the doctor. Her loving father has not left any ancestral property to the daughter, who has renounced everything. Later moved by the pitiable condition of Margalitha, her mother decides to give a share of the property. Such a decision rages John who goes to the extent to threaten his mother with a kick. As a patriarchal figure, he exhibits his oppressive and violent acts towards his own female members. When Margalitha requests for a teaching job to lead her life, the author describes the response of John:

Mayor Channere could no longer restrain his anger. He raised his hand to hit his sister. (O, p.193)

The appearance of Margalitha and Karikkan in the town creates embarrassing situation for John. He thinks, Margalitha spoils the family’s prestige and becomes furious and hits his own mother.

Rebekka’s life in the parental home is more pathetic. As a mute sufferer, she is ill-treated by her father. And family’s exacerbation forces Aabelamma, the
spiritual mentor of Margalitha to enter the congregation at an early age. Her family is burdened with thirteen children and with the mere income of the helpless father. At this situation, such a young girl fails to get a job outside. So she enters religious order in order to bear the responsibility. Her sacrifice fetches prestige and financial support to the entire family. She has not renounced the world by getting a call from God or with service mind but with imposed burden. Even her younger sisters follow the same path. So she tells:

Children, we have no alternative. Suppress your hopes and strangle your dreams. (O, p.5)

The oppressed condition of the family restricts these women to dream of conjugal life and their individual aspirations. Annamkutty’s childhood is away from happiness. Her father is irresponsible. Without caring for the ailing wife, he has spent money extravagantly and sold out his ancestral property. She is a believer of Vergin Mary. Without her consent, she is given in marriage to a Syrian Christian which suffocates her.

However even in the manmade institution of family, women are subjected to authoritative power of the males and encounter plights ignoring their individuality and desires with curtailed freedom. Sarah Joseph refers to the inflicting inhibitions on women within the patriarchal family of Kokkanchara. The conservative family consists of husband who works outside to support the household and wife stays inside with household chores. But a paradoxical feature in the family of Annie is represented by weaving the fabric of turbulence in women’s life. Men in The Daughters of Alaha are detached from the responsibility and portrayed as lethargic persons. As the women of lower class families in Sangati, Kokkanchara’s women bear the economic burden to manage the household. For instance Grandmother, Kunjile, Chinnamma, Chiyyama and even
Annie support the family financially. In Kokkanchara the irresponsibility of the male is visualized when Kuttipaapa asserts:

    Men spend their time by smoking and gambling. Some others are addicted to alcoholism and fall in the streets oblivious of the world around them. (TDOA, p.29)

Sarah analyses how Mariyamma’s husband fails to play the role of a protector in the family and never extends the helping hand to his wife. Mariyamma has faced desperate situation with her in-laws and children, while her husband spends time in playing songs and musical instrument. But he shows his patriarchal attitude to give Kunjile in marriage to a wealthy groom without considering the suggestion of Mariyamma. He is also visible as escapist when he fails to return from Assam. Kuttipaapa is bed-ridden and dependent on female members of the family. The author portrays his restrictions and male domination on women.

Annie’s mother covers her lap with pinch marks to socialize her as per the gender roles. Limitations are heaped even at her way of sleeping. Feminine roles are thus emphasized on girls in the families of Kokkanchara.

In the patriarchal family, woman with her parasitic existence expects protection. Alice Saldana in *The Dead Cannot Hear* upholds the condition of woman who faces dangerous predicaments not from the unknown man but from their own men. The sagas of Rosanne and Uma confide the domestic assault within the family. A motherless Anglo-Indian young girl, Rosanne encounters physical violence and sexual atrocity from her drunkard father. He forgets his responsibility to look after the motherless child with affection and concern. She says:

    He burns me with the cigarette if I do not give in to him. I want to run away from home, but where will I go, I have no money. (TDCH, p.3)
Chapter – 2  Female Restraints as Depicted in the Novels

To escape from such a wretched confinement, she marries a neighbor who runs a brothel. Uma is also raped by her neighbor and gets pregnant. She is made to stay in an Unwed Mothers Home when her parental home denies shelter. The author intends to project the threat to women in the masculine world even from the close one in their early period of life.

Sujatha, the protagonist of the novel, faces isolated oppression in her parental family. Color discrimination humiliates her as the family belongs to upper Brahmin community. Her father plays the role of head without showing any concern or affection towards her. He selects a bridegroom without her consent and does not show any concern towards her when Sanjay deceives her. Later he accepts Prem as Sujatha’s new life partner knowing that he belongs to his own community.

Sujatha’s mother takes care of her husband and performs all her duties pleasantly as a wife. Sujatha says:

My mother cares for my father and he accepts it as his right. (TDCH, p.7)

But the author observes that at the end her confidence is shattered: because her husband has made the will without her knowledge. Though she is an obedient wife and shares her feelings, her husband exhibits his patriarchal mentality. These women characters like Rosanne, Uma and Sujatha are tortured by their previous married life, a life that is celebrated by the customs of society. Thus the author juxtaposes the color discrimination of an upper caste girl and melancholy of married and harassed lives of women in this novel.

Eunice De Souza in Dangerlok finds restrictive roles designated to women in the sphere of family. Vera, a colleague and close friend of Rina, is entangled in the domination of her father-in-law. Her freedom and peace are eclipsed in the male centered atmosphere. Only she has the guise of security in the patriarchal order. Rina notices the superiority perpetuated by the grandfather in her own
family. He becomes furious with the arrival of her mother’s friend who visits to natter whole day at home. With all these, the author provides a picture to understand the women’s trials in the patriarchal institution.

2.3. Repressive Hold of Religion

The complex position of women in society is also determined by religion. These south Indian Christian women writers unfold the secrets of victimization of women within the repressive institution of religion. It plays a large part in conditioning the life of women and moves through every aspects of life. The conservative outlook of women is also influenced by the marginal values and religious norms. Religious groups accept the superior authority of man and woman is treated as an alien.

Bama in her autobiography describes the religious and caste-ridden world which stifles her life and witnesses the humiliation of the community. “Karukku” means double edged sword. She refers this word to her religion, which generates desire to receive spiritual development as a Catholic but turns as a sharp sword in her life.

Bama documents the faith, the fear, the sin and various communions of Catholicism. There is enrichment of belief and devotion to God in her during childhood. This spiritual influence is made by her mother, grandmother, teachers, nuns, and priests. She is very regular to the catechism classes, to the morning masses, makes confessions with her lents and gets communions at an early age. Later she realizes that these religious activities are done with the sense of duty not out of dedication. She illustrates how the priests and the nuns create the sense of fear and sin in every child through false devil and angel stories. She also explains the control of the church over the people and the children. For instance, when she places stolen flowers in the hole of an electric plug to offer them to the picture of Jesus, the current pulls her. But her religious mind makes her to think that it is the
punishment of God for her sin. She discovers that the religious institution which is associated with the underprivileged does not bother about their poverty, hunger and unprivileged condition. Its members try to fill their minds with Scripture lessons, religious teachings and hold them in slavery with terror. The Paraiya community children are alienated and ill-treated by the nuns and the priests. They are discriminated from the upper caste Christian children. Menial jobs in the church and in the convent are assigned to these Dalit Christian children.

Christianity stands for the concern of the poor. With the hope of getting privilege of education, the Paraiya community has converted to Christianity. They have entered a religious system which is away from its propagated values. In reality, they are forced to the cruelty of patriarchy and casteism. Dalits are hurt and humiliated by the elite class. Within the church fold, they experience disillusionment after conversion and besides they are not benefitted by the government schemes and funds. In addition to this the decorum of the upper caste people shows their inhuman atrocities. In the words of Indu Swami:

> Arundhati Roy subtly suggests that even though Christianity survives in India on the strength of low caste converts; these converts can never be assimilated into the mainstream of Christianity. And hence, a relationship between a Christian and a “Paravan” (Untouchable) is bound to be doomed.\(^{24}\)

The interesting conversation of Maadathi and Vellaiyamma about the pigs reared at the nunnery shows the poverty-ridden and lowly lives of the community against the luxurious lives of nuns. The religious institution defines different sexual inhibition for men and women. The Church and the priest confine woman in the cobweb through marital system and never allow for divorce. Young girls are also restricted to select their life-partners and are dislocated like slaves. Thus the narrator presents real incidents of women and makes the readers to realize the prescribed condition of women within the church. Religious sermons and the
promise of reward in Heaven make the lives of those pitiable women as encumbered. Bama quotes:

At Church they must lick the priest’s shoes and be his slaves while he threatens them with tales of God, Heaven, and Hell. (S, p.35)

This celebrated Dalit woman writer touches the aspects of superstitions and festivals among the Dalit Christian women in her literary works. The practiced rituals of Christianity are influenced by Hinduism such as coming of age ceremony and soothsayer’s treatment to a possessed girl. During the celebrations of Chinnamalai festival, Christmas or Easter each Dalit family is expected to offer gifts to the priest. Dalit women, who are treated as unwanted, make their contributions out of their hard and menial wages. They are made to present oblations in the church. She notices the presents offered by Anthony Amma, Bhakkiyam and groups like Our Lady’s Saibai and Holy Childhood Saba. The irony is that women of the Paraiya community staunchly follow the advocated religious customs as routine duty without knowing the significance. Bama notes:

Even though our people had never tasted the fruit themselves, they somehow went through every effort to buy the fruit for the church elders; they made their offering, knelt before them in all humility and received the sign of the cross on their foreheads. (K, p.56)

Bama articulates bitter experiences of caste discrimination within the church and the outside. Dalits are rejected and even the existence of the Dalit priests and Dalit nuns in the religious order is marginalized than the privileged class. This casteism effects like the worst kind of malady. She illustrates the degradation faced by low caste people while travelling, burying the dead body in the church cemetery. Even women are deprived of wearing sari-blouse.
Deep entrenched influence of Christianity from childhood is pointed out in the protagonist. As a Christian girl, her immature mind is filled with spirituality, love, and respect towards religion that prompt her to accept the nunship. Further hypocritical attitude of the church members towards Dalit children during her school days changes her mind.

However Bama’s nurtured service attitude prompts her to join the nunnery with optimism to serve neglected children. But her moralistic thoughts on the premises of the convent prove to be an elusive dream. Humility, obedience and patience are the teachings of Jesus Christ. In contrast, this Christian institution is embedded with caste divisions and its ramifications and power give her tragically harrowing experiences. She points out the humiliating attitude of a sister in a nunnery:

In a particulars class, a Sister told us that in certain order they would not accept Harijan women as prospective nuns and that there was even a separate order for them somewhere. (K, p.22)

This discouragement haunts and disturbs her. The luxurious cage makes them to forget their aim to serve the depressed section. After her sojourn in the caste ridden framework of the convent, she renounces such sham and decides to lead her individual live. She foregrounds her victimization as a Dalit woman in the outside world also. Caste identity torments in her condition of desolation. Caste-functionalized society hurts her at every stage of life. Its crude nature toils her to get a job and a rented house to lead an independent life. Hence the author stands as exemplified to bring awareness among the people about the aggressive exploitation of a Tamil Dalit Christian woman in the niche of caste, religion, language, region and gender.

In her author’s note to “Othappu”, a novel that recently won the crossword prize, Sarah Joseph talks about her teenage longing to be one with Christ. The way to be with him was to become a nun. 

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The atmosphere of Catholic Christianity influences the mind of every young girl. The immature thinking of the girl yearns to consider Christ through nunship. The graceful appearance of nuns in their white holy cloths creates deep rooted faith and fear of sin at the younger age. Such a kind of religious attachment insists her to accept the order. Riny, Margalitha’s niece is the only daughter to Silvy. Margalitha’s Amma and Silvy accustom this young child to their illusioned world of sacredness. While Channere Varkey-Master shows a different path to Margalitha to serve God on her decision of renouncement. But her mother insists to enter the convent by saying:

My child, family life - delivering children, raising them, and all the rest of it - is not as easy or enjoyable as it is made out to be. Those who see it from a distance may think it is. But those who have suffered the grind know the truth.

(O, p.55)

Abelamma’s episode shows how some girls accept the convent life to support their family and to get protective life. Abelamma expresses:

Milk, once pressed out, cannot return to the udder.

(O, p.52)

She realizes that it is impossible to come out of the religious order and mechanically performs her duty as nun and dozes at the worship. She is conscious of the religious norms inside the nunnery. So she assists Margalitha to cross the threshold of the system. On the other side, staunch followers of the church degrade the person who breaks the religious beliefs within the system. Believer of Virgin Mary, Annamkutty finds Margalitha as a consoler and there is a spiritual bond between them. The very fact of Margalitha as renegade nun makes her to faint and curse her with indignation.

Margalitha searches God through service to the poor. She juxtaposes spirituality and sexuality. Her way of seeking peace and God is against to the
church rules. That’s why, she is out casted and excluded from society. Inside the convent:

In the convent, Margalitha used to attend the Mass only to discharge a duty. Day after day, again and again, she lent her voice, not her soul, to the printed prayers that had lost their resonance and fragrance. (O, p.149)

Sister Patricia is a believer and depicts the deep influence of religion. Inside the convent, she tries to seek God by hurting herself with wounds. She represents those women, who are confined to the religious order and never wish to come outside. Rebekka claims herself as a ‘free believer’. So the Church exhibits its authority and supremacy over her. The authoritative spiritual leaders have threatened her gatherings in the houses for prayers. When she faces them with courage, they hurt her by enquiring of her personal life.

Chandy Doctor, who conducts Gospel meetings and heals the people’s illness by laying hands on them. He gets the support of the church and the religious leaders and abuses Rebekka as a possessed woman. His inferior attitude towards women regards them as sinners. The ironical fact is that his faith-healing camps and sermons are attended by educated and sophisticated women. He says:

I realized that the woman was bitterer than death. (O, p.196)

Holding the Bible in his hand, he preaches that woman is a cause for turmoil. Women with their ardent faith bow before him as silent listeners though they are termed as representatives of Satan. Rebekka approaches people in his faith-healing camp to unveil the deeds of the Doctor but she is beaten up by the supporters of Chandy Doctor. The author writes:

Even then, he never missed an opportunity to beat Rebekka down with the sledge-hammer words from the Ecclesiastes. (O, p.196)
As a Christian woman, Sarah Joseph is immensely influenced by the religion. This institution checks the behavior and individual desires of women and fetters freedom. The author through the portrayal of woman characters exposes the enrooted religious influence which is near to reality.

Eunice De Souza expertly captures the religious control over the women. Rina describes her childhood days in Dangerlok. She remembers how the nuns enforce maintaining a note book of her acts. Every act of the girl is conditioned and the mind is filled with the fear of sins and devil’s stories. This has effected and curtailed the freedom of thought and mentally they are controlled by the religious members. She says:

Even now, damnation is never really far from her mind.

(D, p.42)

The religious rigid ideas overrule the women throughout their life. They are forced to look everything holding the idea of damnation without any freedom of mind.

In The Dead Cannot Hear the novelist tries to depict the hold of a community over the life of a woman. The community puts forth the disciplinary rules and norms to the women which may be convenient or inconvenient, harmful or helpful. With these assigned norms, most women bear all difficulties which restrict their freedom to express desires and identity. If she is bounded by the conventions, the community appreciates her. But the same community is unaware of her experiences. The protagonist’s mother, Nalini has lived the conditioned life. So the community honors her at her cremation. Hence Sujatha puts in her own words:

She had tried to live by her convictions rather than by convenience. (TDCH, p.168)
The irony is that the community people are not aware of her hardships and her recognition is ignored. But when they appreciate her, she is not there to hear.

Anand Prakash Minj finds:

According to E.V., Christian faith included the conviction that Jesus is the incarnate Lord who took the side of common man against the oppressor, in his saving work of giving the fullness of human dignity to all men.26

Christianity emphasizes humanity and aims to rescue the oppressed and poor community. But in the context of Kokkanchara society, Christianity projects itself as liege and scorns the marginalized people in the novel, The Daughters of Alaha. The church makes the participation of Catholic women believers as inevitable in the procession which is organized against the communist. But the religious members are unsentimental towards the tortuous wails of these women’s life. The oblations given out of their hard earnings are made obligation. When the issue of eight rooms’ area is decided in the church, women are prohibited to enter the holy place and to raise their voice. The system of church pretends to serve the underprivileged class by arranging group marriages for unmarried daughters but at the end it proves to be burdensome on the parents by indirectly inflicting the evil of dowry. It expects Kocchurodu to lead her life at her husband’s home even though he deserts her. The religious members do not provide an opportunity to Annie to be educated at their rich convent. She is humiliated at the school, considering her marginalized area and street. At the end, the flood of water filled Kokkanchara. The expected Noha’s ark never appears to save the marginalized people from the world of death.

Through such observations Sarah Joseph unveils the religious implications on private and public lives of various women in the community.
2.4. Societal Inhibitions

Peter L. Berger defines:

Society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thoughts and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness.27

Society is an inseparable aspect of human life. The societal force demands that they should live with existing social norms.

India being a democratic country is structured with caste-ridden system and subjugation of the downtrodden. Poor and untouchables experience insufferable oppression. In addition to this, the life of woman is not free from the emasculation. Their role and activities in society are always associated with gender which gives inequality. Even in the hierarchy of society, if a woman is at the highest position in her job than a man, she is treated as subordinate and inferior.

Ashok Kumar remarks:

Since the establishment of the society woman is branded as the weaker sex, denied full justice, social security, economic liberation and political awareness.28

Indian society is rooted in patriarchal practice. The existing social order makes woman to accept the degradation and sufferings. The life of a woman is socially incarnated in subordination. Men and women are socialized into social category. They learn gender traits and gather different roles. So these different sexes have distinction in social arena and such society believes men are superior to women. It assigns the responsibility to the man to control the woman’s conduct. In this social sphere, woman is compelled to adopt herself in various roles. She learns to play characters like mother, daughter, wife and sister in the society.
Temperamental imbalance between the sexes is created in patriarchal society and patriarchal notion is inevitable in such social life. It prescribes and supports masculine authority at every step of life. Woman is exposed to various experiences of life in the social circumstances which are entirely different from man. The presence of social distinctions of patriarchy holds the power and denies the individuality of the woman. In such circles of acquired value system, both male and female are perpetuated to perform the expected roles. There is different relegated status to men and women in the society and they are expected to adopt the social ethos. If women violate, they are looked down and are castigated. So at every phase of life, woman’s liberty is monitored by various forms of social control. She is consciously and unconsciously compelled to accept the social values. Thus she is socially controlled in the masculine of the male directly or indirectly.

The selected women writers display the social inequities and social bondage of women. They trace the frightening experiences of women and harsh realities in the trapped male dominated society.

Bama as a recorder of real events of her village presents the society in her works *Karukku* and *Sangati* to reveal the disturbing experiences. The social milieu, which Bama witnesses, is ridden with crude casteism and patriarchy. Double standard of the powerful rich upper class gives rise to social friction. So the writer records the suppression and age old slavery of the Dalit people with their poverty, illiteracy, blind beliefs, and unending hard work. In such a social web, Dalit women’s position is miserable due to the dual oppression on the grounds of caste and gender.

Social hierarchies segregate and discriminate woman throughout her life. The author mirrors the barriers of the social system which alienate the self of a woman and treats her as Other. From childhood Bama is exposed to the cruel and
inhuman social order. She presents various vignettes to reveal the form of hierarchy in the social sphere of her village. The segments of this society have upper caste communities and lower-caste communities. Both men and women of the lower strata in this social system are heaped with the issues of discrimination and untouchability. She draws our attention to show the unjust where social friction is visible even in the settlements of the untouchables at the ending part of the village. And needy people have inhuman and debased existence. Tarun Kumar writes:

The sense of superiority among the villagers was such, she said that the Dalit habitation was towards the eastern edge as the wind blew from West to East and hence, touched the untouchables last. Discrimination at every step in the bus when no one would sit next to her, at the college where she was asked her caste....

Bama’s literary world is embedded with bitter realities of women particularly Dalit Christian women who are caught in social bondage. She tries to explore the various dominance of the upper caste on these women.

There is a barrier erected between the rich upper class and the unprivileged class in society. As a Dalit Christian woman, the author has witnessed social hardships among rural women. She documents social exclusion of the women in their routine life. In her school days, she has experienced the social ill of untouchability while traveling in the bus. The offensive control of patriarchal society bans the entrance of Dalit Christian women into the cinema hall. Paati states:

In our streets, there are any number of restrictions for women. For instance, even today, only men are allowed to go to the cinema. (S, p.105)

Social upliftment of the Harijans is the gracious attempt of Dr. Ambedkar. His thoughts have permeated among the Dalits in Bama’s village also. But the documented facts of the author show how the brutal land lords threaten women
laborers if they mention the name of this icon. This unjust social order never allows for unity and it makes a rift among women who have new thoughts in the name of caste, God and Priest. Their revolutionary ideas are suppressed and make them voiceless.

The author expertly captures the lack of political awareness among the women. They are not enlightened of their political rights. She has recollected the election episode in Sangati in a humorous manner. The party politics in this supremacist society is entangled with caste. Women’s community is denied of participation in the politics. Their lives are encircled with unending sufferings to manage families and no political party leaders transcend their conditions of oppression and starvation. She appeals the reality of male domination on woman even in the aspect of voting. Her mother has cast the vote as the father wishes. Most of the women are ignorant and illiterate to stamp on the pictures of sheet provided for casting their votes. It is evident from the acts of Paati, Anthoni. So Kannan, a man sitting there says:

These are completely ignorant donkeys. They should never have been allowed to vote, Appa. (S, p. 100)

Thus they are unaware of their political rights in this humiliating society.

Social stratification in the rural area shows the reclusion of the poor people from the wealthy upper class. Bama notes:

It seems that our society is divided into those who toil, and those who sit down and feast. They have separated out those whom they consider unfit to touch, pushed them to one side and marginalized them; they make them work like machines yet abuse them unjustly, never allowing them to make any progress. (K, p. 68)

The endemic poverty coaxes them to toil whole day yet they fail to have money in their hands. While the rich people feast over the containment of the downtrodden. The author authentically presents the hostile face of women’s life
and their travails. They have to bear abusive alcoholic husband, kids, stress of the family responsibility and atrocities from the men at the work place. In this frustrated situation, a girl child’s education is neglected and she is cooped to the domestic chores. The communal riots have victimized the women with abuse and cruel atrocities from the police men. Even in the premises of educational institutions, they are in a quandary. They are regarded as unclean and immoral by the privileged class. And again, they assign the menial and their needy works to those whom they treat as untouchables. Thus the dominant class has entrapped the Dalit women in the system of slavery. In this closed society, untouchability is a social practice. Bama’s grandmother is an illiterate but a skilled midwife and is able to handle most difficult cases. The upper caste women do not welcome her service for her caste. Even outcaste women are denied to wear sari blouses. As a girl, the narrator confronts the brutal insults and contemptible attitude of the Naicker caste (a landowning caste) towards her grandmother. As an aged laborer, she has to address the Naicker’s kids as Master or Ayya. She encounters inhuman acts like the Naicker woman’s way of pouring water from a height of four feet. All the filthy chores are done by the lower caste women as a mediocre individual. They work hard to get a meal and some women try to manage with ragi-kuuzh (gruel made of ragi) or with the left over rice of the Naicker. In this poverty-ridden social situation, even women don’t have a space to have bath in their tiny huts.

In this patriarchal society, there is threat of violence for the Dalit women from the upper-caste fellows. Starkness of poverty in the family compels every woman to support with financial assistance. Village council has authorial strength over the community people in their society. It also appears as an oppressive system on women’s liberty. From sunrise to sunset women work hard in the fields and at home wash vessels, clean the house, collect water, shop for provisions, boil the rice and gather firewood in the forest. Mariamma’s story is evident, where she meets with disempowerment and humiliation in the public sphere. The clouds of distress fall on her, when she has been accused of sexual misbehavior by rich
landowner, Kumaraswamy. The village panchayath curtails her freedom to speak the reality. In this andocentric system, justice to women is an illusion. Young girls, women and even elder women are suppressed to give their opinions. Couple of young men retort:

Do you women have any sense at all? What are you muttering about here, when we men are talking seriously?
Go home all of you. (S, p.21)

Women hide most of the sexual onslaughts fearing the strong hold of patriarchy.

In Indian society, even today social perception of a single woman is not acceptable. The existent patriarchal circumstances rise pathetic and oppressive ways both to married and unmarried women. Bama renounces the religious order, when her dreams shatter and her service mind insists her to dedicate her life to the poor community people. She draws the reader’s attention towards the crude rigid society by telling:

I have seen the brutal, frenzied and ugly face of society and been enraged by it. (K, p.105)

She describes her position as socially out of place and that she is like the property of many men. Besides loneliness, she is discriminated in the name of caste, gender, and single woman’s status in the public niche. Her deplorable situation makes her to articulate new thoughts, hopes and even education inspires to face the practical life of harsh realities.

But this educated and economically independent woman is still expected to live within the marginalized values. For instance, once she goes for a café alone at her work place, her colleagues talk in the following way:

Is she a woman? Look at the way she rents herself a house and goes about as she pleases like a man! (S, p.121)
Discontented with the social exclusion in the outside world and inside the religious institution, she tries to represent the cheerless reality of her own community in literary works. She is the first Dalit Christian woman in her village who awakens the entire world about toils and traumas of Dalit Christian men and women. Instead of understanding the social injustice with misgivings, the entire village ostracized this struggling woman.

That’s why she puts her pen to paper to reveal the suffocating space of women in their respective societies. The bitterness of the women in the social milieu makes them enthralled. The protests of the woman whether she is illiterate or literate, rich or poor, home maker or employee push her as Other in the male supremacist society. In Indian culture, the social ethics expect a woman to be conscious of her behavior setting aside her feelings. The women characters of Bama pertinently show such vulnerable position.

Sarah Joseph evaluates the existing colonial administration, power relations, modernization and dominance of feudal system, cruelty of casteism and ostracism of the subordinates in Kerala society. In *The Daughters of Alaha* the urban elite society takes the service of Thotis to clean the filth in their places. Without considering their work, they reduce them to the subservient level and confine their inhabitation in the border area of Thrissur. They are regarded as untouchables because of the job they do.

This novel speaks about the atrocities of soldiers particularly on poor people. Mariya’s family is also succumbed by their violent act. When the elder member of this family escapes from the responsibility, the physical poverty forces her to earn livelihood. In addition to this, she is subsided to the marginalized place of Thrissur with her family members. In this social establishment, the starvation of the sub-alternate class is miserable and this is evident in the household of Mariya. She put her life at risk to get a little rice by mounting the dark Thangamani hill.
Because the available rice is sold out to the rich class in Kokkanchara, striking the oppressed and exploitative class to suffer with the shortage of rice. Women collect rice which is full of worms from Unnimunun’s Depo that inflicts disease. The interesting point in the novel is that the elite class abandons the low class people to get rice on their own, but longs for the white appam of the poor. The author depicts succinct pictures through Annie’s alienated situations in this social set up. With the description of Kodicchi area, which is not hygienic, show their isolation from the higher strata of society.

The appearance of a tar road, a fence around the well and a huge convent building disturb the struggling life of Kokkanchara women and even they are tried to be dislocated further with the arrival of the town people in the name of progress. For instance, Chakkunni wants to buy the home of Annie.

Drama is only for the rich people to pass their time....(TDOA, p.64)

The above words of Kocchurodu to Annie remind of the social restrictions on the low and poor class to play the roles in the drama. The progressed society never thinks of these people’s education and improvement. The illiterate women of Kokkanchara are scared to take treatment in the hospitals at the time of delivery and diseases. The silent Kunjile, who serves the society as a midwife is put into the vicious circle of the patriarchal order. Even at the time of the flood, women struggle hard to save their home and lives. Whatever the oddities that exist in the culture, they directly affect the lives of women as shown in this fiction. Sara Joseph impressively weaves the story to view the conditions of the working class women, poor women and their treatment in the society of Kerala. She uses the image of the field beans plant to mirror the difficulties and displacement of the sub-altar class.
Many atrocities are inflicted on women in the controlled system of society. This is visible in the depiction of female characters of Sarah Joseph in *Othappu*. The wandering preacher, Rebekka encounters bitterness in the outside world. She says:

I have suffered much. I have begged. Suffered rejection and abuse at the hands of the rich. Maddened by hunger, I have eaten paper soaked in water. Have stayed indoors for days, lacking even rags to cover my nakedness.... (O, p.39)

It is true that she is battered mentally and physically by her husband within the familial confinement. But outside the family also, the cruelty of the men is severe. An open hearted Rebekka shares the woes of the downtrodden and attends the disabled with her healing power. Those prove themselves as hypocrites and non-cooperative, when she is at the hospital with half-severed tongue. Society imposes norms to follow but rarely rescues women from the assaults. Renegade Margalitha takes shelter in the house of Yohannan Kasseessa, a friend of Karikkan. Then the scandalous attitude of the society creates a commotion in the life of Kasseesa linking his name with Margalitha. She recognizes the cowardly nature of Karikkan by his absence during this uproar. So the author writes:

His dilemma was not situated between God and Marglitha, but between society and Margalitha. He was more mindful of the social cost he would have to pay if he held her wounded hand. (O, p.130)

Karikkan has visited Kassessa's home and has waited hours together to have a glance of Margalitha. But when she expects his support, he is conscious of social morality and disappears from the scene.

The strong belief of religious principles insists the society to condemn the ex-nun, Maragalitha for marrying the parish priest which results in the suicide of Karikkan's father. The people comment:

A priest and nun had sinned grievously because of their carnal lust and betrayed believers. What a pity that in this day and age, such people were not stoned to death. (O, p.176)
Believers of religious order in the society even today think woman is responsible for the fall of humanity. Eve is accused of tempting Adam to violate the order of the God. Maragalitha is seen in the place of Eve and people say:

> From Eden to this day, she, she had been leading mankind into Satan's trap. It was she who cost us Paradise. It was best for everyone to stay out of her reach and touch. (O, p.179)

Margalitha is firm in her decision. But though Karikkan is inclined towards Maragalitha, he exhibits weak mind through his deeds. That results in the humiliation and hostility of Maragalitha. She never alters her mind even though society blames her.

When Maragalitha experiences motherhood in her life, society criticizes her as the seducer of Karikkan. She is held responsible for all the disastrous in the life of Karikkan. He is termed as naive against all odds. People gossip:

> Who could tell the many places Margalitha had been to, how many she might have stayed with, or what all had happened, after she left the Convent? (O, p.217)

Deceived by Karikkan, Maragalitha is burdened with Naanu from Augustine, who wants to be free from that child. The entrance of this child in Maragalitha's life creates a lot of rumors among the people.

Maragalitha's act of stepping outside the nunnery brews so many stories in the society. Her journey as ex-nun from her parental home, her travelling in the train without ticket aimlessly, her stay at Kassessa's home and her days with Rebekka and with Karikkan torment her wounded heart in the misogynist world. Society expects strict celibacy and morality from the religious members of the church. If any member comes out of that system, it thinks him or her as the deceiver of the sacred world and stays behind to extend the helping hand.
Chapter - 2

Female Restraints as Depicted in the Novels

The title of the novel, *Dangerlok* itself projects that the life of a woman in the urban condition is often exposed to the risk. Eunice De Souza reveals the suffocating inhibitions which trap the every action of a woman. Rina is an empowered woman; still she is marginalized from the centre of social structure. She reflects on the events of those underestimated situations in her social sphere. In a seminar, she complains when her name is wrongly spelt. But the chief organizer shows his negligent attitude towards her though he apologizes. She realizes the alienation and subversion of a woman poet in the conversation of male poets. Such instances bring to the fore condemnation and destruction of the female identity and self expressions.

The novelist also throws light on the torments which haunt the tribal women in Orissa inflicted by the males of Christian missionaries. The taxi driver’s criticizing attitude towards college girl’s smoking habit and divorce acts. Such imposition of cultural taboos of the patriarchal society on the girls appears as the suppression of women’s liberty. Rina’s tangible experiences in the outer world such as the clerk’s rejection to give stamps at the post office, taxi driver’s demand for huge amount of money, an abusive letter from the author whose book is reviewed unfavorably all are masked as progress but are with all the conventional prejudices.

Eunice De Souza in *Dev and Simran* portrays the predicaments, which disturbs women in the public life. Maya’s bad experience while travelling alone in the train to the conference and an old man’s gesture to get the phone number from Simran at the club in his first meeting depict the state of a single woman who is nowhere safe in the offensive patriarchal society. Maya, who is regarded as a feminist, gets misogynist attitude from men in society. The writer thus makes an attempt to display the cramped urban world for women throughout her works.
2.5. Educational and Economic Deprivation

The idea of education is not merely to impart knowledge to the pupil in some subjects but to develop in him those habits and attitudes with which he may successfully face the future.\textsuperscript{30}

Education is the basic necessity to impart good values and reform false beliefs and prejudices. Progress and social transformation are possible through the educational system. Infact many fields in education are dominated by men. Various discriminations are also present in this sector. The value system in the patriarchal society has restricted many educational areas to women and thus denies her power to earn. Disparity is noticeable even though women are well educated in the modern reformed patriarchal world. According to Kate Millet:

While modern patriarchies have, fairly recently, opened all educational levels to women, the kind and quality of education is not the same for each sex. This difference is of course apparent in early socialization, but it persists and enters into higher education as well.\textsuperscript{31}

The educated and economically independent woman finds herself in a negotiating position. Her choice and desire are directly or indirectly controlled by traditional oppressive hold. Educational system is also gender based. A girl child is always conditioned, which hinders her education. In this unconscious mechanism of the educational system, she faces a lot of constraints. Discrimination lingers even though woman is highly educated. Uma Alladi observes:

Even though more women are now educated, there is not much change in their attitudes and views towards life. Education started on a large scale in the late nineteenth century, but at that time it was designed to develop in a woman those qualities that were seen as essential to making her a good housewife – reticence in speech, subservience of manners, fortitude and conscientiousness.\textsuperscript{32}
Christian missionaries in India have imparted education to the lowly and downtrodden. Though free education is accessible to the children of Bama's village, girls' education is negligible and they are harassed with the household pursuits. Anyhow, the boys educate themselves up to some extent. As a Dalit Christian student, her experiences exemplify the atrocities and degradations in the premises of a school. They are humiliated and alienated by being identified as scheduled caste girls in the class room. Working as a teacher, she is influenced by a woman of religious order and her intuition persuades her to literate the needy children. But she faces pain in the way of her service.

Bama's narratives not only focus on the oppression but also the torments of the Dalit children in the educational institutions. This system ill-treats the untouchables and sometimes goes to the extent to marginalize them. Being a daughter of a sepoy (soldier), Bama gets an opportunity to study. Unfortunately her parents try to obstruct her college education initially worrying about to find a husband in their community. Her father's assistance becomes out of reach. In the hostel, poverty separates her from the upper caste and rich girls. Shailaja Paik states:

Dalit girls suffered more, because they had to fight both caste and gender oppression.\textsuperscript{33}

There are no free boarding facilities for girls to be educated in Bama's village. Sometimes even they pay for their food and for lodging; the enforcement of hostility binds them with caste and class. One of the warden sisters expresses humiliating words towards girl students:

Look at the Cheri children! When they stay here, they eat their fill and look as round as potatoes. But look at the state in which they come back from home- just skin and bone! (K, pp.17-18)
Grandmother, who belongs to the older generation, expresses her remorse and helplessness for not being educated due to the odds in life. Her condition suggests that the domestic slavery of girls hinders education in their life though Christian missionaries have offered free education, free note books and midday meals. This illiteracy among women perpetuates early marriage and ignorance towards medical facilities.

Paati says:

Keeping young women at home is like keeping a fire going in your belly.... (S, pp.9-10)

Even minor educated women’s lives are nowhere safe. The illustrating events of girls in the novels display their lack of liberty to think and to select a life partner, lack of right to express their opinion in public. Bama writes that the men say:

‘Whatever it is, she is only a woman.’ Whatever she does or achieves, they give it no credit, rate it as low, the only reason being that she was born a woman. It is the same in every field. At the most, if a woman achieves something especially good, they will say, ‘look at her, Appa, she is like a man.’ (S, p.109)

Instead of playing the role of elevator of their deprived community, Dalit educated men imitate the upper caste. They escape from the social responsibility to expose their people to the world of literacy.

In these texts, educated and economically independent female protagonist’s life is encircled with vulnerable situations in this male dominated world. The patriarchal mentality enforces effeminacy and the stereotyped image on both educated and uneducated women. In the concluding lines of Sangati, the author shows her disappointment by imaging the traumas of the illiterate women of her village. She is cognizant of the living oppressive male hold on woman’s desire and need. She suffers from infidelity and disintegration. Thus Bama stands as witness and advocates against the oppressive conditions of women vociferously.
Eunice De Souza in *Dangerlok* reviews people's resistance to girl's education. Traditional cultural values in the minds make them to think about the security of their girls and they fear that the girls would go astray. In the case of Rina also her mother, who is familiar with the patriarchal order, is particular that her daughter's education be in a women's college. Besides she forces her to get a job within the city of Poona.

Sarah Joseph offers to show the problem and the humiliation to an underprivileged class for education. Annie faces ill-treatment and she is discriminated by teachers where they throw her plate during midday meals at the school. Martha teacher and Ammanni teacher ferociously insult her in the name of caste and place. They believe:

Kokkanchira was the place where dead bodies were thrown out. The dead dogs and human beings decayed, staying together in close embrace. After the corpses, the scavengers, the butchers, the unsocial loafers, illegal liquor makers, rickshawvallas, porters and those who sell their bodies come to live there. Their children seldom clean their teeth. Between their fingers the skin gets decayed. Under their nails dirt accumulates. Their ears remained septic throughout the year emanating a bad odor. The teachers never go near them. They don't check their dictation. They touch them with the tip of the cane only. They are treated as a separate class.\(^{34}\)

Teachers show themselves as strict disciplinarians and do not treat the children of Kokkanchara in a pleasant way. The noticeable point in the fiction is that even the educated people of Kokkanchara hesitate to touch those pupils. They neglect their own people by exhibiting superiority instead of making effort to uplift. Kocchan teacher of Kokkanchara calls students as “kokkathees” (dead bodies eating vultures). They are degraded and insulted by the verbal abuse. Annie silently witnesses the arrival of a huge convent to Kokkanchara which is a phase of urbanization. Christian nuns have started this school for the rich class children. But a Christian girl like Annie is denied of educational opportunity in this place.
Sarah Joseph indirectly marks the deprivation of education to the lower class girls and they find such institutional doors are always closed to them.

*There is a Dance for Every Song* is an inspiration and mirrors the achievement of Mridula Martis. She starts her journey to London to fulfill her dream of dance learning. At the time of her first dance of Rumba, she notices how man plays a very important role and leads the entire dance performance. She writes the words of Peter:

70% of the dance is the man’s role as he has to learn to lead the follower.\(^{35}\) (TDFES, p.57)

The more preference is given to the male partner and the lady is named as “the follower”. This word indicates the secondary role of a woman even in the field of art. She has to imitate the steps of a male partner.

Economical limitations are also present in the lives of women. Superiority of man has its hold on the economic power of the woman. Economic dependence of women paves a way to a subservient status. These constraints prevail everywhere and hinder the empowerment and progress. Bama provides an insight into the perilous state of women. She finds innumerable obstacles to woman at the economical level that restricts her liberty.

She depicts women characters who work outside because of economic necessity. Inspite of this, there is presence of male supremacy, and the domestic responsibilities are heaped on Dalit Christian women. Women of all generations such as wife, daughters, and grandmothers work tirelessly to get a meal. Their poor condition and untouchability lead to their economic suppression. Through her childhood memories, she attempts to picture the incessant hard labor of the woman from dawn to dusk. Thus she intends to give an account of the repressed and ruined lives of women within the economic system.
Chapter – 2  Female Restraints as Depicted in the Novels

The narrator extensively throws light on the multifaceted work of women and their economical oppression. She writes:

And to this day, in my village, both men and women can survive only through hard and incessant labour. (K, p.41)

She witnesses how women render hard labor and are victimized by violent abuse and humiliation both in the fields and homes of landlords. The basic economic reasons are poverty and they are landless laborers. The author’s grandmother serves as a laborer.

Apart from household chores, they work as agricultural laborers, construction laborers, collecting firewood in the hills to sell and making bricks. Naickers (landowning castes) have majority of lands and these women’s lives are completed with bonded labor in their lands.

She recounts the economic hardships of women which she observed as a child, adolescent and young adult. In the midst of poverty, these women are deprived of money fraudulently in the barter system by the Naicker employers and tradesmen. Working conditions are deplorable and they are maligned by untouchability. For instance, they are made to sit in the cattle shed to shell the groundnuts. Hard physical labor is same for both men and women but disparity is visible when women do not receive appropriate wages and are ill paid. Mariyamma exemplifies herself by working as laborer for digging a well. She represents economic precariousness which suffocates the women. The stinking broken-grain and grains collected at the lake shore or at the bank of the filthy canal are used to fill up their bellies. She writes while shelling the groundnuts:

If we chatted in between shelling, or ate one or two of the nuts, that was it. Naicker would be furious and swear at us, using every term of abuse he knew. (K, p.44)

In Sangati, she traces out a real incident where a couple of young girls eat some of the gram out of starvation while sowing the field and find terrible death.
The mental and physical turmoil of a woman are depicted by a female figure Kaaliamm, who financially manages her family. These Dalit women never have the time and the money to think about jewellery. Though woman is a wage earner, she is entrusted with the charge of even a little household duties. The protagonist herself is subjected to the dehumanizing situation at college, when she is insulted of her low status without any kinds of trinkets and fine clothes. Getting gruel for one day even after hard work is a risk. So it is impossible to long for costly material things; such adversity on the college day compells her to lock up herself in the bathroom.

The author writes:

As soon as children grew up to be ten or twelve years of age, they'd go and find some way of making money.
(K, p.45)

The depiction of child labor brings out its problem. Women characters like Mariyamma, Annamma, Maikanni and Bama have experienced such toil. The story confines the plight of Bama to her childhood. Economical support to the family is inevitable for every Dalit Christian girl and Dalit Christian woman of her village. The protagonist is exposed to infinite sufferings while collecting firewood and dried cow dung, pulling up the ground-nut crops and separating the pods, shelling the groundnuts, gleaning stray onions in the field. She finds it difficult to withstand the cruelty of discrimination and repression of the tradesmen and the landlords. Many young children enter the match factory in order to earn money instead of gaining knowledge in the schools. Bama states:

These tiny crab-like children pour their kuuzh into their carriers half asleep, totter along to the van, climb in and go off to work. They work at sticking on match-box labels; they make firecrackers and use chemicals; and they return home exhausted, at seven in the evening. (K, p.48)
The life of Maikkanni, a young girl with an ensnaring eye, gives touching insights into the absurdities of life of many young girls who work both inside their homes and in the suffocating atmosphere of the match factory. The author writes:

The day Maikkanni learnt to walk, she started to work as well. Her mother had to go out to work in the fields. It was Maikkanni who looked after all the tasks at home. (S, p.70)

The irresponsibility of the father draws critical situation on the family. So Maikkanni and her mother work outside as daily wage workers. Maikkanni’s conversation with the narrator depicts the barbarity of the match factory. The stink of chemical creates pain in her guts. Working outside allows mobility to the woman, but her money and liberty at home is subjugated by male authority. She gets punishment from her father when she spends a rupee out of her own wages to buy coneicecream. In the match factory, the children have a critical existence and confront despotic authority of the owner. Many times the owner beats Maikkanni for throwing away match box labels and for shitting under the tree. She says:

He beat me twice, Perimma. The first time was when I was sticking the matchbox labels, and he saw me throwing away two labels because I had used too much paste. He gave me a sharp knock on my skull. My whole head felt as if it was spinning. (S, p.72)

The factory owners play movie songs and provide other comforts to the workers only to extract more and fast work from them.

Many women characters in Bama’s novels financially support their families even if the father or husband is dead or alive. Velliayamma, abandoned by her husband, works restless until her death. Mariyamma, a motherless young girl, accepts the responsibility of the two sisters. Thus the novelist writes:

Many of the girls wake up at cock-crow and work in the match factory all day, so they go to sleep immediately after their evening kanji, or even without drinking it. (S, p.78)
Women do hard manual labor without any break but they are pushed at the bottom of the economic ladder. However Bama makes her effort to unveil various issues which constrain woman’s life at the economical level. As an observer and an experienced person, she touches the pathos of women.

Sarah Joseph in *Othappu* brings out the deprivation of a job and family’s property to Margalitha. Though her family is well-educated, it gives marginalize role to a woman and enforces dominant patriarchal ideology. The author says:

> The Channere sons, however, believed that women working outside the house lowered the prestige of the family....(O, p.53)

Margalitha has not desired for material things. She breaks the closed religious order realizing her stay as impossible. This ex-nun’s distressed state has not at all moved her family members. So to lead her life in the excluded society, she demands a teaching job in her father’s Vidyaposhini L.P. School. But her money minded brother strictly denies the teaching post to his sister with an aspiration to get reasonable rate for that vacant post. In the family property, she is not assigned with rightful share. Her brothers are more worried not to grant a share of the property to her than about her intolerable act of giving up the nunship. Even her mother has secretly willed some land with the condition that she should marry an aged advocate Chiramel leaving the unlawful partner, Karikkan.

Irrespective of the poor or rich families, women tussle to get a rightful share of the inheritance. Margalitha is snatched of her property right in her patriarchal family because she has joined the religious order and as a woman, she is subdued. The eminent author, Sarah Joseph with a woman’s consciousness contends on the conflicting circumstances of her female protagonists as wage-earners. Economic restrictions from the male dominant authority create the contradictions. Almost all the female characters of Kokkanchara support their families financially. Kunjile balances the household by starting a Appam (a bread made of rice batter) business. This business is inhibited by a group of fourteen mischievous persons when Nonu is on her way to Trissur to sell Appam. This
perturbation occurs from the irresponsible males. So she finds her way as a midwife. But still the patriarchal restrictions haunt her outside and also inside. Annie expresses the attitude of Kuttipaapa towards his sister’s profession:

He does not like Kunjile to be a midwife. He aspires that she should take up other job. Because as a midwife, she has to go to unknown places with unknown persons irrespective of day and night. He doesn’t have peace of mind. (TDOA, p.40)

The only source for household and Kuttipaapa’s medicinal expense is Kunjile’s income. Though he is on the bed as a diseased person, he is vigilant and tries to control female members of the family. Here the novelist focuses to reveal that whether the man is capable or incapable, he wants to exercise his dominance.

Chiyyamma and Chinnamma work in the button company and Annie’s mother gets a job as building laborer. The owners extract heavy physical labor with very low wages. Even Annie also assists the family. She peels the cashew fruits in Kocchan teacher’s garden and in return she gets mangoes, which she sells. While working, the teacher looks at her as if she is a thief. So the problems of mean wages and looking down the poor working class earners are traced out. Many chit fund companies and the church deceive the poor people. They pawn ornaments and give money for the highest rate of interest. Dark Kunjara does not prove to be successful in spite of her honest policy in chit fund business. Kunjile is an efficient midwife in Kokkanchara and she handles difficult cases. Once a mistake happens at the hands of Kunjile while delivering a baby. Kuriyappa Doctor threatens her and forbids her to continue working. Prof. Parvathi Aithal and Dr. Mini Prasad point out:

The males of Kokkanchara make fun of those women who attend spinning class run by younger Priest and Kuttipaapa. They looked upon the women suspiciously. (TDOA, p.147)
Ridicule and disrespect from men restrict them to attend this class. These instances make the readers to view women employees in predicaments of various kinds.

Presenting a single family of Kokkanchara, Sarah Joseph discusses various distressed states of women. The oppressed life of an ordinary woman shows different dimensions of the gender problem. Thus the novelist visits the endangered womanhood at every step.

In Dangerlok, Eunice De Souza concentrates on the issue of maidservant’s harassment in the houses. Mr. Chopra underestimates them as slaves and burdens with more work. These maidservants get very menial wages for their hard work. Whether woman is literate or illiterate, the problem of economical oppression prevails.

The author tries to locate the hardships of women in urban life in the novel, Dangerlok. The harsh realities perpetuated by patriarchal structure hurt the independent woman, Rina and impose the established morals on her life. The working woman in the midst of the corporate world encounters harassment and dominance of males. Once Mridula Martis wears a skirt for the meeting and is embarrassed by the act of the manager who next to her drops pencils and picks it up many times. This displays the vulnerable situations of women at working places irrespective of their professions.

Suppression and sufferings of women are relevant not only to a particular region, culture and religion. It is evident from the women writers with their illustrated memorable characters in their respective works. Inequalities and gender violence are perpetuated from age to age through organized institutions like marriage, family, and religion. Directly or indirectly, patriarchy relegates woman. These complex realities of life are projected in the writings of the selected Christian women writers.
Notes


[Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as S].

   
   [Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as K.]


   
   [Note: I have used Kannada version of this book and translated some portions of the text into English whenever required for the purpose of citation. Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as TDOA].

   
   [Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as O].

   <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/119921/miscellany;ideas.html>


   
   [Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as D].

   
   [Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as DAS.]

21. Saldanha, Alice. The Dead Cannot Hear (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation; 1999), p.28
[Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as TDCH.]


23. Ibid., p.31.


[Note: Hereafter all citations to this text will be referred to as TDFES.]