CHAPTER 4
WIDOW: A SITE FOR CONTENTIOUS DISOURSES

Krupabai Satthianadhan and Swarnakumari Debi wrote in the same period, but with a cultural difference. The issues and aspirations they dealt with were directed towards the women’s question of that time. The setting of the novel *Kamala* (1894) is in South India. Krupabai Satthianadhan (1862-1894) was the pioneer who opened up a new tradition of women writing fiction in English and became known as the first woman novelist in English from India.

Before analyzing the novel *Kamala*, it is important to trace the evolution of the Indian English novels. As historians record, the evolution of the English novel in India was not a rapid phenomenon. The introduction of English language and spread of western literature in India paved the way for the rise of Indian literature in English. Fiction was the most popular form among diverse strains of literature and held major influence among the readers. The spreading out of the Indian novel in English testifies its social impact. The beginning phase of growth and evolution of the Indian novel in English can be seen in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth century. Prose and novel appeared first in Bengali language before in any other Indian languages. It was the result of efforts of a group of men, who studied “European literature and science” in The Hindu college, Calcutta and utilized that institution as a good platform, that led to the rise of the English educated new middle class (Ramamurti 35).
Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Pyari Chand Mitra and Bhudeb Mukherjee were not merely the leaders who prepared the ground for the Bengali novel but also for the Indian novel. Through them the novel as a form of literary expression spread all over India (Ramamurti 40). The novel form first appeared in Bengal before the other provinces and the form in English appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As Miss Derett (author of *The Modern Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach*) points out, “The development of the novel in English is almost exactly though more slowly, paralleled by its development in many regional languages” (qtd. in Ramamurti 47).

Lal Behari Day’s *Govinda Samanta* published in 1874 was considered to be the first important Indian novel in English, which delineated the emergence of the novel genre in India with its formal realism with a marked difference from romance (57). During the period between 1874 and 1900 very few novels appeared on the literary scene. This period witnessed the birth of a new era with the emergence of women writers like Toru Dutt, Swarnakumari Debi, Cornelia Sorabji and Krupabai Satthianadhan who opened up a new space for the Indian woman (Ramamurti 66-67). According to Mund,

The nineteenth century Indian novel in English has captured the pulse of the time and has faithfully portrayed the Indian woman in a changing situation. One can see a realistic portrait of woman in a changing social situation. One can see a realistic portrait of woman in relation to man in the family and community. While still in the grip of social discrimination, we see Indian women slowly getting liberated. In this new context, man-woman
relationship could not be assessed applying the traditional norm. The complex human relationship with its varied dimensions of perception has fascinated the novelist. On the other hand, the Indian writers’ general tendency to preach and idealize has often been in conflict with his artistic self. (88)

English education facilitated the rise in the status of women in society by providing higher education to women. Consequently, the general attitude towards women’s education changed radically. In the nineteenth century, it was not possible to release women from the long dependency and subservience through education because education was not accomplished then. Child marriage, which caused early widowhood, and moreover social restraints and subordination of women were also prominent then. Later, the battle for emancipation was taken over by a few educated women who later became writers and communicated to the world, their own bitter experiences as women as well as their ideas and efforts to reform society (Ramamurti 67). As Prof. Alphonso-Karkala observes, “They tried to tell the world the obstacles women faced and the disadvantages they suffered in an orthodox Hindu world. These women writers struggled to give form and shape to their autobiographical accounts, which attracted publishers, both in India and abroad” (qtd. in Ramamurti 67). The writers who belonged to this group were Toru Dutt, Krupabai Satthianathan, Shevantibai M. Nikambe, Raj Lakshmi Debi, Swarnakumari Ghoshal and Cornelia Sorabji (ibid).

Krupabai Satthianadhan was born in Ahmadnagar, Maharashtra in 1862. Her parents were Haripunt, an active Christian missionary, and Radhabai Khisty, who
were the first Brahmin converts to Christianity in the Bombay presidency. She lost her father when she was a small child and was brought up under the care of her mother and her elder brother Bhasker. Krupabai was the thirteenth of Radhabai and Haripunt’s fourteen children.

Through her brother Bhasker, she entered into the world of literature and learning. Not only that, her mother’s ways of life (after the conversion to Christianity she followed many practices of Hindu religion) had also helped to form her sensibilities as a writer. The death of her brother Bhasker was a big blow in her life. Affiliation with the Christian missionaries in Bombay had been an important turning point in her life. Krupabai’s entry as a medical student at the Madras Medical College was a great step in the annals of India as the first Indian medical college to admit women. Krupabai’s marriage with Samuel Satthianadhan, an educationist, also helped her in the literary career. Krupabai lived out the remaining brief span of her life with her husband in different places like Ootacamund, Rajamundry, Kumbakonam (the educational center of Thanjavur district), and finally, Madras.

It could be understood from her involvement in contemporary women’s issues that she was one of the pioneers of Indian feminism then. Her activities were directed towards women’s reform and she opened up many new paths for women’s education. She taught in the Zenanas and in an Indian girl’s school, and inaugurated a small school for Muslim girls. She could not open a home for Hindu widows according to her wishes because of her failing health. She began her literary career
by contributing articles to local newspapers, magazines, and journals. She has also written poetry, and a few of her poems are included in Miscellaneous Writing.

It was Krupabai who first introduced an Indian heroine into English fiction by Indian women. Her prominent works include *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*, an autobiographical novel, through which she pioneered women’s writing in English in India. *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) [based on her mother’s life], depicted the life of a child—wife in the orthodox Hindu religion and her various roles as wife, mother and a widow. It was her last novel. In the year 1895, *Saguna* was published in book form. Krupabai died in 1894. *Miscellaneous Writings of Krupabai Satthianadhan* (1896) which was published posthumously include some of her poems, essays, articles etc. Lokuge comments, “In that brief life, she had pioneered in English the New Woman writing of the late 19th century by, defying institutionalized patriarchal ideologies (in tradition-bound India) that enforced her domesticity and subjectivity. Through her writing, she sought greater equality between men and woman.” (Lokuge 1)

*Kamala* came out in the Madras Christian college magazine in serial form in 1894. When it was published in the book form it got recognition both from the Indian and the British readers. In 1896 it was translated into Tamil. The original title, *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) had changed to *Kamala: The Story of Hindu Child-wife* in the later editions. The growth of the Indian novel in English and in regional languages could be traced on parallel levels. In almost all the languages the novel genre is used to depict the changes in society. Malayalam literature also has such a rich heritage of abundant reservoir of various literary forms.
Colonial India witnessed the emergence of many western-educated Indian women writers. They were the representatives of female education, products of gendered social reform, recipients of Christian faith and western ideologies. Indeed, these women writers were parts of the complex process of modernization in colonial India. Indrani Sen observes that in the mid-nineteenth century, “the focus of the western educated Indian women writers was on the contemporary female education project, the issue of female subjectivities and negotiations with colonial modernity” (2).

Krupabai Satthianadhan’s Kamala (1894) addresses the issue of social reform, female education, existing orthodox customs of Hindu religion and the protagonist’s dilemma to accept a colonial modernity. In Subendu Mund’s paper, “Krupabai Satthianadhan: The Portrait of an Indian Lady” (1996), he writes that Krupabai Satthianadhan (1862-94) still remains an unfamiliar name to the students of Indian English literature even after more than hundred years of her death (1). Unfortunately, like Toru Dutt, Krupabai Satthianadhan had a short span of life otherwise she would have made significant changes to the Indian literary scene. Yet, her two novels are remarkable for their construction of Indian female heroines caught between different cultures i.e. Indian and English, Hindu and Christian, traditional and modern (Reddy 203).

Her commitment to women’s issues can be seen in her activities to uplift women from their degraded condition. The first article published was ‘A Visit to the Todas’ under her nom de plume of ‘An Indian Lady’, in the South Indian Observer. In a “Memoir” published with the novel Kamala, Mrs. H.B. Grigg (Krupabai
Satthianadhan’s biographer) writes: “Unlike Toru Dutt of Bengal, who has been called her prototype, the authoress of Kamala lived to see her literary efforts recognized… Her writings seem even better known to English than to Indian readers, some of them having been reviewed in flattering terms in the leading English journals” (qtd. in Reddy 203).

As Chandni Lokuge points out, Krupabai Satthianadhan inaugurated the tradition of writing novels in English with her autobiographical novel Saguna (1895) when other Indian women writers were writing in many other Indian languages (1). Similarly, Subendu Mund opines on her medium of writing as, “I think it was natural to write in English. She spoke Marathi but lived in Tamil and Telugu-speaking regions. She had the patronage of western missionaries who taught her English” (qtd. in Parthasarathy). As an ardent spokesperson for women, Krupabai Satthianadhan voices their causes through her essays. Her passionate exhortation for women’s education is included in her essays like “Women’s Influence at Home” and “Female Education”. In her essay “Female Education”, she avers that “In order to raise India to her true level, it is indispensable to raise her daughters from their degraded condition to their proper position in life” (Satthianadhan, Miscellaneous 17). She also expresses her opinion on the emancipation of women in India in the same essay “Female Education” where she eulogizes Pandita Ramabai’s effort and her initiation of Widow’s Home. She observes,

How much fuller brighter and healthier the life of our girls would be if they could only throw off the trammels of superstition and prejudice and breathe the healthy atmosphere of innocent
enjoyment and culture! Pandita Ramabai's work is national in its effects, for the widows she is training are sure to take lead in the emancipation of the woman of India. (ibid 95)

Krupabai Satthianadhan’s narratives would capture the attention of the readers with its aesthetic and creative dimensions. Her writings are focused more on women and their hard endurance and sufferings. As a novelist, she longs for women’s freedom and their complete emancipation from oppression. Among the various features of her writing, what stands supreme is her interweaving of realistic description of nature and social life.

The narrative of Kamala is remarkable for its realistic representation. Krupabai Satthianadhan’s genius as a novelist is well exemplified in the narration of Kamala. In Kamala, Krupabai Satthianadhan has applied the technique of shifting the first person narrative mode to the third person narrative. As Chandani Lokuge opines, “the story often pauses a little to include the author’s intrusions into the text in the persona of India’s New Woman committed to upper-caste Hindu women’s reforms” (2). The narrative of Kamala shows the author’s ability to capture the attention of readers while describing events, especially the natural beauty of the landscape. While writing this novel Kamala, Krupabai Satthianadhan had been diagnosed with tuberculosis and had lost her first child. Yet, Subhendu Mund lauds her expertise in narration, “Kamala was completed on the hospital bed, but doesn’t betray a hurried ending or looseness of style or narrative” (qtd. in Parthasarathy).

Krupabai Satthianadhan’s Saguna is an autobiographical novel. Its setting is different from her second novel Kamala. It depicts the lives of converted Christians;
mainly her father’s conversion to Christian faith. These two novels are women oriented novels, which unveil the lives of two girls circumscribed within two religions. As a nineteenth century novel, Kamala discusses the turbulent women’s issues of the day with poignancy and passion. The key women’s issues of her time were child marriage, sati, prohibition of widow remarriage, kulin polygamy, female education, and widowhood etc. Krupabai Satthianadhan narrates the life and experience of Kamala as a child, child-wife, daughter-in-law, mother and a widow. As Mund says,

Both the novels are concerned with internalised conflicts: in Kamala it is between the inner world of innocence and beauty and the outer world of ignorance, superstitions and deception; and in Saguna it is between two cultures and ways of life. The conflicts are self-seeking; ultimately leading both Kamala and Saguna towards the truth they suffered for. Kamala is a Hindu and Saguna is a Christian; but they find their truth in their own faiths. They emerge as women of grace and fulfillment despite the apparent failures. (3-4)

Seen from a feminist perspective, Krupabai Satthianadhan can rightly be called a feminist writer because her every attempt to release her heroine from the traditional orthodoxy can be viewed as an attempt to bring her heroine to feminist individuality. Krupabai Satthianadhan addresses the subjects of social reform, colonial modernity and female subjectivity in a radical way in the novel Saguna. Saguna discloses the life of the nineteenth century Indian ‘new woman’, who wants to become a doctor. She has the colonial model of education and sharp wit to
analyze matters, yet her inability to decide whether to accept or not the aspects of colonial modernity creates the problem. Krupabai Satthianadhan advocates and asserts that conversion is the best solution to break the prolonged histories of oppression from the Brahmanical traditions of Hindu society. While describing the experience of her own mother, Krupabai Satthianadhan shows the plight of an uneducated orthodox child wife’s life in an orthodox Hindu Brahmin household in her autobiographical novel *Saguna*. *Saguna* reiterates throughout the novel that conversion is the means of freedom from gender discrimination and oppression from the clutches of the rule bound Brahmanism (I. Sen 12-13). Krupabai Satthianadhan framed her heroine Saguna as the modern, educated, new Indian woman. Being a brahmin convert to Christianity, she suggests that Christianity is the only means of escape from the gender oppression practiced in the Hindu patriarchal society. A similar view is shared by Padma Anagol that in colonial India, many women were attracted to Christianity only because of its customs that honored women more than the harsh strictures of Hinduism (93). In Hindu religion certain customs like *sati*, prohibition of widow remarriage, enforced widowhood and its associated strictures shows the harsh regulation and repression of women. Indrani Sen further notes that the conversion to Christianity was the trend of colonial modernity in the late nineteenth century Maharashtra (12). Geraldine Forbes writes that Christian missionaries vehemently attacked the customs of the Hindus like *sati*, polygamy, purdah custom, and they advocated education for women. They were of the view that women were playing a major role in conversion and they observed that “the progress in civilization was directly equated with conversion to Christianity” (27-28).
In contrast to her first novel, *Saguna*, Krupabai wanted to expose the negative side of Hindu religion and its celebrated notions of tradition, customs, and rituals in her novel *Kamala*. Krupabai asserts that the thrust of Hindu religious practices is to bring women under one patriarchy. Being the first in the caste hierarchy, Brahmanical patriarchy imposes several restrictions on women in every possible way. Thus, it fences the lives of women within the four rigid walls of tradition and religion. *Kamala* unveils the life of a young Brahmin girl named Kamala and her experience as a child, child-wife, daughter-in-law, mother and a widow. The little girl Kamala is the only child of her ascetic father, *sanyasi* Narayen. She lives with her father and an old granny in a house near a temple on a hillock which is part of a great sacred hill. She has lost her mother at a tender age because of that reason she is the beloved of her father. She spends her childhood happily enjoying the nature’s beauty and freely mingling with Sudra girls who help her in many household duties. At a young age, she gets training in many domestic duties from her old granny. Her each day begins with “the music of the temple close by, the soft ringing of bells, the long drawn chants of the Brahmans saying their prayers” (Satthianadhan, *Kamala* 24). She spends most of her time with her father. He allows her to listen to his learned talk while sitting in a temple verandah. So the little Kamala is modest, timid and an introvert by nature. While arranging Kamala’s marriage, her father expresses his anguish and says, “I can’t help it. I wish it was otherwise. You must go and be like other girls, toil for your own food and be at the mercy of others” (ibid 31).
At a young age, she is married off to Ganesh, the son of a pundit, who lives in the Brahmin quarter of the city of Sivagunga. Kamala likes her father-in-law very much because he reminds her of her own father. She even helps him while he is in his study. At first, she receives kind treatment from both her mother-in-law and father-in-law. But Gungi, her sister-in-law turns everyone against Kamala. As for Ganesh, Kamala doesn’t even know him well because he leaves for his studies soon after marriage. Now he returns home as he gets a job in the collector’s office. In Kamala, Krupabai Satthianadhan also delineates the lives of the daughters-in-law of the neighboring houses. Some are happy and some are suffering terrible persecution in their in-laws’ houses. Though the family is against Kamala, Ganesh, her husband finds some quality in her and decides to educate her. This further heightens the gap between Kamala and her in-laws. They avoid and ill-treat her in every possible way. Gradually, Ganesh loses his interest to teach her and thus the scheming relatives of Kamala successfully obstruct a woman’s education.

Sai Zadhovini, one of the main woman characters in the novel, is the master brain of the mischievous activities like burglary, disputes etc. that is happening in that place. But overtly she presents herself as a noble woman who has great quality and power. Ramabai’s (Kamala’s sister-in-law) husband speaks highly about her and introduces Ganesh to her. This paves the way for the development of a relationship between Sai and Ganesh. Another notable character is the young physician Ramchander, the son of sanyasi Narayen’s sister and also the disciple of Guru Arunyadaya. His story is like this: Ramchander was once betrothed to Sai and had left his house immediately after. After so many years, on his return home, he heard
that there was a rumour in his village that he had died. The girl to whom he was once engaged, had run away from the village “to avoid the miseries of a widow’s lot” (125). On hearing all this, Narayen’s wife had offered that her daughter Kamala would be given to him as his wife one day. Kamala’s mother died when she was five and sanyasi Narayen roamed around with his child in great agony. Finally Ramchander discovered Narayen again, only on the evening of Kamala’s engagement.

In the meantime, Sai meets Ramchander but they do not recognize each other. Back in her village Sai talks to an old man named Dhaji Bhavoo from whom she learns that Ramchander was her husband. She longs for him, and “her independence, once so attractive, now for a moment disgusted her” (124) and she expresses, “‘What would I not do to change my lot-to be virtuous and to be loved by one noble and really great? Ah! how I have been duped’” (Satthianadhan, *Kamala* 124).

In the course of time, Kamala notices the weaknesses in Ganesh and also wishes he were more like Ramchander. Later, when Kamala’s first child is born, she has to face so many hardships in her in-laws’ house. After that she moves to her husband’s place in Rampur, where her two sisters-in-law are also living. Ganesh, often visits them and when he comes back he would be a strange man altogether. Gradually Sai starts visiting Kamala’s city home frequently. On a festival day at Rampur, Ramchander comes to Kamala’s home and informs her that her father is ill. She also learns from him that after her father’s death he would be her local guardian. Later Ramchander discloses to her husband’s people about her father’s life and also
about her antecedents. He even advises Kamala about Sai and her dubious ways. Kamala thwarts every attempt of Sai to entice Ganesh. One day Sai comes to Kamala’s house and gives orders to Kamala. But Kamala ignores these orders and neglects her completely. This makes Ganesh furious and he hits Kamala. Taking this opportunity, Kamala drives Sai away from her house. She screams at Sai, “Leave my house for ever. Leave at once. If you do not go I shall force you” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 138).

After this, Ganesh quarrels with Kamala and even denies the fatherhood of Kamala’s child. When Kamala reaches her father-in-law’s house in the dark hours of the early morning with her child and a servant woman, they welcome her. They treat her kindly because they have heard the news of her father’s death. After her father’s death, harder trials are awaiting her. Her child dies of fever and she herself is unconscious for days afterwards. Soon afterwards, Ganesh dies of cholera after one days’ affliction. A few years later, Ramchander approaches Kamala to hand over her mother’s casket of jewels and reveals his love. He pleads before her to accept his love and come to the land of freedom and leave all superstitious beliefs. He even tells her that he is “tired to death of all the meaningless mummeries of a devotee’s life” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 154). But Kamala rejects his offer, saying that in olden days the wives died on the funeral pyres of husbands. Later, Kamala spends her money in selfless work of charity and Ramchander hides himself in the forest and comes only to look after his patients at fixed times. Krupabai concludes her story by exalting her heroine as a saint because she spent her jewels for the use of the needy and the poor, especially for widows and orphans.
While describing the life of Kamala in a religious atmosphere, Krupabai Satthianadhan shows the life of an upper-caste Hindu woman in the mid-nineteenth century and describes how far tradition and religion had its influence on people especially on women. Living in a religious atmosphere, rituals and strict orthodoxies have been internalized by Kamala at a young age.

The dawn of each day was ushered in by the music of the temple close by, the soft ringing of bells, the long drawn chants of the Brahmans saying their prayers, and the hushed refrain of the pujari\(^1\) who intoned their *mantras*\(^2\) with a peculiar drawl, and the mingled faint din of the waking city below. The song of the birds was dear to the girl, but not so dear as the soft melody of the chants of the Brahmans which, though she understood them not, filled her soul with feelings of devotion. Thus stirred from sleep she hastened to make her own *puja*\(^3\) to the gods that gave her all the good things of life. (Satthianadhan, *Kamala* 24)

Like any typical upper caste Brahmin girl, Kamala’s life too is controlled by tradition and religion and she views life and the world through its myopic eyes. Being a social reformer, Krupabai Satthianadahan had the responsibility to advocate womens’ education. Like many of her contemporaries, Krupabai Satthianadhan’s character Kamala shows the necessity of womens’ education. Nineteenth century was a period where women were prohibited by the religio-cultural codes from acquiring any kind of education. In this novel, Krupabai shows that the sacred

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\(^1\) Priests.  
\(^2\) Sacred verses.  
\(^3\) Worship.
education was considered an alien thing for women and they were being trained in household duties. Taking the life of Kamala as an example, Krupabai shows Kamala was trained in all domestic duties from a young age by her old granny. This may be viewed as the power of the patriarchal community to hold control over women and also to make them bound to the rules of patriarchy. But, she has drawn Kamala as an exception here because Kamala’s father introduces her to some sacred texts and Vedic education. As a step to lead women to the threshold of female education and women’s emancipation, Krupabai asserts the need to acquire both Vedic education and western kind of education.

Unlike the other girls of her age, Sanyasi Narayen introduces Kamala to the world of learning. This instilled an interest in Kamala to acquire knowledge. It is a rare distinction conferred by Krupabai on her heroine. Later, Ganesh’s attempt to educate her also shows her real interest in intellectual development. In her childhood, “He [Kamala’s father] lets Kamala grow up like a boy, and the girl is no better than the father. She will tell you the contents of many books though, picked up, you know, from her father” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 34). Indicating the condition of the nineteenth century, Krupabai states that women were not allowed to educate themselves in the nineteenth century. As Lokuge points out, the women of the vedic period enjoyed learning both traditional and religious kinds of education. It was the Brahmanical patriarchy that stalled the freedom of women and restricted education to women. Not only that, with the advent of child marriage, it was commonly believed that learned and educated women were immoral and would be the victims of premature widowhood. Later, women’s education deteriorated in the late 18th and
19th centuries. The education imparted to an orthodox Hindu girl was limited to domesticity, role indoctrination and moreover to pativratadharma (husband-worship). She got advice from the elder members of her family and of her husband’s family in religious and secular literatures and in popular socio-religious beliefs (Lokuge 161). As Uma Chakravarti states, the monopoly over knowledge rested in the hands of the brahmanas. The Sudras and ‘untouchables’ were severely punished for violating the ban, according to the Brahmanical texts. Not only that, women too were excluded from acquiring the sacred knowledge. She also observes that the upper castes held greater power over ‘sacred knowledge’, ‘book knowledge’, ‘intellectual inquiries’ like astronomy, and considered it as superior. But the management of the household and its arena was considered as the duty of woman and was given no value (Gendering 17).

The novel displays the contradictions in the treatment of men and women in the acceptance of reform and modernity in the household. Kamala’s father has given her the kind of freedom which a son would enjoy in the Hindu family in those days. Once her granny says: “‘Bad enough,’ was the rejoinder, ‘with all your spoiling. Why, she gets more petting than a son would’” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 22). It can be seen that some men are free to accept the notion of modernity, but womenfolk of the household insist on tradition and regard themselves as the guardians of tradition and customs. Like the granny of Kamala, older women are the greatest opponents of reform in the nineteenth century and they impose orthodoxy inside the homestead. As Lokuge states, generally the life of an orthodox Hindu girl is always structured within the domestic sphere. A girl goes outside only for an occasional family
ceremony or for a pilgrimage. But a boy has no such restrictions and has an easy
access to public life (161). In ancient times the birth of a girl/ a daughter was an
unwelcome event in almost all the patriarchal societies and the son was valued more
than the daughter (Altekar 3).

Krupabai Satthianadhan, being a christian convert wanted to expose the
orthodoxies of Hindu religion. Kamala exposes the harsh realities of child marriage
and its influence over the generations of people as one of its themes. Krupabai
shows that the marriage comes to the bride’s parents as a shock. For instance, after
arranging Kamala’s marriage, her father tells that, “‘You are to be married;’ he said,
‘and I can’t help it. It was arranged some time ago’” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 31). As
Altekar explicates, the beginning of the Christian era marked the prevalence of child
marriage and the prohibition of both levirate (niyoga) and widow remarriage. Apart
from these, all emerging castes of that time insisted on marriage practice of mutual
exogamy. This restricted the choice of marriage partners within the caste group. And
if a woman became a widow, she had to live as a widow forever because of the
prohibition of remarriage. Moreover, the pervasiveness of Sati custom from about
the 5th century A. D. made the situation more horrible. And it was a least acceptable
thing in those days to be the parent of a girl child (4- 5). Through the conversation of
Kamala’s father, Krupabai also introduces the fate of married women. As Lokuge
points out,

Child-wives left parental homes, sometimes at puberty, sometimes earlier, to
live with the husband’s family if the husband or mother-in-law so desired.
Often, this would be the first time the wife and husband saw each other.
Communication between them was extremely restricted. Marriages were generally consummated after the child-wife’s first menstruation and first pregnancies occurred soon after. A wife returned to her own home only for occasional short visits. Until she attained motherhood, she was entirely dependent on her mother-in-law and other elder persons of her husband’s household. Her training in wifely and housewifely duties and religious practices, initiated by her mother, was continued by the mother-in-law. Under the government of ignorant mother-in-law, the child wife’s life could turn into real drudgery. (160)

While exposing the harsh reality of child marriage, Krupabai also indicates the ignorance of children about child marriage and they consider, “it in the light of a festival” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 32). Some peculiar customs practiced among the Brahmans on the day of marriage indicate the authoritative hold of the sastras over the people. Sitting on a flat stool the bridegrooms face the holy fire. The mantras chanted by the Brahmans are incomprehensible to them. As Krupabai states,

……at the auspicious moment the Brahmagath
d, the silken knot, never to be untied, which united them for life, was tied. Living or dead she was henceforth the wife and the property of the man whoever he might be. This was ordered by the shastras\textsuperscript{5}, and the law was never to be broken. (Kamala 37)

\textsuperscript{4} A crucial moment in the Hindu marriage ceremony when the edge of the bridegroom’s shawl is tied to that of the bride’s sari especially the upper end of the sari that is draped over the shoulder. The knot is symbolic of the permanence of the Hindu marriage (Lokuge 161).

\textsuperscript{5} Religious texts.
By giving prominence to the prescriptive texts like *shastras* and Vedas of Brahmins since ancient times, Brahmanical patriarchy imposes general subordination of women and thereby it controls women’s sexuality and preserves the purity of their caste. In Hindu religion the image of a husband is as a man to be worshipped. Women are considered as the property of the man. Brahmanical patriarchy always makes women subordinate to men. She has no separate existence apart from her husband. Chakravarti argues that women are mere attachments to men, both in terms of economic autonomy and in terms of the autonomy in law. Women are restricted from using productive resources and performing religious rituals; if at all, she is permitted, the ritual must be presided over by her husband. She is worthy to perform only fasts on behalf of her husband, sons or brothers. However, Chakravarti asserts that women are “the property, both in terms of their reproductive and their productive labour, of men” (*Gendering* 73).

Finding out the tiny little star, *Rohini*\(^6\), the moon’s companion, is another interesting ceremony on the marriage day. This indicates the conferring of “the life-long companionship and happiness on a young couple” (*Satthianadhan, Kamala* 37). When Kamala uses her husband’s name during the ceremony unknowingly just as he has used hers, the others remark she would be the most undutiful wife and force her to do her *Prayashchita*\(^7\). Krupabai shows here a phase of husband worship and how the belief of husband worship is deep rooted among the masses. For instance,

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\(^6\) The ninth lunar asterism that contains the star Aldebran, and known as the favourite wife of the moon.

\(^7\) Penance.
….she saw shocked faces all round her, and loud hisses and laughter came from all sides.

‘Hari! Hari!’ they exclaimed in unison. ‘Break coconuts. Break coconuts! She will be the most undutiful wife. She has taken her husband’s name!’

‘Don’t you know, you little stupid,’ said an old woman shaking her, ‘that a husband’s name is to be heard, but never pronounced by a wife. He can take your name, but you can’t take his. Make your Prayaschita now.’ Thus ended the farce. (Satthianadhan, Kamala 38)

Since ancient times it was believed that a pativrata should not use her husband’s name. The Skanda Purāṇa (Brahma-Khanda, Dharmaranya section, chapter 7) gives the description of a pativrata. Kane quotes,

She should not repeat the name of her husband, as such conduct leads to the increase of the husband’s life and should never take the name of another male (v.18) even when she is loudly blamed (by the husband) she does not cry loudly, even when beaten she is smiling (v.19). A pativratā should always use turmeric, kumkuma, sindūra, lamp black (for the eye), a bodice, tāmbula, auspicious ornaments, and should braid her hair (vv.28-29). (286)

Indeed, the hollowness of Brahmanical patriarchy is revealed here. While keeping its women always subordinated to men, Brahmanical patriarchy allows male domination upon women and it holds women within its debilitating power. Krupabai shows that religion has a significant role in framing the character of woman. Patriarchy controls women and makes them submissive in its hold. But
Krupabai exhorts nineteenth century women to come to the land of freedom. She advocates a mature behaviour from women rather than submissiveness. Uma Chakravarti states that the patriarchal structure thrusts certain mechanisms of controls upon women. “The mechanism of controls operated on women through three devices and at three levels: the first was ideology; the second was the right to discipline and to keep women under control granted to their kinsmen; and the third was the power of the king to discipline and punish them for their errant behaviour” (Gendering 73). At the ideological level, the controlling mechanism of women works through the schooling of women in *stridharma* or *pativrata dharma*. By carefully mapping out the class/caste structure, the brahmanical society internalizes the idealized notions of *pativrata* in women who accept chastity and wifely fidelity as the supreme thing in their life (ibid 73-74).

While delineating the sufferings of Kamala, the writer also hints at how a daughter was treated in the Hindu families in the nineteenth century. The narrator says, “But as it was with Kamala, so it usually is in Hindu families. Once given over, the daughter so lovingly brought up, is no more the concern of her parents. It is improper for them to interfere in any way with her new life, for what is written in the book of fate comes to pass” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 75).

Tying up the experiences of other child-wives of the neighboring households to the story of Kamala, Krupabai generalizes the condition of the issue of child-wives. The four friends Bhagirathi, Rukhma, Harni and Bheema are the daughters-in-law of the neighbouring houses. She highlights the condition of unhappy child-wives like Bhagirathi and Harni. Their experience as child-wives
disclose both the physical and mental harassment they suffer. From the account of Bhagirathi, we could understand how the daughters-in-law were treated by the in-laws in their household. She says to Kamala,

Why, child, don’t look so distressed, we each have our troubles at home and the mothers-in-law and the sisters-in-law are not so sweet and innocent as you imagine. A time will come when not a day will pass without your getting a good beating from them or from your husband, and they will try to poison your very food for you. (Satthianadhan, Kamala 45)

They suffer every atrocity because they have been taught by tradition and religion as such. So that Rukhma, the Shastri’s daughter, remarks, “But we have all to go through it, and you must not be frightened. It is a woman’s lot” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 45). Krupabai writes about the routine of Kamala:

In the morning, long before day-break, there was a stir in the house, and the mother-in-law would wake the girl who slept near her. Thus aroused Kamala hurried out through the quadrangle to the back of the house, for it was her duty to get the water vessels ready and fill them with water for the morning ablutions. Then came the cow-dunging of the kitchen and front yard, and the working out of various flower designs on the cow-dunged floor with white shell powder, at which difficult feat every Hindu girl is an expert. Next came the buying of vegetables and other things from street vendors and the work in the kitchen, where she was expected to help in cooking. She was also required to prepare the baths, keep the ointments and other things ready, and if anything was missing a shower of abuse was hurled upon her. (Kamala 57)
Similarly, the author has drawn her heroine as she suffers everything meekly because her religious and traditional upbringing taught her like that. She even gets pleasure in suffering like the legendary heroic women like Sita, Savitri etc. They stood strongly in their practice of husband worship (*pativrata dharmā*) even as they suffered terribly. So Kamala imbibes the lesson of patient endurance from them even in the harder trials of her life. Krupabai writes, “Somehow Kamala became resigned to her lot, and it was her crude religious convictions that enabled her to do so” (58). Kamala’s life and upbringing is centered on the *puranas* and Vedas and her mind is full of the melodies of Sanskrit shloka. She gets influenced by the stories of legendary women like Sita, Savitri et al. And heroic models were Rama and Pandavas. Kamala views that,

All these had taught her one lesson, the great lesson of humanity, love for others and the need of doing one’s duty at any cost. However crude the stories and legends were they all showed how good deeds were rewarded and bad deeds punished even in the next life, how humility had its reward, and love, chastity, honour, and respect for elders were looked upon as the distinguishing virtues of a noble life. This was the sum and substance of Kamala’s moral code, and this gave her an impetus to be good.

*(Satthianadhan, *Kamala* 59)*

Not only that, Hindu women were indoctrinated by religion and tradition to accept everything meekly in the name of mere fate. She identified herself with legendary figures like Savitri, Sita, and other noble women and took a secret pride in it. In a similar vein, Uma Chakravarti states that mythologies have a prominent part
in the formation of the *pativrata* ideal. *The Ramayana*, the great mythological text, highlights Sita as the ideal *pativrata* woman. She is being eulogized even today as “the long-suffering, patient, loving and faithful wife of Rama” (75). The qualities of a good wife are attributed to her who is a combination of “beautiful and dutiful wife, the chaste and passive embodiment of womanhood in Hindu mythology” (75). Ramayana says that Sita worships her husband as a veritable god. Later, Ravana captures and put her in his custody. Even then she retains her chastity and virtue without any taint. Unfortunately, Rama later accuses her as impure and she invokes Agni, the God of fire to prove her chastity is the story. Nevertheless, this ideal is strongly rooted in every Hindu woman as this is in Kamala. Brahmanical texts teach women to accept their subordinated position, highlighting it as a mark of distinction. Thus, it could achieve the ultimate social control through the denial of women’s freedom (75).

Another instance where a woman suffers unbearable humiliation in her in-laws house is the case of Bhagirathi. She is a girl with some education and a great deal of courage. She leaves her wealthy, illiterate husband who has tyrannized her in every possible way. Once he brings a mistress to his house to insult Bhagirathi. This infuriates her and she gives up the jewels once he gave her. She also breaks the bangles which were supposed to be worn until her death as a sign of a married woman. But, unfortunately, her mother disavows her act of rejecting her husband and brings her back to her husband’s house. And her mother forces her to remain until her husband casts her off forever.
The mother made a great noise and began abusing her. ‘There! See what you have brought yourself to, go in now,’ she said, pushing her.

‘I won’t go in, mother! You can kill me with your own hands, but I won’t enter this living grave,’ she said, with quiet firmness. (Satthianadhan, Kamala 59)

Here, Bhagirathi destined to live in her husband’s house irrespective of her wish. Shalini Shah states how a wife’s individuality is negated by stating the *pativratā* idol of the past.

The ideology of *pativratā* also negated the very individuality of a woman, who was not entitled to have her own little joys and avocations. She was to eat, drink and wear clothes according to her husband’s taste. The wife’s religious obligations, too, were subordinated to her husband. It is said at one place that women have no sacrifice ordained for them. They have no Śrāddha or fast to perform. To serve their husbands obediently and affectionately forms their only obligation, and by performing this duty they can conquer the very heavens. Constantly required for her services, renunciation for acquiring religious merit for herself was something a woman could not be allowed to practice. (83)

Here men can tyrannize a woman in an abusive manner and under any condition. Yet, woman should be submissive to her husband. The remarks made by the women of the neighboring houses show the general attitude towards this incident. Through this, the narrator describes the plight of the married woman and her place in her
husband’s household and in society. Some women, who gathered to witness the return of Bhagirathi from her own house, respond:

One said mockingly: ‘What? You went away in such a temper and you have come back again.’ ‘Shame to you, girl,’ said another. ‘Don’t you know that if a man be tied to you once you cannot free yourself from him, even if he be an ass. The halter is round your neck, let it be wooden or golden, it is all the same.’ ‘What a fall,’ said a third triumphantly. ‘What jewels he gave you! Can’t you at least be satisfied with them. Go inside and fall at his feet’.

(Satthianadhan, Kamala 59-60)

Similarly, Susan Wadley points out that the best of wives like Sita will worship and honor their husbands even when they have mistreated and neglected. And all the literatures point out that the wives’ duties to her husband, but not his concern and duty towards her (32-33). Through Kamala, the writer portrays the lives of child-wives in an orthodox Brahmin household. Their insignificant position in their husband’s house shows the complete negation of their individuality. Though most of the women characters are shown as victims, some react and the acts of rebellion are as important the subordination. Here, Bhagirathi reacts against her husband’s errant behaviour. But, her inability to find a place in society without her husband shows the unseen social tension she experiences in society. Highlighting Kamala’s experience, Krupabai Satthianadhan indicates that like Kamala a generation of women lived in the domestic sphere of Brahmins as passive recipients of patriarchal commands.
Kamala’s duties commenced very early in the morning. She slept in her mother-in-law’s room, a dark dingy room lighted by only one window at the top and full of little niches in the wall. In one of the niches were kept her simple toilet things, a _kunkun_ box, a shell comb, and a hand mirror. In another were placed wreaths of flowers of jessamine, or _shivanti_, and a betel-nut box and tray. Her clothes were hung on a rod which was fastened across the room; and two wooden boxes formed the only furniture. In the darkest corner were Kamala’s own little bundle of clothes and her mattress rolled up by it. (Satthianadhan, _Kamala_ 57)

Through this, Krupabai shows “a home made dark and dismal by the hatred and jealousy of a foolish ignorant woman” (Satthianadhan, _Kamala_ 61). She also mocks at the instance where a woman tyrannizes over another woman and the attitude of some mother-in-laws. Through this, she shows the life of a child-wife in an orthodox Hindu household. She also illustrates different experiences of child-wives like Harni, another child-wife has a good husband and an ill-natured mother-in-law. At the same time, Kamala’s experience as a wife was also subdued. Krupabai criticizes the joint family system of Hindu homes for the uneasy relationship between husband and wife. While pointing out the relationship of Ganesh and Kamala, Krupabai views that Hindu homes do not permit freedom of speech and action like the European families. Because of Krupabai’s inclination towards western ideologies, she points out it as a defect of Hindu social system. This anomaly in Hindu homes makes the situation worse and husband and wife often act as if they are strangers to each other. Krupabai views,
The relations between a husband and a wife in an orthodox Hindu home are, as a general rule, much constrained. The two have not the same liberty of speech and action that are accorded to them usually in European countries. The joint family system is the chief cause of this anomalous state of things. The Hindu wife, unless she lives with her husband in a house of her own, scarcely exchanges a word with him before other members of the family. They behave as if they were strangers to each other, the woman covering her head at her husband’s approach, or leaving the room when he happens to come in, or standing aside, and when talked to, either not taking any notice of what is said, or, with head turned aside, answering in the most distant manner possible. The mother-in-law’s jealousy prohibits the young people from having anything like liberty of speech or action in her presence.

(Satthianadhan, Kamala 62)

Reiterating the aspect of women’s education, Krupabai points out that women’s emancipation is possible only through education. Indrani Sen opines that education for women is an inevitable part of modernization. The nineteenth century society and family were against women’s education. During the late 18th century, the upper-caste/upper-class families enforced female illiteracy in India. Later, the efforts of Indian reformers, European missionaries, philanthropists and the colonial government helped the growth of female education in India (4). But Kamala, unlike other girls of her time, avoided her husband because of the thought that she would be unloved and ill-treated by him. Indrani Sen further opines that it was a common thing in the 19th century that the liberal, reform minded husbands started educating
their child wives at home (ibid). Ganesh’s attempt to educate Kamala resembles the attempts of 19th century educated men.

He found her, moreover, eager to get information about everything, and wonderfully quick of comprehension, and with the English idea he had imbibed regarding women’s love and education he thought of striking out a new line and developing Kamala’s mind and so training her to be a real companion to him. (Satthianadhan, Kamala 73)

Indrani Sen observes that the intention behind the insistence of the western educated men to get the lettered or educated women as their wives was because of their wish to identify or equate with the colonial, Victorian model of the companionate wife and helpmeet (10). Imbibing western values like women’s intellectual development and their treatment of women as equal partners, Indian men were accepting changes in their life. As Geraldine Forbes states,

During the course of the nineteenth century, the pattern of women’s lives began to change. In reality the concept of the “perfect wife” was being redefined. First, there were modifications in the appropriate activities for a female at different stages of her life. Second, the appropriate arena for female action was expanded. And third, there was a new and growing approval of individualism. (28)

A similar view is shared by Meredith Borthwick when analyzing the account of a Brahmo woman about bhadrabahila. The modern Indian woman has good qualities like modesty, humility, softness, self sacrifice and when she gets educated
she would be more civilized and would get the independent decision making capacity. So the modern Indian women should be the mixture of both traditional Hindu female qualities like self sacrifice and the Victorian model of perfect lady’s quality as husband’s gentle helpmate and companion (55-56). Here Ganesh decides to educate Kamala. His words reiterate his intention while his mother complains to him about his act of teaching Kamala. He says, “I only want her to be a little more of a companion to me. She won’t lord it over you. In fact learning will teach her humility, and she can work after her lessons are over” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 73).

Geraldine Forbes observes that British considered the position and status of women in society as the standard to judge a nation’s progress in the level of civilization. According to their ideals, the relationship of a husband and a wife should be like “the wife was the intelligent companion of her husband’s daily life, giving him sympathy and encouragement, counsel and advice solace and relaxation” (114).

Attracted by this ideal of British, many western educated bhadralok with colonial employment were tempted to have a wife like this (ibid). For instance, Tagore’s The Home and the World (1916) illustrates the same theme. Nikhil, the protagonist, introduces his wife, Bimala to education as an attempt to introduce her to the outer world. And he wants to release her from the traditional restricted female life in India. In most of the narratives written during the nineteenth century India, a major thrust was on the effort of educated husbands to educate their wives.

Krupabai Satthianadhan also describes the hypocrisy of the educated men of her time. But when circumstances challenge them, they withdraw from action. In Kamala Ganesh suffers tremendous difficulties from his family. His mother and
sisters disapprove of his conduct and accuse him of forgetting his manhood. They say, “What a man with any self-respect would make much of his wife, give her learning, and raise her up to his own level? The wife, as the saying went, was ‘the cat under the plate’, the slave of the family and of her lord. They considered that he was disgracing himself in acting thus” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 73).

Here Ganesh could not withstand such oppositions and his family skillfully turns his attention away from educating Kamala. Thus, Krupabai shows, like other men of her time, he merely becomes a prey to these circumstances. The attitude of Kamala is like she submits herself to every form of oppression as if everything is part of her fate. She expects nothing good from others, but Kamala’s attitude to Ganesh is revealed here. “But it was different with Ganesh; for though her feelings towards him had not yet ripened into love, she had begun to regard him already as a friend and comrade. She felt that he was superior to his people. His conduct had justified her belief and trust in him” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 78). It is important to note here that woman’s subordination is visible in marriage and Simone De Beauvoir states in her The Second Sex (1949) that the paradox of marriage lies both in its erotic and social purpose. This ambivalent attitude is seen reflected in the portrayal of husband to wife.

He is a demigod endued with virile prestige and destined to replace her father: protector, provider, teacher, guide; the wife’s existence is to unfold in his shadow; he is the custodian of values, the sponsor of truth, the ethical vindication of the couple. But he is also a male with whom she must share an experience that is often shameful, grotesque, objectionable, or upsetting, in
any case incidental; he invites his wife to revel with him in sensual indulgence while he leads her family towards the ideal. (480)

As Mrinalini Sinha argues nationalist discourse or colonial consciousness constructed a kind of nationalist masculinity which was enabled through the control/protection of women. She opines that two types of masculinity had been created in nationalist discourse. One was colonial masculinity/elite ‘white’ British masculinity which was constructed to protect women especially oriental women. The most important criterion of white British masculinity was to save Indian/brown women from Indian men. The other was the masculinity represented by the native men as a method to retrieve their honor and masculinity which had been lost due to the negative representations in colonial discourse. The intention of this native masculinity was to secure/guard Indians from the colonizer’s influence. Mrinalini further argues that both the protection of women as well as the protection of the nation was the most vital thing in the production/construction of masculinity (330-331). It can be viewed that Ganesh was the product of the nationalist masculinity in the colonial context. Nationalist masculinity not only educates or empowers women, but also protects women from the outside threats.

Through the experiences of child-wives in Kamala the repressed selves of women are shown. They have nothing to do except the monotonous domestic affairs. This makes their life bleak and unhappy. In her article “Female Education” Krupabai Satthianadhan informs and advocates the intellectual and aesthetic reformation of women as a solution. She says,
Poor souls! They are not to be blamed; they know of no higher mode of existence; there is nothing to occupy their minds; no interest is taken in them…They live to be men’s attendants, and their highest destiny is to die in the service…Seeing that such is the sad condition of uneducated women, how necessary it is to do something immediately to better their lot by giving them a liberal education, and to take every other step to enlighten their minds. In the possession of an intellectual taste a woman’s monotony will be lightened, and the mind will have new resources to occupy itself if she has such accomplishments as music, painting, &c. (Miscellaneous 21)

The writer has shown the character Sai as ‘the great rise and the great fall’ (82) in a woman’s character. Krupabai Satthianadhan shows the nature of opposition from the men of the 19th century who support tradition. Generally they believed that education would spoil the character of women and it would also result in the disintegration of family. Ramabai’s husband points out that though Sai is independent and “excels any man in accounts, and as for reading character no philosopher even could excel her” (82), she is the compendium of great rise and fall. She has no family ties, no sympathies to anyone. Despising women’s education, Ramabai’s husband says to Ganesh, “‘Do you see now the difference between being educated and uneducated? Whom would you like to have as a wife? A simple, innocent, modest girl afraid to open her mouth, or a bold, clever woman wielding such a dreadful power over others as this woman wields? Yet it is education that has made her what she is” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 81-82).
The skeptical attitude of people of those times that education would corrupt the character of women is shown here. In the chapter, “Expanding Horizons: The Education of the Bhadramahila,” Forbes views that in the early nineteenth century, there were strong prejudices against women’s education. There was a belief that the educated women would become widows. So that, in the nineteenth century, no man was ready to marry an educated girl (60). Bharati Ray points out that, generally, traditional men of the nineteenth century feared about the power of educated women. They argued,

…education was inherently de-feminizing or westernizing. It would foster in women a distaste for domestic duties, a love of luxury, selfishness, and disrespect for traditional culture. It would also give them greater facility to engage in unfaithful liaisons because of their ability to write letters, a husband’s control over his educated wife would be less secure, and she would certainly want to live away from the joint family. (Ray 36)

But, it can be seen that, Ganesh’s attempt at educating Kamala is not for the betterment of Kamala as a woman; rather he reveals,

…I admit that education and freedom do not do for all women….Women love and honour those above them when their minds open to grasp the great and noble qualities they see in others. They cherish the loving hand that raises them up, and though elevated even to a throne they will do their best so to walk as never to grieve the tender heart that loves them and raises them… .(Satthianadhan, Kamala 82)
Krupabai Satthianadhan shows the paternal patronizing nature of Ganesh. He is a man of selfish nature and he does everything for his own pleasure. He considers “Kamala as a sort of chattel made to give him pleasure and minister to his wants” (99). As Krupabai Satthianadhan writes in her article “Female Education”, Indian men consider their wives as ‘mere appendices to their great selves’ (21). Her characterization of Ganesh is an elucidation of her words. He considers her as his wife and his property. He is least bothered about her when he spends his time in pleasure. She writes, “He was a man who could not bear to see outward signs of pain or sorrow, and he tried to shrink displeasing duties just to avoid the pain and trouble of them. Intelligent conversation gave him pleasure and his mother’s company satisfied his vanity, for he was the pet son” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 99). Later, Ganesh condemns himself for taking a decision to teach Kamala. In this regard, Forbes notes male oppositions to female education was due to the fear of education’s power which would empower women. When women became literate, they would break the husband’s control over them and would begin unfaithful relationships by writing letters (61).

Challenging the caste barriers of the nineteenth century, Krupabai allows her heroine (even if she is a Brahmin) to mix freely with the sudras. For instance, once Kamala longs for her mountain home and her sudra/dalit friends. Krupabai writes,

Brought up in the innocent freedom of her mountain home she felt free like the air around her, and, untrammeled by caste superstition and fear, she entered joyously into the spirit of the rural diversions, taking an interest in the simple rustic souls around her, hugging their little black babies when
they ran to her and joyously clung to her feet. She would forget to bathe after touching the Sudra and other low caste children, and no one found fault with the lovely sanyasi’s daughter. But now how different everything was, how the artificial barriers of custom and caste separated her from all these people!

(Satthianadhan, Kamala 86)

Krupabai shows nothing would happen if anyone touches or lives with Sudras. It was the scheme of Brahmanical patriarchy to keep distance with Sudras as they occupy the lowest position in the caste hierarchy. Krupabai wishes to reform their condition. She shows that they are free at every stage of life even when they become widows. Sudra or Dalit woman is accepted in the Dalit community without any stigma of widowhood attached to her. They participate in production and do everything to uphold the structure of the society.

In Kamala, Krupabai Satthianadhan is not merely telling a story; rather she focusses on social issues as well. In this novel, she hints at the prevailing caste system of the nineteenth century. “[Kamala] was fond of the Sudra girls who every morning tended the cow and goats that grazed beside her home. From them she received most willing assistance in the many household duties that she had to perform” (Satthianadhan, Kamala 24). Not only that, Kamala gathered her knowledge of the wide world from their loud conversations as they worked. It also highlights the relatively free outdoor life enjoyed by girls from the Dalit communities. As Shakuntala Devi indicates, throughout India, caste remains the basis of social order. In the caste system, the first three castes were considered as “twice-born”, i.e. apart from the physical birth common to all human beings, they
had a spiritual birth according to religion and had to wear the sacred thread. The _sudras_ were “once-born”, they had no right to wear the sacred thread. They were regarded as a servile class, whose duty was to minister to the twice-born (5-6). But when compared with the high caste they are less restricted in their lifestyle. By casting her heroine as mingling with the lower castes, Krupabai Satthianadhan challenges the rigidity of the nineteenth century caste practices.

Krupabai shows two instances in the novel to represent the aspect of husband–worship as in the case of Bhagirathi and Kamala. Krupabai makes use of this episode to show how girls, even if they get nothing from their married life, are forced to stick on to such relationships. When Krishnan informs his love for Bhagirathi she feels tempted to accept his love. But thinking about a Hindu woman’s life which ideally revolves around her husband, she rejects his proposal. Bhagirathi even considers suicide as an option to escape from her desire for Krishnan.

Normally, wifely fidelity is the supreme thing in a Hindu woman’s life. Hindu religion and tradition taught the girls to hold wifely fidelity and chastity as a most precious thing in their lives. Kamala prays,

‘Rohini _Mata_, deliver my friend from this evil influence and I will make prostrations seven times seven on the great full moon day.’

‘Grant this prayer,’ said Bhagirathi, ‘and I will do so every month for one full year.’ And both turned their faces towards the setting sun and bowed.

(Satthianadhan, _Kamala_ 89)
They internalized the notion that the love and desire outside the confines of marriage is a deviation from female virtue. Once Kamala compares her husband with Ramchander, seeing his love and kind nature. It can be seen that, though she loves Ramchander, she is not ready to accept him after her husband’s death.

Krupabai writes,

Once, but only once, a wish intruded itself in the deepest and most sacred chamber of her heart—a wish which made her blush at her boldness and cover her bosom with her hands as if to hide it from herself. Would, she said to herself, that Ganesh had been more like Ramchander. Such a wish, though natural it may seem, was shocking in the extreme to a Hindu girl, who must never allow herself to compare her husband with anybody else.

(Satthianadhan, Kamala 126)

Similarly, Kamala rejects when Ramchander’s offer of his love and life to her after the death of her husband and child. Uma Chakravarti observes that the pativrata concept is the most successful ideology created by the patriarchal system. According to this, women themselves control their own sexuality and believe as it should bring power and respect to them. So pativrata may be viewed as an “ideological purdah” of the Hindu woman. By carefully guarding chastity and wifely fidelity they achieve salvation and thereby they reproduce “the inequitous and hierarchical structure” with “the complicity of women” (Gendering 74).

Krupabai allows her heroine to choose marriage as an option to escape from the drastic widowhood and thereby longs to break the shackles of tradition. Ramchander pleads,
It is the land of freedom I want you to come to. Have you not felt the trammels of custom and tradition? Have you not felt the weight of ignorance wearing you down, superstition folding its arms round you and holding you in its bewildering and terrifying grasp? Everything is so dark and dreary for you here. I see it in your eyes. You will be free with me-free as the mountain air, free as the light and sunshine that play around you………Now, Kamala, what say you? We shall create a world of our own and none dare interrupt our joys. I have means at my command of which you know nothing; and love will welcome you in the new world, love such as you have never dreamt of-my love, my undying love and worship. Accept me and your freedom, and come away with me, and no one will know anything of it. (154-155)

Similar situation can be seen when Ramchander pleads before Kamala to accept his love and hails to come to the land of freedom, leaving all the superstitious beliefs but Kamala rejects his offer and says that,

‘Ask me not that,’ she said, with a shudder. ‘It is too much for me to think of. Did we wives not die on the funeral pyre in days of old? Did we not court the water and the floods? What has come over us now? My heart beats in response to yours, but betray me not, thou tempting heart. I am ashamed of myself. Despise me and drive me away from thee. Look not on my face. I am the accursed among women. There is something wrong in my nature, and that is why the gods have disgraced me. They have broken the sacred thread of womanhood round my neck; taken my lord and master, and have cursed me. (Satthianadhan, Kamala 155)
In Hindu religion, husband is the guiding spirit of a woman. She has no other existence apart from her husband. In Brahminical patriarchy, Chakravarti states that, a woman gets recognition as a person only when she is with her husband so then she becomes a ‘social entity’ and also she is attributed the names of *sumangali* (auspicious woman), and *saubhagyavati* (fortunate woman). In short, Brahmanical patriarchy gives no recognized existence to a wife apart from her husband (*The Ideological* 66).

The issue of widow remarriage was one of the key issues of the reform movement during the nineteenth century and it created an uproar of extensive debates and contestation among the conservative upper class Hindu Brahmans (Bandyopadhyay 147). With an ardent effort of a small group of Bengali reformers such as Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who persuaded the Legislative Council and its members to abrogate an earlier legal and prescriptive prohibition against the remarriage of Hindu widows. As a result, a law was enacted in 1856 which supported not only the remarriage of Hindu widows, but also the inheritance rights of sons born of remarriage (Sarkar, *Wicked* 83).

Krupabai has shown the independence and learning of Sai as the negative side of women’s freedom and points out that the untamed freedom of women would lead to the ultimate destruction of her morality. Now Sai mourns for abandoning Ramchander and his love. She wails and blames Dhaji bhavoo who has made her life in this manner. She says,

‘Ah!’ she said, ‘it is all gone. You have blighted my life. You have made me what I am. I cannot be different, and yet I feel I might have been so
different. ’……….my name and my honour- I parted with them willingly, thinking of the glamour that you cast over learning, independence, riches, and the power of securing an influence over others. All these I possess. But what is all this without my name? ....(Satthianadhan, Kamala 124)

Through Kamala, Krupabai also describes the role of widows in the nineteenth century Brahmin community. She does not dwell much on widowhood in Kamala, rather she hints at widows and widowhood here and there. Indicating the ceremony at Ranichandrapunt’s house, Krupabai writes that “it is a grand affair and all the world is to be there except of course the old, the lame, the deaf, and the widows” (Satthianadhan 47). Similarly, when women in the neighbouring households were discussing about Kamala’s return to her father’s house, Krupabai points out widows’ part in it. “The widows, with their sarees covering their shaven heads, stood near by, some leaning on the walls and others holding on to half open doors. They did not do much of the talking, though they smiled and now and then put in some pithy remarks” (ibid 111). Widows were restricted from entering the mainstream society because of their inauspicious status in society.

Similarly, Sai’s (a Brahmin woman) running away from her house ‘to avoid the miseries of a widow’s lot’ (Satthianadhan 125) also shows the agony of being a widow. Rosalind O’ Hanlon argues that the blend of Brahmanism and patriarchy constitute severe social oppressive practices against upper caste Hindu women. The most segregated among them are widows (68). For Hindu Brahman widow has to live with and obey many restrictions in their life, among which most severe is tonsure. Tonsure has many implications in Hinduism. In another instance, Krupabai
indicates that while the married women entered their houses with their twisted bundles of washed clothes through the front door, the widows went by the backyard.

As Chandani Lokuge has pointed out,

> The nineteenth century widow’s life was inflexibly constrained by institutionalized ideologies: prohibition of re-marriage, and obligatory withdrawal from the world in devotion to celibacy, asceticism and the worship of her gods. Widowhood was also considered a blight and carried serious social stigma: a widow was an outcaste without personal rights, and was abused as a harbinger of ill-luck. (168)

The negative connotations associated with the figure of widow are part of the religious interventions in the nineteenth century society. Through another child-wife, Rukhma, who becomes a widow when her husband dies of chicken-pox, Krupabai shows the attitude of people to the innocent girl. While thinking upon Rukhma’s agony, Kamala imagines her suffering and her relatives’ remark on it: “Let her suffer, let her bear the sins of former generations, the unfortunate polluted one, who has been the cause of her husband’s death. What sins she must have committed, how many hearts she must have broken!” (Satthianadhan 130). They consider Rukhma as the cause of her husband’s death and she is responsible and guilty for her own fate.

In this novel, Krupabai imposes widowhood on her heroine. When Ramchander comes near her and lifts her up, exhorting to accept his love, she wails from the bottom of her heart the word ‘Ganesh’ (Ibid 155). This apparently claims the stronghold of religion and tradition in her. Here Kamala rejects Ramchander’s love because her religious and traditional teachings prevent her from doing so. The
concept of ‘pativrataadharma’ is deeply internalized in her. So Krupabai writes, “Her religion, crude as it was, had its victory (Ibid 155-56).

Here Krupabai’s attempt is to mould Kamala in the role of the ‘New Woman’. As Forbes states, by the end of the nineteenth century, as part of the British conquest in India, there emerged a number of women who were educated, articulate, mobile and who actively participated in public activities. “These “New Women”, as they were called, were part of a modernizing movement which sought to modify gender relations in the direction of greater equality between men and women”. These new women also had the opportunities for the expression of their individuality (Forbes 28-29). However, Krupabai Satthianadhan makes her heroine bold and at the same time timid. Once Kamala questions Ganesh and drives out Sai who comes to entice her husband. Krupabai states in her novel that, “It was an unusual thing for a woman to behave in this fashion” (138). She also introduces her heroine to education, a rare accomplishment of the nineteenth century women. Yet, Krupabai Satthianadhan ends her novel with the theme of pativrataadharma and enforced widowhood. She could not release her heroine from the traditional religious orthodoxy. Her portrayal of Kamala as both the combination of traditional and modern qualities shows the writer’s own perspective on tradition and modernity. Through Kamala’s rejection of Ramchander’s love, Krupabai advocates that it is not remarriage that liberates women but education. Not only that, by making her heroine economically independent with Kamala’s mother’s casket of jewels, she also hints that it is economic independence along with education that makes women’s liberation possible. Maithrayee Chaudhari opines that education would not take
away women from their traditional roles rather it would enhance the efficiency of wives and mothers and also reaffirm traditional values in society as the better carriers of these values. So the new Indian woman is both the combination of the Aryan woman and the ideal Victorian woman (282). The ideal Victorian woman contained the characteristic virtues of a Hindu wife such as moral goodness with a basic education, social presence, etc. Ruskin described the image of an ideal Victorian lady in his lecture in 1864:

…She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman. (qtd. in Borthwick 57)

In fact, this image was just an ideal compared to the real life image of the middle-class women in nineteenth-century England. But nineteenth century reformers were anxious for social change, therefore they adopted the ideal Victorian image to construct an ideal Indian woman (ibid 57). But, it can be seen that, during the late nineteenth century England, feminist movement started questioning Victorian model of marriage and the concept of companion and helpmeet constructed by the colonial patriarchy of the west. At the same time, suffragette movement also started in the west demanding voting rights, conjugal freedom, and sexual freedom etc. But, nineteenth century Indian reformers were influenced by the
Victorian model of woman constructed by the Victorian patriarchy not the feminist model of woman constructed by the feminists of that time.

Here Krupabai Satthianadhan has attributed a new female subjectivity to her heroine, Kamala. She has drawn her heroine as the one who is the ideal new woman. At the end of the novel, by portraying Kamala as a person good to the society, the writer has entrusted a social responsibility on her heroine. And this shows that she is a person who is socially responsible and at the same time, she is a person who stands within the walls of religion and tradition obeying its rules. So, she is the ideal new woman who helps the needy and at the same time, she is a person who is subservient and submissive to the patriarchal, religious codes. So it is apt to say that the creation of Krupabai Satthianadhan’s Kamala is the product of colonial modernity. The underlying tension of the writer was where to place her heroine in tradition or in modernity. This tension is apparently seen in the writer’s decision to end her heroine’s life as an austere widow. Thus, Krupabai ends her novel with the theme of enforced widowhood and shows that her heroine, as a widow does not try to break her traditional constraints and social restrictions. She devotes herself as a pious widow and spends her money to charity and good work. Thus she negates her personal existence and happiness. Here, Krupabai Satthianadhan places her heroine within the structure of new women ideal.

Paranjape views that Krupabai has not written this story as a propaganda or a social reform tract that offered conversion as a solution to the problems of young Hindu widows (115). He also views that, the novel is not an “overt condemnation or criticism of Hindu society and tradition” but “a sympathetic portrayal of a society in
the throes of great change” (ibid). Thus she created her heroine with all the qualities of a traditional woman and also a product of colonial modernity.

Subendu Mund observes,

In many of her other works also, the author reveals her awareness of the dangers of a society in transition. While she is critical of the decadent customs and superstitions, she extols the essence of Indian spiritual life. She may be called the first feminist writer of India in the sense that in her works there is a passionate involvement in the issues related to women – particularly Indian woman – in the context of the changing social situation. (7)

In a similar vein, Mrinalini Sinha views that women are helpless in all these discourses of the nation, whether women represent the true essence of national and cultural identity or as signifiers of tradition and modernity (Gender and Nation 329). As I already mentioned, the discourse of tradition and modernity determines the essence of both the Indian nation and the Indian woman. Even today that dilemma between tradition and modernity still persists. But in the periods of colonialism and nationalism this dilemma was highlighted through Indian woman. The British considered the progress of civilization by judging the status of Indian women. Later, this paved the way for development of seeing Indian woman as emblematic of the Indian nation. Similarly, nationalists took the position of the Indian woman as a standard to judge the Indian culture. Here, tradition was constructed as putting Brahmanical scriptures as its standard. Therefore, the tradition constructed itself was Brahmanical and the modernity constructed against it was also Brahmanical leaving
every aspects of the lower sections of society. The ideals of Victorian womanhood was introduced by British rule in India (Sinha, *Gender* 217). As Mrinalini Sinha further notes, “Upper caste/class concept of the Indian/Aryan woman was crucial to the modern reinvention of traditions for the protonationalist and nationalist project of national regeneration” (ibid 216). As she puts it,

The image of the Indian woman as simply the object of imperialist-nationalist debates, however, was further complicated by the broader nationalist agenda. The re-articulation of middle-class Indian womanhood had been necessary for the emergence of a new middle-class public and private sphere in colonial India; this same ideal of womanhood also offered a space for the mobilization of middle-class women themselves. (Ibid 216)