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Original Article

An Overview of Gender Based Violence in Kuvempu's The House of Kanooru

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Abstract:

Deep rooted cultural and traditional upbringing is the root cause of discrimination between males and females. My paper intends to analyse physical, sexual, psychological, financial and domestic violence, exploitation and dominance of men over women in the novel The House of Kanooru by Kuvempu, with a specific study of Malnad region, rural Karnataka. It is pathetic to know the fact that most women accept domestic violence and male dominance as a part of their lives. Women characters face exploitation within a rigid, patriarchal and feudal society. Gender inequality, limitations of orthodox customs, societal expectations and the struggle of women for freedom and identity are analysed. The major characters such as Subbamma, the third wife of Chandrayya Gouda, Seethe, daughter of Chandrayya Gouda and Nagamma, mother of Hoovayya represent women's sufferings, struggle and fight against societal norms and patriarchy. The novel deeply presents social, economic and generation gap and the feudal system in India before the independence era.

Key words: *- Violence, inequality, exploitation, dominance and discrimination.*

Introduction:

Kuvempu is a proud writer of Kannada literature, who is given a title as RASTRAKAVI (National Poet) by the Government of Karnataka. Born on December 29,1904 in Hirekodige ,Karnataka. He completed his education at Mysore University, taught there for about 30 years and become Vice Chancellor. His ideas are not restricted to any one place or community and propounded the concept of universality as Vasudaiva Kutukamb and worked against caste system. His works throw light on nature beauty of Shivamogga, social structure, humanity, equality and universalism. He is the pioneer of Modern Kannada Literature by using regional languages can be a powerful vehicle for global ideas. He wrote the Karnataka state anthem. He is a novelist, poet, and essayist. His famous work *Sri Ramayana Darshanam*, which earned him the Jnanpith Award in 1967. He gave modern touch to Ramayana. The word darshanam means the vision, the author has given a new perspective and vision to the characters of Valmiki's Ramayana. Rama is portrayed from modern perspective through humanistic lens. The characters of the epic, specially Rama is portrayed as supreme moral consciousness and humanistic person. The author has given modern psychological insight to classical characters. The epic probes into the moral struggle of the character. *Malegalali Madhumagalu* is an epic novel set in beautiful Malnad region. The novel deals with the social structure of feudal society dominated by landlords. Many aspects of Indian society like caste system, gap between landlord and labours, love affairs, gender discrimination, superstitious concepts daily struggle of agrarian life are delineated in the novel. The famous novel *Kannoru Heggadati* is written in Kannada in the year 1936 and it was translated into Englisg as The House of Kanooru by the two translators B.C Rmachandra Sharma and Padma Ramachandra Sharma in the year 1999. Girish karnad adapted as film, the director has condensed the 700 pages and 150 characters to lesser number to make it a movie. It took nearly eight months to reduce it. It heavily focus on four **main characters:-** Chandre Gauda, Subbamma, Huvayya, Seethe and there are few other characters.

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This the masterpiece where one Jnanpith Awardee directing a movie based on the work of another Jnanpith Awardee.

The novel *Kanooru Subbamma Heggadati*, or *The Proprietress of Kannuru* written in 1936, narrates the story of a landlord and a joint family, with Chandre Gauda is the head of the family. His elder brother died of high fever, but it is misunderstood that he killed his brother with black magic. Now he is the eldest male to take responsibility for Nagamma, the wife of his elder brother, and Huvayya, his brother's son. He lost his wife due to illness and got married for the second time, and she too died during childbirth. No cultured family came forward to give a girl in marriage for the third time. Hence, he got married to Subbamma young girl. Chandre Gauda represents the majority of men in Indian society during the social milieu of pre- and post-independence India. The narrative technique of the author is grounded with deep understanding with visioning the society through words. The novel addresses the casteism and feminism of his time. With the arrival of two young man Huvayya and Ramayya educated in Mysore University has changed the atmosphere of the village. They came with generosity towards female and labours. The ideas of democratic vision, liberalism and equality are unmatched with old stereotype thought process of Chandre Gauda and other male characters. One generation has to die rather than to understand and accept the new ideologies. Clash between the old mind set and modern is one of the reasons for Chandre Gauda's down fall. The Female characters of *Kanooru Subbamma Heggati* are Subbamma, Nagamma, Seethe (Site) Laxmi and other minor characters. Subbamma is the female protagonist, wife of Chandre Gauda, the landlord of a village. Domestic violence is very common and accepted in rural areas. Subbamma is the third wife of Chandre Gauda, who married her from a poor family without her consent. An observation shows that Subbamma is confined to the kitchen to cook for the family but faces violence, rejection, and humiliation from her husband and other family members. She accepts male dominance and violence; female characters are unaware and sometimes helpless when victimized by male dominance. Women fail to fight against it, as it would deteriorate their social prestige and dignity.

The domestic incident of breaking of mud pot by Subbamma turns out to be disgraceful to the family dignity in the village. Nagamma and Subbamma fight for distribution of food to women labors, a mud pot fell on the floor. The fight and the sound reaches outer verandah of the house where Chandre Gauda and other men feel disturbance. Chandre Gauda beats Subbamma with stick in the kitchen without analyzing the fact and culprit. It is taken for granted to beat wife in frustration without their fault. Itbis the duty of devoted noble wife to take care of the family dignity and not to talk in loud voice. Disrespect, rejection and extra marital relation of male family members lead to stress, depression and suicide. Chandre Gauda, is a portrayal of the typical majority of males in Indian society, who is an old, despotic patriarch of Kanooru manor. He is very dominating, rude, rough, and beats his wife without understanding her agony. He got married for the third time to a young girl named Subbamma, who comes from poor family, enjoys the richness. But later things changed when Huvayya and Ramayya returned to Kanuru. and blames her for not giving a child from her womb and causes domestic and physical abuse. He got extra marital relation with another woman and goes to her to relieve his disturbed mind. His attitude is the same towards other labors of the village. Traumatic incidents at home by husbands cause fear, isolation and suicidal thoughts in women. The novel presents Indian society - Kanooru at the micro level, Subbamma representing the position of Indian women at the macro level. Subbamma feels isolated and does not have any financial freedom. A servant asked money to her but unable to pay; she feels guilty. She steals money from her husband's pocket and lends the money. She has to take permission from her husband to go to a relative's house. She is like a house arrest. As she comes from a poor family and is struggling for bread, her behaviour seems to be unsophisticated. She always fights with Nagamma. The arrival of Huvayya and Ramayya from Mysore University for vacation brought a change in Subbamma, realised her rude behaviour, stopped quarrelling with other female members of the family and servants. This change in Subbamma nature is noticed by Chandre Gouda, who becomes suspicious about her soft corner and feelings towards Huvayya. Finally, he decides to divide the property and send Nagamma and her son Huvayya out of the house. He also imposes a strict rule that no family member is supposed to meet Nagamma and Huvayya.

The novel is set during the period of social transition and transformation when the feudalism decaying and new ideals take place with new education to the younger generation. Freedom movement, western education, Gandian philosophy and other revolutionary ideas influenced the youth and revolted against the old, unscientific and superstitious way of life. This lead to the friction between old and new generation. Subbamma is a devoted wife who comes back home to look after her husband during his last days. After the death of her husband, she turns out to be rebellious against the traditional male dominance and takes control of the authority. She takes part in all the activities of the estate. As days pass, she becomes very close to the overseer and forgets herself in his lust. She learns that she is pregnant with the overseer's child. Disillusioned with the situation, she turns to the overseer. He demands a large sum of money to bring medicine to abort the child. She gives her jewellery and money. The overseer gives medicine and runs away from the village. After consuming the medicine, she dies. Nagamma is the mother of Huvayya , a widow. She has to make a high drama to get permission from Chandre Gauda to meet her son, when he is injured in another village. She cries and cures her destiny for being a widow. There have been clashes between Subamma and Nagamma relating to house hold works and controlling the labours. She always blames Subbamma, of her a poor family background and mean and unsophisticated behaviour. She is a dominating family member and takes the responsibility

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of distributing the food and other household works. Nagamma represents majority of uneducated women, traditional, superstitious, dominating and stubborn. Huvayya is contrast to his mother in several issues, he is educated, modern, liberal, rational and scientific. There are difference of opinion relating to animal sacrifice, Huvayya protects the sheep which is about to be killed in a temple. He refuses to offer ritual to village deities like Bhootharaya. His behaviour towards labours and villagers is in sharp contrast with his mother. He treats the labours with empathy and generosity, which hurts his mother and enrages Chandre Gauda.

Sita or Sithee is another female character, a daughter of Chandre Gauda's friend in Muthahalli who grew up with Ramayya and Huvayya. She is innocent, patience and pure and becomes the victim of patriarchy and Chandre Gauda's cunning plot. Since her childhood, she has romantic feelings toward Huvayya. She takes care of him when he is injured in an accident while going to Kanooru by bullock cart. Marriages are decided by the male members of the family, and women have no voice in selecting their life partners. Chandre Gauda arranges the marriage between Sita and his son Ramayya, very lethargic and not interested in her. Some chaos occurred, and the priest tied the sacred thread to Sita's neck (Mangalasutra) instead of Ramayya. The unscientific and rude dominance of Chandre Gauda enrages Ramayya, and he shouts at his father, which hurts Chandre becomes bedridden and dies. Ramayya also dies from poison consumption. Huvayya takes charge of all the property and finally comes to know the reality of Sita marriage. The climax of the novel moves around the character Sita, who forgets the dark and crushed past and moves towards the positive, progressive life with Huvayya. All is well that ends well. Huvayya and Sita are married. Huvayya treats everyone in an equal way and looks after the estate and all villagers in a healthy way. Seethe and Huvayya decides to lead an ascetic life dedicated to spiritual life and social service, free from corrupt feudalism.

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