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Rewriting Social Reform - The Early Phase of the 'Social' Realist Novel in Kannada

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Introduction

The time period comprising the second half of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century was the phase of transition in Kannada literature, which saw significant departures from earlier forms and modes of literature. The emergence of literary prose, transition of Kannada language from *halegannada* (old Kannada) to *hosagannada* (new or modern Kannada) leading to the modernisation of Kannada, and the focus of literature shifting to the secular can be seen as the most transformative of these departures during this transitory phase. The novel, which gradually evolved as a new and distinct genre during this period, epitomised these departures as its form could incorporate all the major changes that were taking place in Kannada literature; and the novel subsequently emerged as the genre most representative of this transition.

Translation and Rewriting

Translation emerged as one of the most important literary activities during this period and a critical catalyst of this transition and is identified here as a separate literary activity fostered by the zeal to modernise Kannada language and literature. 'Translation' in the colonial context becomes a somewhat limited term that is unable to capture the entire range of different activities like adaptation, paraphrasing, editing, commentating, summarizing, appropriation, manipulation and so on. The term 'translation' itself is polysemic. But 'rewriting' is able to include 'original' writings mediated through commentaries, summaries, anthologies, and direct 'translation' activities such as adaptation and paraphrasing.

Andre Lefevere uses the term "rewriting" in a way that brings forth the many transformations that rewriting effects during a phase of interaction between different languages. Lefevere explains:

> . . . how the interaction of writing and rewriting is ultimately responsible, not just for the canonization of specific authors and the rejection of others, but also for the evolution of a given literature, since rewritings are often designed precisely to push a given literature in a certain direction. Think, for example, of the often-quoted rewritings of T'ang poetry in Pound's *Cathay*, which have helped to push the evolution of modern English-language poetry in a certain direction. (Lefevere, 1985: 219-220)

It must also be remembered that the time period indicated above was also the period when the struggle for Indian independence was at its peak and as a consequence, nationalism, was at its height. Revival of history and a valourisation of the past were some of the important discourses of nationalism and this was reflected in Kannada literature through a flood of historical novels translated from Marathi mainly by Galaganatha (Rao, 2006-07) and from Bengali mainly by B. Venkatacharya (Rao, 2007). This was also the time when social reform movements had captured the imagination of the intelligentsia across the length and breadth of British-ruled India. And this was reflected in Kannada literature through the 'social' realist novel, where, in the initial days, the plot revolved around the theme of social reform. In fact, these two types of novels are fictionalized rewritings of the two dominant political positions during the later colonial phase—that of the extremists and of the moderates. Over time, revival of history and reform of Hindu society, both became powerful discourses of nationalism.

At first glance, though historical novels and 'social' realist novels look like straightforward channels for advocating 'revival' and 'social reform' respectively, a deeper research would reveal that the 'social' realist novel advocating 'social reform' is not as straightforward as it looks. The 'social' realist novels do talk about 'social reform' of 'Hindu' society, but not all these novels look at 'social reform' from the same perspective. Within the sphere of the early Kannada 'social' realist novels, there were both pro- and anti- 'social reform' novels and there were some novels whose plots were far removed from the world of 'social reform.' That these pro and anti- 'social reform' novels were drawing the contours of their respective ideas of the nation and giving shape to their respective visions of an ideal 'Hindu' society is hardly surprising following Anderson (Anderson, 1983).

The Realism and Reality Debate

The available histories of Kannada literature (R. S. Mugali, 1953; Mariyappa Bhatta, 1960; L. S. Seshagiri Rao, 1983) do not focus on the early realist novels. Fortunately the early Kannada novel was discussed outside these literary histories (G. S. Amur, 1983 & 1994; B. A. Viveka Rai (ed.), 1987; U. Maheshwari, 2001), but since these debates are in Kannada, excepting one or two in English (Shivarama Padikkal, 1991 & 1993) a non-Kannadiga going through Mugali's or Seshagiri Rao's literary histories in English will hardly get any information on the early phase of the novel in Kannada. This intervening period when supposedly there were no great creative achievements in Kannada literature was a period of transition when Kannada literature was trying to come to terms with the loss of patronage and new influences from outside. The early novels reflected this uncertainty, in terms of

forging a new language to rewrite a new form and new themes. That the stalwarts of the later Kannada novel developed their art and craft from these early examples of the novel is not acknowledged in these literary histories. One of the important reasons for this alienation or disinterest could be the issue of 'realism'. The earlier writers could have been found wanting on this score.

Early Novels

It would be easy to categorise the early novels as imitations, and say that the novel and prose writing developed in Kannada due to English influence. Though it is true that it was for the first time in Kannada literature, in the early novels and plays, that prose was used for creative purposes, M G Krishnamurthi says that the rise and use of prose for creative purposes is one of the significant features of Modern Kannada literature. That is to say, prose was not an unknown feature for Kannada writers, except that prose was used for specific purposes of elaboration and explanation, as can be seen in *Champu* poems.

Krishnamurthi also comments that one should see the development of prose also as a shift in the relationship between the writer and reader. At a time when there were no printing presses and preserving and obtaining manuscripts were luxuries even for the literate minority, recitation of works was the only medium through which the writers and readers could come together. The tonal inflections of the writer/reciter, which signified pauses and emotions, now became punctuation marks in the new print medium (Krishnamurthy, 1994).

As mentioned earlier, the need to remember and recite also meant that metres and rhymes became an important part of writing and even non-creative works like the *shastra*-s were written in verse. The arrival of the printing presses and extensive use of paper changed this relationship. The development of prose in Kannada can be attributed to all these changes, and the novel rose as a distinct genre (with models and themes available from both within and outside) as a result of these shifts and not just because of the English novel as a modular form.

When writers used words like 'novel', *upanyasa*, *kavya*, *grantha*, *kadambari*—all at the same time, supposedly to signify the same phenomenon, we see a whole range of influences ranging across cultures impinging on this new form of writing. And the results also suggest that some of the cultural connotations of all these terms were rewritten to form the 'novel' in the early days.

The categorization, that came later, of the early novels also offer interesting insights into what some of the criticism on the early novels considered as the 'novel'. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, one of the earliest to offer a critique of the novel form, distinguishes between 'novel' and 'romance' on the basis of the theory of probability. According to him, every incident in a 'romance' "need not actually take place (in the future). In the depiction of worldly matters, incidents should have the probability of actually happening in our day-to-day lives. If not, the story would seem improbable and may not be liked. . ." (Iyengar, 1926) (my translation). According to this rule, only 'realist' novels can be considered as 'novels'. Srinivasa Havanur, author of ***Hosagannadada Arunodaya*** (Havanur, 1974), an important and exhaustive book on nineteenth century Kannada literature, in his brief assessment of the early novels towards the end of his book, has very strict views on what a '*samajika*' (social) novel is.

Havanur considers Rentala Venkatasubbarao's novel ***Kesarvilasa*** (1895) and Gadagakara's ***Suryakantha*** (1892) as not being 'social' enough, as the events in these two novels take place in an imaginary kingdom under the rule of a king. But evidence suggests that a novel need not be set in contemporary times to reflect contemporary views. Havanur, contrastingly, quotes from ***Report on Publications Issued and Registered***, *India Government, Calcutta, 1883-1898* (RPIR), wherein a report on Telugu publications issued in 1895 mentions that ***Kesarivilasa*** is not a marvelous-adventure-romance; and according to the report, the heroine's struggles and triumph suggest an awareness of women's position in society. The discussion on ***Suryakantha***, later on in this essay, shows that this novel too is not just another adventure-romance. For Havanur, a 'social' novel has to be a reflection of society during the period of writing. He consistently uses the term *samajika kadambari* (social novel) and not *vastavika* (realist novel), and for him 'social' means 'contemporary'.

Samajika Novels

In a totally different approach, Maheshwari (2001), in a feminist study of the early novels in Kannada, considers all novels that show a concern towards women's issues as coming under the category of '*samajika*' novels. Maheshwari divides the early social novels into three groups:

> In the first group are those novels that in one way or the other only responded to the initial attempts at women's reforms in society. These novels only contextually document the different responses to reform activities. In the second group are those novels that reflect a clear reformist stance. In the third group are those novels that are against reforms or which reveal an anxiety towards women's reforms. (Maheshwari, 2001: 78) (my translation)

Maheshwari's categorization is most useful when it comes to considering early novels as rewriting the reformist agenda of nationalism. She endorses the fact that it is impossible to divide the early novels into two strict mutually exclusive categories of historical novels as rewriting revivalist agendas and realist/social novels as rewriting reformist agendas. In the context of any literature entering into the 'modern' mediated through colonialism, 'realism' becomes a complicated issue, and especially so in the case of the novel.

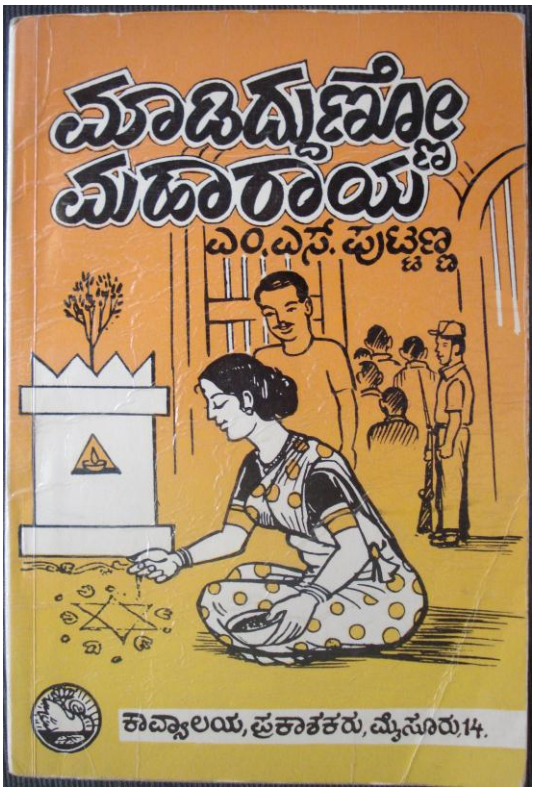
Processes of Apprehending the Concept

It is impossible to disregard the already existing models of 'realism' in the West and try to forge a new concept without getting entangled or influenced by Western theories on realism. The colonial encounter has made this kind of comparison inevitable. What best one can do is try and see how writers negotiated and chose between Western influences and the already existing rich literary culture of their own languages. A shift in apprehending the concept of time and space and the changing economic scenario during and after the Industrial Revolution are generally considered as reasons for the change in viewing reality and the subsequent rise of the novel in the West.

How do we account for the rise of the novel in a society that did not go through similar shifts? What the writers had were diverse models of the English novel and found themselves in a situation which forced them to respond to these literary models and other challenges to their culture as well as their

traditional way of life. This could be one of the reasons why the realist novel in Kannada is consistently being called '*samajika*' (social) and not '*vastavika*' (realist). If we can for a moment disregard the idea that what is 'social' should be 'contemporary', the term 'social novel' for the early realist novels is in a sense also appropriate because these dealt with the changes taking place in 'society' at that time. In fact, most of these novels directly rewrote social issues and concerns, more importantly women's reform.

The Early Social-Realist Novel in Kannada



In discussing the early social novels I have followed the chronological order for convenience and have considered novels written till 1915. 1915 marks the publication of M. S. Puttanna's first novel, ***Madiddunno Maharaya***, which seemed to set the trend for the future of the novel in Kannada as the discussion on this novel later in this paper reveals.

If we were to categorise the following novels, Lakshman Bhimarao Gadagakara's ***Suryakantha*** and ***Chandraprabha*** acknowledge contemporary debates on women's education very briefly; Rodda Vyasarao's ***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu***, and Bolara Baburao's ***Vagdevi*** deal more with the decline of the Hindu society than with contemporary social-reform; Kerooru Vasudevacharya's ***Indira*** and Gulvadi Annajirao's ***Rohini***, are novels that are skeptical about social-reform and ridicule reformers and their activities; Gulvadi Venkatarao's ***Indirabai*** and ***Bhagirathi*** and Shantabai Neelagara's ***Sadguni Krishnabai***, are novels that are openly in support of reforms; and M. S. Puttanna's ***Madiddunno Maharaya*** is totally unconcerned about any kind of reform, preferring to paint a picture of life in a village in mid-19th century Mysore with all its virtues and vices.

Gadagakara's ***Suryakantha*** (1892) is chronologically the first 'independent' novel written in Kannada. Coming after a spate of 'translated' historical and romantic novels, *puran*-ic and marvelous narratives, Maheshwari considers ***Suryakantha*** as one of the earliest novels that responded to the issue of women's education. The fact that this novel is set in an imaginary city with the king as a ruler makes it appear as an historical novel. The king has no role to play here and it is the story of Suryakantha, born to poor parents, who leaves home to study, finds employment in the army and helps in the war efforts. Suryakantha's courage and kindness finally help him to improve his family's condition. The issue of women's education makes its appearance in this novel in a tentative manner. Suryakantha's father wants his son to become a scholar, but abject poverty prevents this wish and Suryakantha leaves behind his parents and sister Premavati and sets out in search of education and employment. He had to separate from his sister whom he loved dearly, and before leaving he tells her to study under her father's tutelage and become literate. His awareness that his sister cannot go out and study, but his desire to also see her educated reveals Gadagakara's awareness of social reformist concerns.

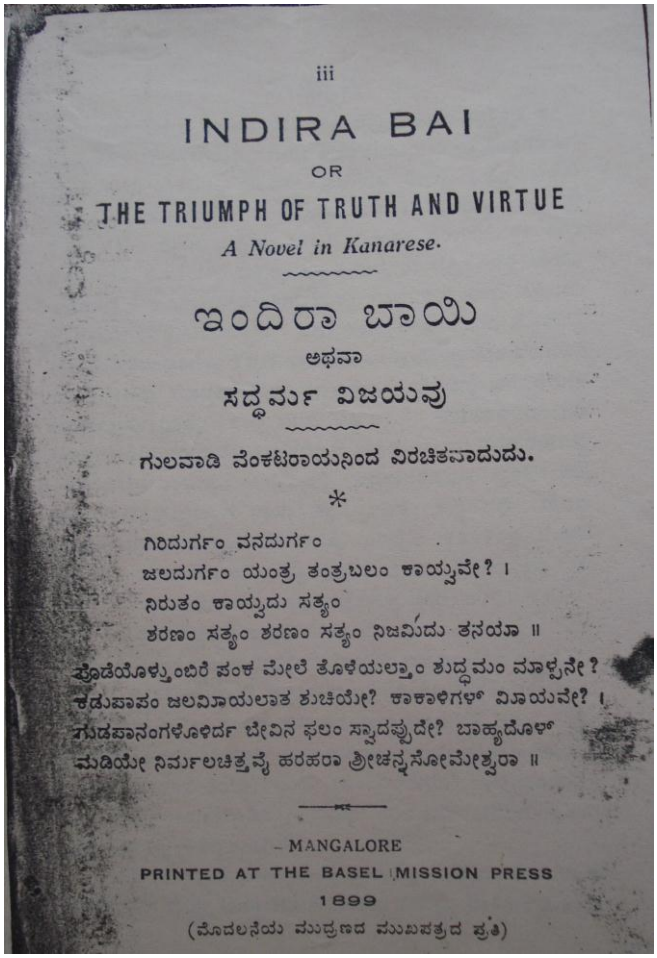
Gadagakara's next novel ***Chandraprabha*** (1896) sets right the gender imbalance. In this novel it is the heroine, Chandraprabha, who displays intelligence, courage and resilience. Chandraprabha is the daughter of Kripasheela and Bhagyasheele. She is taught the traditional duties of a housewife and is given in marriage to Manamohanarao. Her courage comes to the fore when she fights the King's soldiers who had come to arrest her husband on a false charge of participating in a rebellion against the King. When her husband is arrested anyway, she sets out to fight the inevitable war to secure his release. Along the way the author describes many incidents that reflect Chandraprabha's kindness, intelligence and self-control.

The reformist concern of this novel is reflected in a conversation regarding women's education between Chandraprabha and Manamohanarao. Chandraprabha wants to know whether the general idea that women are less intelligent is true. Manamohanarao replies that not all men and all women are either fools or intelligent people and just because some of them are in either category, it is not right to blame only women, but that ignorance is more in women. Chandraprabha probes further and asks whether this ignorance is a woman's natural state or is it because her parents have not provided her with a proper education, to which her husband says that it is not a natural state.

These two instances in these two novels reveal the author's awareness and acknowledgement of the social upheavals around him. As mentioned earlier, the author's proximity to the Marathi society, where debates regarding women's education were already taking place, could have influenced his thinking. These aspects regarding women's education in these two novels were brought to light in Maheshwari's book and Havanur's argument against ***Suryakantha***'s inclusion in the 'social' novel category was the only information available. This also highlights the shift in focus in novel criticism in Kannada where new modes of analysis have brought forth aspects that did not fit into strict conventional modes of analysis of form and content. These two novels also belie the notion that only novels set in contemporary times are capable of responding to contemporary concerns.

Realist Novel in Contemporary Times

The first realist novel set in contemporary times in Kannada, ***Indirabai***, was published in 1899.



iii

INDIRA BAI

OR

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH AND VIRTUE

A Novel in Kanarese.

ಇಂದಿರಾ ಬಾಯಿ

ಅಥವಾ

ಸದ್ಧರ್ಮ ವಿಜಯವು

ಗುಲವಾಡಿ ವೆಂಕಟರಾಯನಿಂದ ವಿರಚಿತವಾದುದು.

*

ಗಿರಿದುರ್ಗಂ ವನದುರ್ಗಂ
ಜಲದುರ್ಗಂ ಯಂತ್ರ ತಂತ್ರಬಲಂ ಕಾಯ್ವುವೇ? ।
ನಿರುತಂ ಕಾಯ್ವುದು ಸತ್ಯಂ
ಶರಣಂ ಸತ್ಯಂ ಶರಣಂ ಸತ್ಯಂ ನಿಜವಿದು ತನಯಾ ॥
ಪ್ರೊಡೆಯೊಳ್ತುಂಬಿರೆ ಪಂಕ ಮೇಲೆ ತೊಳೆಯಲ್ತಾಂ ಶುದ್ಧಮಂ ಮಾಳ್ಪನೇ?
ಕಡುಪಾಪಂ ಜಲವಿಾಯಲಾತ ಶುಚಿಯೇ? ಕಾಕಾಳಿಗಳ್ ವಿಾಯವೇ? ।
ಗುಡಪಾನಂಗಳೊಳಿರ್ದ ಬೇವಿನ ಫಲಂ ಸ್ವಾದಪ್ಪುದೇ? ಬಾಹ್ಯದೊಳ್
ಮಡಿಯೇ ನಿರ್ಮಲಚಿತ್ತನೈ ಹರಹರಾ ಶ್ರೀಚನ್ನಸೋಮೇಶ್ವರಾ ॥

MANGALORE
PRINTED AT THE BASEL MISSION PRESS
1899
(ಮೊದಲನೆಯ ಮುದ್ರಣದ ಮುಖಪತ್ರದ ಪ್ರತಿ)

Here, Venkatarao rewrites the problems of his Chitrapur Saraswat community at the turn of the century and the clamour for reforms from the educated progressive members of the community. (The clamour for reforms within the Chitrapur Saraswat community and the difficulties faced by the reformists in the community have been documented and analysed by Frank F. Conlon in his book ***A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins, 1700-1935*** [1977]). A variety of languages and dialects of Dakshina Kannada district used in this novel highlights the pains the author took to make the novel sound authentic. The extensive use of *Yakshagana Talamaddale*, of which Indirabai's father, Bhimarao, is a keen enthusiast, organizer and performer, strengthens the cultural landscape of the novel.

Gulvadi Venkatrao

Indirabai is born to an ambitious mother, Ambabai, and her acquiescent husband, Bhimarao. Bhimrao's is a rags-to-riches story. He firmly believes that his success is only due to his wife's good luck, and does not even hesitate to plot the murder of his apprentice, Sundararao, on the basis of a concocted complaint from his wife. Indirabai is married off to Vithalrao a year before her attaining puberty. The only son of wealthy, indulgent parents, Vithalrao is unable to control his sexual ardour and cannot wait till his wife, Indirabai, comes of age. With the tacit approval of his parents and in-laws, he arranges to live in a bungalow on the outskirts of the city with two concubines. His insatiable sexual ardour and debauched lifestyle ultimately lands him in bed with a high fever and he dies leaving Indirabai behind as a virgin widow. Her mother wants her to get her head tonsured and lead the life of a widow. Her father, however, disapproves of tonsure and brushes aside suggestions of 'sati' made by the priest. She is made to wear white *saree*-s, asked not to comb her hair or even apply oil to it, and not to wear blouses too. She rebels and disregards her mother's injunctions, except for wearing a white *saree*. Her mother conspires to send her off with a group of dubious 'swamiji-s', who go around conducting rituals and collecting unwanted widows for their various services. One night, when these swamis are camping in her house, and when one of them tries to molest her, she locks him up in her room and manages to escape. She takes refuge in the house of Amritarao, a lawyer in the town. Amritarao had earlier adopted Bhaskararao, the son of Sundararao, and had educated him. Bhaskararao is in England for his ICS studies. On hearing Indirabai's plight, Amritarao allows her to remain in his house. His wife, Jalajakshi, concurs with her husband. Bhimrao and Ambabai ask Indirabai to comeback and threaten Amritarao, but as Indirabai had decided to stay on at Amritarao's house on her own volition, her parents cannot do anything further. Amritarao learns that Indirabai is keen on studies and sends her to a widow's home-cum-school in Satara run by Pandita Anandibai. She returns on passing her exams and Bhaskararao too returns from England having qualified for the ICS. Amritarao broaches the subject of marriage to both Indirabai and Bhaskararao separately. Both develop a liking for each other and disregarding the fact that Indirabai is a widow, Bhaskararao decides to marry her, thus ending the novel.

Social Hierarchy and Language Use

The author uses Konkani, Tulu, the English mixed Kannada of the English-educated youth, the dialects of Brahmins, lower-caste workers and servants, and the register of law courts to make this novel dialogic and polyphonic (Mikhail Bakhtin, 1984). The author has also taken pains to translate conversations in Konkani and Tulu into Kannada in the same pages for the convenience of readers outside Dakshina Kannada district. As the realistic novel also marks the advent of the particular in literature, a number of features help in giving a local flavour to the novel. The novel is studded with a number of proverbs, which most of the times also provide an ironic twist to the situation.

Social hierarchy is represented effectively by the use of language. In many cases the dialect or language given to specific characters is representative of their respective classes or castes. Two Christian police constables speak a variety of Konkani, generally known in Dakshina Kannada as 'Christian Konkani', and these two are the only people in the novel who speak Konkani. Similarly, Tulu is spoken by servants in the novel. Konkani and Tulu are used as representational devices without any explicit comment by the author. The portrayal of recently English educated young men speaking

an English mixed Kannada is definitely an exercise in sarcasm. Their speech and actions are shown as fanciful. The elaborate rituals of smoking cigarettes and cigars, and having 'dessert' after dinner, every gathering of graduates turning into impromptu meetings with motions being proposed and seconded, a formal vote of thanks, proposing toasts and the resultant 'hurrah'-s, newfound manners of saying 'goodbye' and 'goodnight'—these descriptions evoke laughter as the actions seem elaborate and imitative, and their language contrived.

Sarcasm

The sarcasm is heightened by the author giving Kannada equivalents to their English usage in brackets. Apart from the noble purpose of helping English ignorant Kannada readers, the author also seems to suggest that Kannada has the vocabulary to say the same things that are being said in English and that their effort is artificial tending more towards display. When almost every minor character has a name, these English-educated graduates have no names. The author refers to them as 'a BA said', 'another FA said', 'another BA countered'—their degrees have become their identities.

Venkatarao attacks mindless orthodoxy and wasteful practices. He would rather have people spend time reading something useful. Through his heroine, Venkatarao emphasizes the concept of knowledge for functional purposes — knowledge that will help readers to lead a meaningful life. He rejects reading that is hollow and involves only the chanting of god's name.

Female Education

The main objective of female education, as enunciated by male reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was to equip women to deal with domestic matters and be better, efficient and knowledgeable wives. Therefore, it should come to the readers of the novel as no surprise that Indirabai reads Pandita Ramabai's ***Streedharma Neeti***. One of the main objections to female education as raised by the orthodox public was that educated women would neglect their household duties. Since the intention of the reformers was to make female education acceptable to the conservative middle class, they were very keen on emphasizing the fact, that education and women's household duties were not mutually exclusive, i.e., women who are educated do not necessarily neglect their household duties. Pandita Ramabai's influence can be seen quite clearly here. Ramabai's influence can also be seen in the portrayal of Pandita Anandibai, a reformer, who runs a home-cum-school for widows called '*Saraswati Mandira*', an institution similar to *Sharada Sadan* which was started by Ramabai.

Against Superstitions

Gulvadi Venkatarao's second novel, ***Bhagirathi***, was published in 1900. This novel is not easily available, but an informative essay by B. A. Viveka Rai on ***Bhagirathi*** (Rai, 1989) reveals how drastically different this novel is from ***Indirabai***, Venkatarao's first novel. Venkatarao has created this character, Bhagirathi, a poor widow, who is also the narrator, to lampoon the various superstitions of Brahmin communities. The novel is technically in the form of conversations between Bhagirathi and her neighbour, Leelavati, a young educated girl, though it is Bhagirathi who does most of the talking. Rai observes that in this novel Bhagirathi is the story-teller and Leelavati is the listener and whenever Leelavati tries to voice her opinions, she is swept away by the power of Bhagirathi's non-stop

harangue. Bhagirathi is well-known in her town as 'kattale Bhagirathi'. 'Kattale' in Kannada means 'rules'/'customs'. As Bhagirathi blindly follows all kinds of rules set up by the society, and has strange explanations and remedies for equally strange problems, the adjective 'kattale' is stuck to her. Rai considers Bhagirathi as an unreliable narrator, because what she gives as explanations and remedies are born out of blind belief and there is no certainty about these beliefs.

For Gulvadi Venkatarao, ***Bhagirathi*** is an extension of his concerns about society that he began with his first novel, ***Indirabai***. In the preface to ***Bhagirathi*** he reminds his readers:

> In the 'Preface' to ***Indirabai***, I had said that truthfulness and purity of heart are the two accomplishments that sustain us in this world and the next. But as long as foolishness and stupidity prevail in us, it is impossible to achieve these goals. This is portrayed through Bhagirathi's life. (Venkatarao [1900], quoted in Rai, 1989: 10) (my translation)

Through Bhagirathi's various lists of dos and don'ts, Venkatarao uses sarcasm to bring out the society's scorn for female children, women's education, English education and the stubborn insistence on maintaining the existing order with all its evils. As Leelavati, her permanent listener, is an English-educated girl, Bhagirathi repeatedly harps on the evils of English education and specifically of women being educated. Through Bhagirathi's life, Venkatarao portrays the debilitating effects of child-marriage and frustrations of child-widows and thereby implicitly presents the case for widow remarriage.

Highlighting the Position of Women in Hierarchical Society

Quite different from the above two novels is ***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu*** written by Rodda Vyasarao Venkatarao in 1900. Though the novel does not have the overarching reformist agendas that ***Indirabai*** and ***Bhagirathi*** had, but it highlights the position of women in a hierarchical society. In terms of 'giving a message', this novel is similar to most of the early realist novels. ***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu*** disappeared from public and literary view almost immediately and was discovered by D. A. Shankar in the British Museum, London. This novel was edited by Shankar and republished in 1998.

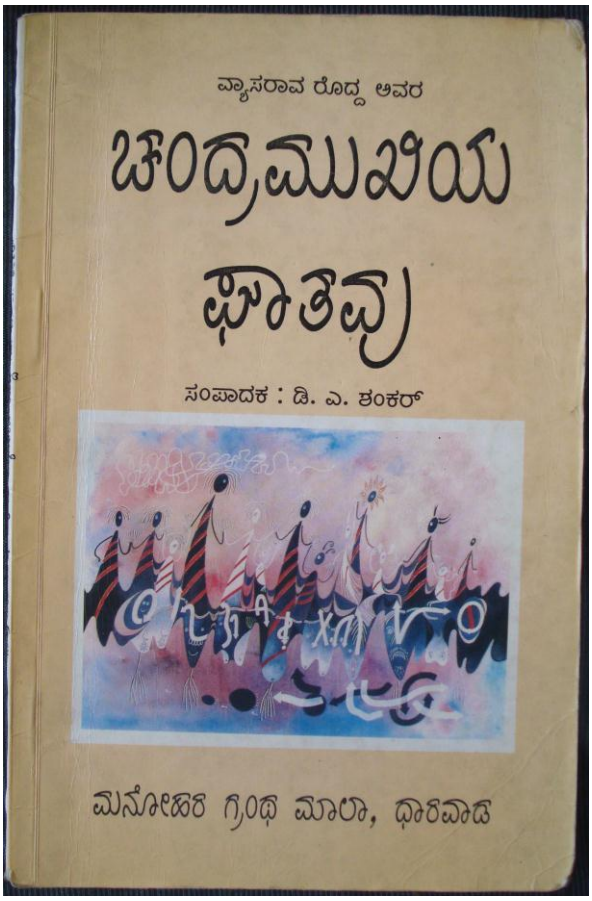
The main crux of this novel is the blind beliefs and superstitions that afflict Hindu society, and how women are made to suffer to uphold these dubious beliefs. Briefly, the plot is of how an unemployed Brahmin youth, Haradatta, feels burdened by his wife and three children. He is forced to work as a watchman in a factory and the meagre salary is not enough to feed his family and his vices. Haradatta resorts to manipulating some accounts at his disposal, is found out and thrown out of his job. In revenge, he forges some papers and decamps with three thousand rupees. He resurfaces in the garb of a holy man as that costume would help him evade the police looking for him and also as a lucrative profession to lure superstitious and gullible people. Some convincing tricks later, the husband of a childless couple goads his wife, Chandramukhi, to serve the fake swami, so that he may grant them a child. Haradatta gives her an intoxicant mixed in milk which she drinks and dies soon after. The police who were on his trail finally catch up with him and he is sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment for his misdeeds.

Attack on Religion

Scathing attack on Hindu religion, its customs and beliefs, perceived as decadent during the reform period, comes ironically from the lips of the fake 'swami' Haradatta, as he explains why it is easy to fool people:

> Hindu dharma is a blind creature without a torch, foolish in its thinking, decadent in its customs, and stupid in its speech. Like an ox it turns to whichever direction it is prodded and beaten to go, a puppet which dances as it is made to. It has long ago sacrificed proper thinking and acting upon it with mental and moral courage. It believes strongly in the godliness of its ancestors. Its belief is in divine ability, its trust is in tricksters. Women are slaves and men are rulers here. If things were not like this, would I have had a large following like this? (Rodda [1900], 1998: 9-10) (my translation)

***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu*'s Remarkable Narrative Techniques**



This novel is only of 28 pages, but as only the second realist novel in Kannada, ***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu*** is remarkable for its narrative technique. The novel opens with a first-person narrator, Kalicharan, a reporter for the daily ***Pioneer*** in Bhagalpur. Almost like the beginning of a detective novel, Kalicharan receives a terse mysterious telegraphic message from his friend Dhirendra, a police

inspector in Alipore, asking him to reach Alipore the next day. The mystery continues as Dhirendra receives Kalicharan without giving him even a hint of the purpose of his urgent message, and at the dead of night, gives him a package and asks him to leave Alipore immediately. Kalicharan opens the package upon reaching Bhagalpur and discovers a manuscript of an autobiographical account of a life of a 'sanyasi'/'swami' with Dhirendra's comments, and a request to publish the account after deleting irrelevant details. From the second chapter onwards, it is the purported autobiography of the 'sanyasi'/ 'swami,' published and presented by Kalicharan. Haradatta turns out to be the 'sanyasi' and the second first-person narrator. The novel is constructed as an autobiographical/confessional account of a 'sanyasi' discovered and presented by Kalicharan.

The novel is set in Eastern India, in Bihar and Bengal, and the names of places and of people suggest a different kind of setting for a Kannada novel. ***Chandramukhiya Ghatavu*** which began as an English novel with a Hindi name (***Aysa Kysa Hua***) serialized in *The Indian Social Reformer* written by a Kannadiga that ended abruptly finally reemerges as a Kannada novel set outside the Kannada speaking areas, the present day Karnataka.

Macroscopic View of Problems

If Gulvadi Venkatarao's ***Indirabai*** is a rewriting of almost all the issues of the reform period, some of the later novels concentrated on a single issue and tried to give a macroscopic view of that issue. Venkatarao's ***Bhagirathi*** itself is an example, which deals with superstitions and blind beliefs. Bolara Baburao's ***Vagdevi*** (1905) deals entirely with the goings on in a religious 'matha' or (monastery). The novel is set in the Kumudapura monastery, whose head Chanchalanetra Swami (the name itself is ironic and symbolic of the nature of the man; 'Chanchalanetra' means 'restless eyes' or 'roving eyes'), supposed to remain celibate, is enamoured by Vagdevi's beauty and contrives to bring her into the monastery. The poverty stricken parents of Vagdevi, aware of the implications, override her reluctance and convince her of the benefits of moving into the monastery. Chanchalanetra's lust and her parents' greed force Vagdevi to accede to the repeated entreaties of Chanchalanetra and the entire family shifts to the monastery. Since the monastery is the moral guardian of the society and its religious affairs, it wields a lot of power and wealth. Vagdevi's parents are more enticed by the power they could wield if their daughter becomes the beloved of Chanchalanetra, than their daughter's honour and welfare. Vagdevi's husband, a slothful creature, is most satisfied as long he has enough to eat and he does not have any say in the entire show. In fact, he is genuinely happy that he can now eat to his heart's content at the expense of his wife.

The Role and Function of Sub-plots

A number of sub-plots intersperse the main narrative involving a number of people from all walks of life. As these people are in some way connected with the monastery, a number of shady dealings involving them and the monastery are also portrayed. The focus in this novel is more on maintaining the sanctity of places of religion and worship. Ideas of reform do not seem to influence this world, but, in terms of satire, the tone in ***Vagdevi*** is much more incisive than in Gulvadi Venkatarao's novels. The story which begins in a small social unit called Kumudapura slowly spreads across all social units and layers. Vedavyasa, tired of Chanchalanetra's misdeeds, meets the four religious heads around Kumudapura and seeks their help. When no help comes forth, he meets Thimmayya, the 'peshkar' of

that state. After this he meets a series of officials and goes right up to the king, where he ultimately gets justice. Bolara Baburao, in his sharp social critique, stands at every level of society, describes the scene there, and seems to reflect how contemporary Hindu society at every level is filled and rotting with irreligiosity, debauchery and greed. Baburao seems to ask how such a society can be healthy.

Baburao's rewriting of Hindu society in decline is carried forward by Gulvadi Annajirao. Gulvadi Annajirao's ***Rohini athava Saraswatha Mandala*** came out in 1906. Annajirao too belonged to the Chitrapur Saraswat community, and ***Rohini*** and Venkatarao's ***Indirabai*** are similar in many ways. This novel too deals with widow remarriage, though with slightly radical overtones.

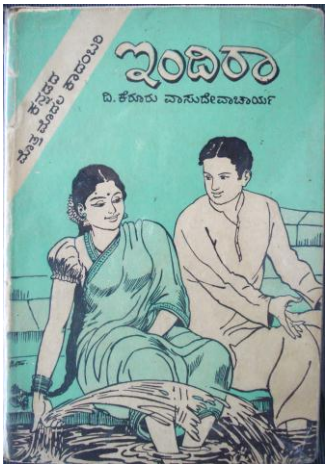
Rohini is not a virgin-widow like Indirabai, and the person who loves her even before she was married, Narayana, hesitates to marry her after she becomes a widow. Though Narayana has a different reason for not marrying Rohini—he feels that she is a 'parastree' (another man's wife)—Annajirao criticizes this and introduces a roving character called Ramasharma (who shows up intermittently in the novel) who makes Narayana understand that Rohini is a widow now and is not another man's wife anymore and that Narayana would not be doing anything so virtuous as marrying a widow in his entire life.

Annajirao does not blindly extol the virtues of reformers, and criticizes people who go around as reformers for its external grandeur (Rohini's father Mukundarao, who insists on taking her to the prayers at the Upasana Mandir of the local Brahmo Samaj) and also those who masquerade as reformers (A friend of Rohini's first husband called Vishweshwararao) luring young people into their nefarious activities. He criticizes orthodox religionists for sending injunctions at the slightest pretext and excommunicating people from their caste.

Annajirao's anxiety regarding the sanctity and safety of the Brahmin community comes forth strongly. Narayana wants to establish a 'Brahmin Samaj' instead of the radical 'Brahmo Samaj'. This 'Brahmin Samaj' would aim at creating a community where educated and learned Brahmins come together without any inter-subcaste hatred. Ramasharma adds to this by saying that unless the Brahmin community changes with the times, Brahminism would be destroyed by 'mlechcha'-s (outcastes/untouchables). For Annajirao, the 'Saraswata Samaja' in the title of the novel does not only refer to his Chitrapur Saraswath community, but 'Saraswath' in the larger sense of 'a learned and erudite' community.

Not Always in Support of Social Reform

Not all early realist novels supported social reform activities. In the novels discussed above the people who opposed women's education, widow remarriage, and general reforms in society, were on the other side and the authors of these novels strongly advocated reforms, though Bolara Baburao's and Gulvadi Annajirao's attitude can best be termed ambiguous. Kerooru Vasudevacharya's ***Indira*** (1908) is a rewriting of the orthodox anti-reformist point of view.



Indira is essentially a story of the romance between Indira and Ramakanth. The story of Indira's and Ramakanth's love has all the classical ingredients – first meeting, falling in love, separation, misunderstanding, parental objection, and finally marriage. Ramakanth's father, Kamalakantha, Indira's father, Jayarao, and Devayani, a young educated widow, were friends in their youth in Srirangapattana. Kamalakantha and Jayarao both develop a liking for Devayani, but she wanted to marry Kamalakantha. Jayarao did not like this and once when Kamalakantha was away on some work and did not return for many days, Jayarao seized this opportunity and informed Devayani that Kamalakantha had got married in some other town. Kamalakantha too had sensed that Devayani liked him and he too wanted to marry her. When he returned from his trip, Devayani refused to meet him. When Kamalakantha got to know what had happened and when his desire to meet Devayani and explain matters were rejected by her, he left town, hurt and dejected. He later married a girl of his parents' choice and Ramakanth was born some years later. Jayarao too married a girl of his parents' choice and Indira was born to them. Devayani chose to remain a widow. Ramakanth's and Jayarao's respective wives died early. Jayarao continued to live in Srirangapattana, so too Devayani. Jayarao's business matters meant frequent tours outside his town and Indira grew up into a young girl under the loving care of Devayani. Devayani had not forgotten Kamalakantha and when she learnt that his son, Ramakanth had come to Bangalore in search of a job, she wanted to see him and through a mutual friend, requested him to come and see her. Ramakanth comes to Srirangapattana and in course if time meets Indira in Devayani's house. Friendship soon turned to love. Jayarao, on returning, saw this growing closeness with increasing concern. He wanted to marry his daughter to a titled young man, through whom he too could assume some importance in society. His greatest ambition was to acquire the 'Rao Bahadur' title from the British. Moreover, he did not want Indira to marry the son of someone who thwarted him in his bid to marry Devayani. He tries to send Ramakanth outside the state by offering jobs. Many such attempts and misunderstandings later, Indira and Ramakanth come together finally to get married.

In between the many fluctuations in this romance, Vasudevacharya introduces a group of reformers with whom Indira and Ramakanth are seen engaged in debates regarding women's freedom, women's education, widow remarriage, language issues, and so on. Many well-known reformers and their reform activities are lampooned here. We have already seen Pandita Ramabai's work being acknowledged in Gulvadi Venkatarao's ***Indirabai***, where her book ***Streedharma Neeti*** is introduced as

an essential reading for young women and through Pandita Anandibai's character, who establishes a home-cum-school for young widows.

A Caricature of Pandita Ramabai and Other Social Reformers

In ***Indira***, Vasudevacharya rewrites Pandita Ramabai's character in Pandita Radhabai, a caricature of Ramabai. To add insult to injury, he makes Radhabai speak about herself. Pandita Ramabai's widowhood and her conversion to Christianity are lampooned. In ***Indira***, Pandita Radhabai is shown as having married three times, each time after being widowed and her conversion is shown as coming after her marriage to a Father Cunningham in America. Seshadasacharya Adya (author of an early Kannada social play, ***Suvadana Bhaskara***) is lampooned here as Phanindracharya Adya.

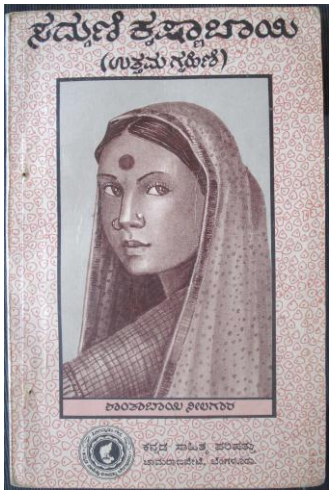
Phanindracharya is shown here as marrying Nagalakshmi, who has been widowed thrice and that he is not bothered about her not being a virgin-widow. The exaggeration and the language used for this description are gross and also show Vasudevacharya's unconcealed rage at these acts. Nagalakshmi is described as a woman who was 'savoured' by three husbands previously.

The meetings of the reformers at the Upasana Samaj is described by Ramakanth as being similar to Church sermons and rituals, with chapters being read out from ***The Bible***. Vasudevacharya makes it clear that he sees all the reform activities as Western and more specifically Christian and that he would not have anything to do with such reforms.

Vasudevacharya was a student at Pune during the years 1889-1890 and was witness to the reformist-conservative debate between Agarkar and his followers demanding reforms and supporters of Tilak who wanted to uphold Hindu values. Pandita Ramabai's activities were reported in their respective periodicals/ newspapers—***Maratha***, ***Kesari*** and ***Indu Prakash*** of the Tilak group and ***Sudharaka*** and ***Subodha Patrika*** of the reformist Agarkar group. These debates would have influenced Vasudevacharya and coming from an orthodox, priestly family, he seemed to appreciate Tilak's views. This exposure could be the cause of his anger towards Ramabai and other reformers.

Apart from presenting the contemporary conservative attitude towards reforms, Vasudevacharya makes the novel topical by introducing elements like the names of newspapers that Ramakanth reads, the Kannada-Marathi language debate, Venkatacharya's popular translation of Bankimchandra's ***Vishavriksha*** that Indira reads, names and activities of religious and social reformers and long discussions on reforms.

A Third Perspective on Women's Reforms



After the contrasting views on reforms seen in ***Indirabai*** and ***Indira***, Shantabai Neelagara's ***Sadguni Krishnabai*** provides the much-needed woman's perspective to women's reforms, thus giving a third perspective to the women's reforms during the early days of the novel in Kannada. Neelagara's novel, ***Sadguni Krishnabai***, first published in 1908, disappeared so fast that there is not a single reference to it in any of the literary histories. Even Venkatesha Sangli's encyclopaedic directory of Kannada litterateurs (1960), which spans a period from 1850 to 1920 and which is a mine of information, does not have any reference to this book. It did come as a pleasant surprise to see this book, which now becomes the first Kannada social/realist novel written by a woman.

Neelagara's novel was the result of an award announced by Narasimhacharya Kavyananda Punekar in memory of his wife, through the Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha, Dharwad. The award carried twenty-five rupees and the novel was to be written as outlined in a 'sloka' from ***Manusmriti***, a translation of which in English is this:

> *In whichever family the husband is happy with his wife, and the wife with her husband,*
> *in that house will fortune reside permanently.*

The story is of Krishnabai, the daughter of Hariwant and Radhabai. Hariwant provided a decent living and good education to his children and was especially fond of Krishnabai, his last born. He took upon the responsibility of her education upon himself and taught her whenever he was free. When his death left Krishnabai forlorn and distraught, her elder brother, Shamarao, took over the responsibility and arranged to send her to a private home tutor, who was a friend. When Shamarao had to shift to Mumbai, he took his sister and mother with him. On seeing the various career opportunities in Mumbai, Krishnabai too wanted to start a career. Her brother agreed and sent her to the Zenana Mission Girls' School. At first apprehensive of her thus far limited education, she soon realized that she was far better than many of her classmates.

An American lady doctor, who used to visit the school, noticed the talent in Krishnabai and offered to teach her Medicine. Soon, Krishnabai completes her course in medicine with top honours. On the day of the final awards function, Madhavarao, a young man doing his BA course, the only son of a famous

lawyer, Janardhan Pant, noticed her and enchanted by her intelligence, wanted to marry her. Soon, a meeting was arranged between the two families and Pant discovered that Krishnabai was none other than the daughter of his childhood friend Hariwant. But, Madhavarao's mother, who had strong opinions against women's education, was skeptical. Madhavarao manages to convince her and the wedding takes place. Krishnabai performed her household duties so well that her mother-in-law soon lost her initial apprehensions and handed over the charge of the entire household to Krishnabai. She nursed her in-laws during their illnesses, but they died soon after. Madhavarao was yet to complete his studies and Krishnabai managed the incomeless household with great expertise and helped him complete his studies. When employment opportunities were not forthcoming, she urged him to study for a law degree. Madhavarao had always wanted to go to England and study for the civil services or the barrister examinations.

Despite Madharavao's protests, Krishnabai sold her ornaments and raised the required amount. Both husband and wife decide to go to England. At a time when crossing the seas meant ostracism even for men, Neelagara makes a bold move by making her heroine leave the shores. The ship meets with an accident in mid seas, and a passing ship manages to rescue many passengers. In the confusion Krishnabai and Madhavarao are separated. When one rescue ship brings her back to Mumbai, another rescue ship takes Madhavarao to England. Neelagara brings Krishnabai back to the country, thus missing a certain controversy. But she must be credited with making the move itself to send her heroine to England. Madhavarao and Krishnabai believe that the other is dead, but both hope that the other is alive and that they will reunite. Krishnabai then goes to her elder sister's place and slowly comes out of her sorrow and starts taking care of the education of her sister's children Kashi, Godavari, and Balawanta. How she educates them and takes care of the household forms the major part of the narrative. Some years later, through a friend, Madhavarao comes to know that Krishnabai is alive and well in India and writes to her. She is overjoyed and he soon returns after passing his ICS examinations. After a joyful reunion, Madhavarao leaves for Satara to become the Assistant Collector of the district.

The story as outlined may create an impression that Krishnabai is just another heroine who blindly accepts traditional beliefs and acts accordingly. But it must be remembered that Neelagara is operating within the constraints of a patriarchal society and she also had to write within the confines of the traditional theme of the 'sloka'. Vijaya Dabbe (1996), in a perceptive introduction, says that Krishnabai is not a submissive, dumb heroine; instead she is a person with an immense will and desire, capable of changing the lives of people around her. Neelagara is alert to the developments inspired by a modern sensibility. Though, externally, the novel seems to propagate the view that women exist for the happiness of men, what it actually says is different. Neelagara cleverly uses the ploy of carefully presenting her own opinions in other's tongues and uses scriptural evidence so that her arguments cannot be disputed. Using this, she is able to present a most perceptive and an almost radical observation at that time:

> Like men, women too are human beings. They too have intelligence and the ability to learn. They also have the enthusiasm to reap the benefits and happiness that come out of education. It is not beneficial for anyone to keep fifty percent of our population who are women in intellectual darkness. By educating women, they will be able to learn

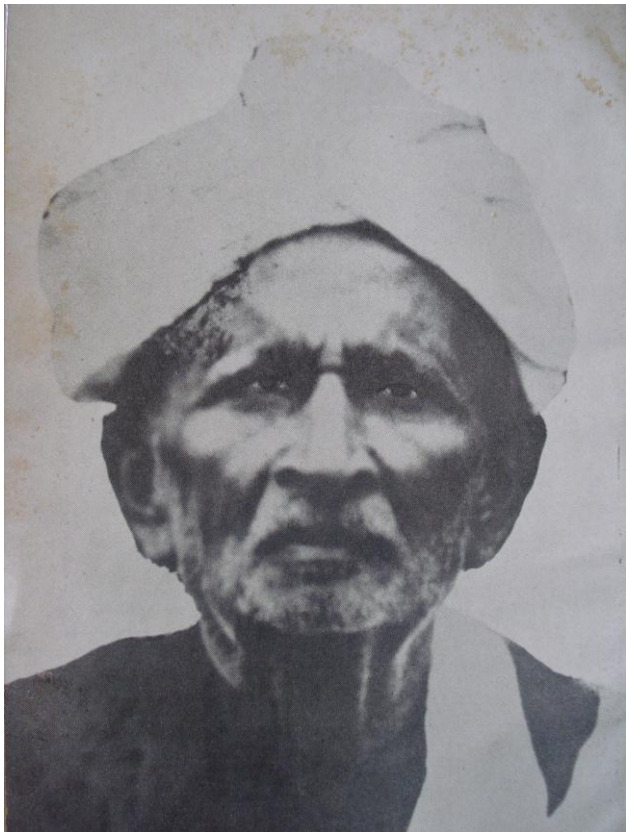
> what they desire and teach their children many useful things at home itself. (Neelagara [1908]; 1996: 10) (my translation)

Though there is no vehement oppositional force in the novel, Krishnabai had to contend with her orthodox and skeptical mother-in-law. Neelagara succeeds in her task by making Krishnabai's husband, Madhavarao, talk about and defend women's education to his mother. It is clear that Neelagara operates within the confines of the reform agendas of that time, when the common fear, even among the reformers, was that educated women neglected their household duties, and that their respect towards elders and traditions decreased with increasing knowledge. Neelagara has to prove that this fear is illogical; she shows how Krishnabai is not just another educated woman conducting household duties after marriage, that she was responsible for the education of her sister's children. She tells her sister's eldest daughter, Kashi, that there is no point in acquiring some 'general knowledge' by remembering names and reciting dates and years of historical events and stresses the need for a deeper understanding of our country's history, what our country lacks and what type of education is required for our people.

Impact of Modern Institutions Introduced by the British

In all these novels, beginning from ***Indirabai***, we can see the existence and operations of modern institutions introduced by the British. Courts of law, the police force, schools, and railways make their considerable presence felt in these novels. We also get to see the malaise of corruption already invading these new institutions. Added to these modern institutions, was the presence of the Christian missionaries. And for the first time in Kannada literature, social novels provided a canvas in which the entire society with its various hierarchies, both traditional and modern, could be portrayed.

A Contrastive Development



M. S. Puttanna

Coming as a complete contrast to all this is M. S. Puttanna's novel ***Madiddunno Maharaya*** (a Kannada proverb equivalent in meaning to "as you sow so shall you reap") which was published in 1915. The novel does not directly associate itself with any of the concerns of the reform movements, though education and punishment and the practice of sati do find their own places. Puttanna was a great admirer of the late ruler of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, and his novels are set in the times of the reign of this king, where the king usually puts in an appearance as the dispenser and upholder of justice.

The novel opens with Kittajois reciting the '*panchanga*' (traditional almanac/calendar) for the day, which reveals that the incidents in the novel took place in '*pramadinaama samvatsara*', that is, around the mid-nineteenth century. 'Chastity' and the final triumph of the Hindu view of moral/righteous behaviour are the main themes of this novel. This novel portrays the trials and tribulations of a Brahmin couple in a distant village in the Mysore Kingdom. Puttanna in his preface to the novel tells that daily-life characters in a novel should in their nature and deeds approach the ideal Rama and Seetha, Yudistira and Droupadi. With the specific mention of the period and the religious basis for his characteristation, Puttanna sets the tone for his novel in the beginning itself.

The plot of the novel briefly is this: Sadashiva Dikshit, a widower, marries Thimmavva, and with his son, Mahadeva, from his first marriage, and old mother, leaves Mysore and settles in Sanjewadi. Mahadeva later marries Seethavva. Mahadeva's step-mother, Thimmavva, who has given birth to a daughter, starts harassing her daughter-in-law, Seethavva. Seethavva bears this harassment

uncomplainingly. Sanjewadi is basically a village of thieves and their leader is an untouchable priest named Sidda, officiating in a Maari temple on the outskirts of Sanjewadi. Sidda's lecherous eyes fall on Seethavva who used to go to Arundamma's house, not far from the Maari temple, to worship the sacred Tulsi plant there. Sidda's lust is encouraged by Narappayya, who lives with the Dikshit family. When Sidda realizes that none of his enticements is going to lure Seethavva, he tries to molest her when she was alone. Unable to bear this insult, Seethavva falls severely ill and her family thinking that she had died of the illness makes preparations for her cremation. The wood used for her cremation was not dry enough and her body does not get completely burnt. Moreover, she was very much alive. Anandbhatji, a '*tantrik*' (traditional sorcerer), who was passing by the cremation grounds, realizes that she is still alive and revives her. Seethavva rejoins her husband, and Sidda is punished by Anandbhatji. Amase, a thief, reveals the misdeeds of the villagers and they too are punished. Sanjewadi is in ruins by the end of the novel.

Puttanna had already set the tone for the novel, and the incidents in the novel fit into his plan. By situating the novel in the 19th century, he creates the period and setting for the possibility of incidents like reviving the dead. ***Madiddunno Maharaya*** is a much-discussed early novel because of its unapologetic tone and the writer's belief in what he was writing. This makes the novel completely different from the other realist novels of the same time. G. S. Amur considers this novel as serving advance notice on the future growth of the novel in Kannada. Amur goes on to comment: "***Madiddunno Maharaya***'s sharp realism comes from its stark portrayal of human corruption and the consequent break up of society" (Amur, 1994: 47).

One cannot dispute Puttanna's astuteness in putting this incident where it is, because as he had already said in his preface, Seethavva's rise from the dead in a sense conforms to the legendary's Seeta's coming out unscathed from the '*agnipariksha*' (a test of chastity where Seeta had to pass through fire) set by her husband Rama. This secures Puttanna's world in its moral laws. M. G. Krishnamurthy commenting on the novel observes that Puttanna strongly felt that there should be a close relationship between the language of the novel and day-to-day speech and that the novelist should choose the subjects/topics for his novel from the world around him. This indicates Puttanna's belief that the writer's powers of imagination should be related to the specific culture in which he lives. Krishnamurthy says how this novel becomes different from other realist novels written during that time and sets the tone for the future:

> 'Chastity' and the final triumph of the Hindu view of moral/righteous behaviour are the main themes of this novel. Since most of the events take place in a distant village, it becomes possible to break both secular and moral laws. A group of bandits living in the village represent the destructive forces; towards the end of the novel we realize that the leader of this group is a priest of a temple outside the village. Chastity is symbolic of the moral laws. When the leader of this group of bandits tries to outrage the modesty of the Brahmin's wife, it is symbolic of an attempt to violate secular and moral laws as well as spiritual laws. The 'denseness' of 'specific descriptions' in this novel prevents it from becoming a manual of morals. Even though at some points the novel is a document of social issues, at some places an exciting story, and at some places a low farce, since this novelist is completely and unconsciously committed to the accepted values of the society all these diverse features come together. As a result, events acquire symbolic

> meanings; even though the story ends in a triumph for secular and moral values due to the King's intervention as we can guess, the reader doesn't feel that the novelist is building castles in the air by detailing this victory. (Krishnamurthy, 1994: 16) (my translation)

One of the main reasons why this novel has got its share of credit is that it never claimed to set right the ills of the society or offered solutions to contemporary problems. Puttanna's novel shows that societal ills like corruption, which the reform-novels expressed disgust at, was a feature of society even in the past. The reform-novels, if one may call them so, made their disgust at the atrocities and inequalities in society very clear and this itself became the framework for these novels. The anxiety of the early social novelists regarding the threats to their traditional way of life is not unconcealed in spite of their attitude towards reform.

Anxiety for Morals

This anxiety is rewritten through religious morals, which is a strong presence in these novels and these novels reveal that social-reform is in a sense religious reform too. Therefore, one can see the early novelists laying a lot of stress on morals, indicating in their prefaces the moral purposes of their literary attempts. Even a representative selection of prefaces from each of the different categories bears this out.

Gadagakara, in his preface to ***Suryakantha*** (1892), seems to suggest that his novel is a compendium of advice for the entire society:

> This novel illustrates how young boys and girls need to be obedient towards their parents, teachers and elders; how parents should be conscious of their children's education; how one should not forsake one's morals even in the face of adversity and danger; and how calamity befalls them who take to bad ways. This book also illustrates patriotism, friendship and fellow-feeling, therefore, people of all ages, from children to old people, and women may also read this book. (Gadagakara [1892]; quoted in Havanur, 1974: 545) (my translation)

Gulvadi Venkatarao's purpose in writing ***Indirabai*** too is similar:

> The purpose of this book is to portray that—Truthfulness and purity of heart are two accomplishments that sustain us in this world and the next and all efforts to exclude these two are bound to end in failure. (Venkatarao [1899]; 1962: iv) (my translation)

A different picture of maintaining traditions emerges in Vasudevacharya's angry denunciations of women's reforms in his preface to his ***Indira*** (1908):

> Today we see many young women who have been educated under the existing system, who have brought happiness to everyone without bringing any ill-repute to *streejati* (=women; the feminine gender). But we also see women who rebel against the present social structure and want women to be more independent than men. They feel that they

> should follow women of other countries in matters of dress, food and manners and that men need not be given the same kind of respect that they have been receiving till now. And thus having filled their heads with such foul matters, have thrown away the decency which gives greater radiance to their natural beauty. There is no dearth of such *svairini*-s (literally, free, independent women; also women of easy virtue) who have started to spoil our social equilibrium. It is because of our women that our traditions and customs are still intact. If it is not the responsibility of our wives to maintain the balance in the society and to see to it that there is no loss of happiness in the family, then whose responsibility is it? (Vasudevacharya [1908]; 1984: 3-4) (my translation)

The entire burden of maintaining the social equilibrium falls on women and the anxiety (and sometimes anger) that the society will fall apart if women are educated and acquire the confidence to assert their identities is not confined only to male reformists and dissenters. Women reformers also expressed similar sentiments, but even when they were calling for reforms, they also dealt carefully and tactfully with these anxieties to prove that the fears were illogical. If we can recall the statement regarding women's education quoted earlier from Shantabai Neelagara's ***Sadguni Krishnabai***, and compare it with what she says in her preface, we see that it was not easy for a woman to say what she wanted to say openly. Neelagara's statement in the preface is similar in tone to the ones expressed by the other male novelists:

> All women do not deserve to be called a good wife. A woman has to put in a lot of effort to merit such a title. As it is necessary for men to go out and earn money and fame, it is also necessary for women to keep things in order at home and earn respect and honour from other people. When a woman conducts herself like this, she brings honour to her family as well as her husband's family, and thus, deserves to be called an excellent wife. (Neelagara [1908]; 1996: 2) (my translation)

Irrespective of whether the novels are historical, social, romantic or marvelous, the novelists' main purpose of inculcating a morality made these formal distinctions, in one sense, irrelevant. These novels were already drawing the boundaries of the nation. In all these novels it is the upper-caste Hindu society that is in turmoil and the dominance of this group in literature ensured that the nation is rewritten according to their specific needs. It is at this juncture that revival and reform seem to converge with a single purpose.

End of the Early Phase and a New Beginning

Puttanna's novel marked the end of the early phase of the novel in Kannada literature. The anxieties and dilemmas that characterised the beginning of the novel, gave way to an increased confidence in dealing with both form and content. Puttanna's novel also marked a beginning of a new era. The enormous popularity of historical novels had obscured the early social-realist novels, evident in sporadic reprints and a number of lost works. This began to change with Puttanna, whose novels are being regularly reprinted. This also had a lot to do with the reading public. The shift in political concerns also influenced the readers. If the struggle for independence required a valourisation of the past, the building of a new independent nation required a representation that reflected the changed

ideals. Issues like inequality and caste and class repression began to appear in literature and were fictionalised and rewritten in novels.

The early realist novels, considered 'independent' in contrast to 'translated' novels show that 'rewriting' takes place in different ways, not just from one language to another. The above discussion reveals that most of these novels are fictional 'rewritings' of actual events that took place in different communities around that time, and also of people who were involved in these debates and controversies. The use of languages and dialects, proverbs, cultural specificities, and traditional observances, in these novels, has helped in rewriting the entire societal fabric of turn of the century 'Karnataka' into literature. We must also take into account that through these early social novels, reformist agendas get rewritten into literature as a strong political position and vies for space in the national imagination.

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