



**Department of P.G. Studies and Research in English
Jnana Sahyadri, Shankaraghatta-577 451**

**RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHY IN THE SHORT STORIES
BY INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS: A STUDY OF
SARAH JOSEPH, VOLGA AND VAIDEHI**

Thesis submitted to Kuvempu University for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
ENGLISH

Submitted by

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2022



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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHY IN THE SHORT STORIES BY INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS: A STUDY OF SARAH JOSEPH, VOLGA AND VAIDEHI** submitted to Kuvempu University, Jnana Sahyadri, Shankaraghatta, Shivamogga district, Karnataka, India, for the award of the degree **Doctor of Philosophy in English** is a record of original and independent research work done by me during 2014-2022 under the supervision of **Dr. Ramaprasad B.V.**, Professor, Department of English, Kuvempu University, Jnana Sahyadri, Shankaraghatta and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship of this university or any other university.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHY IN THE SHORT STORIES BY INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS: A STUDY OF SARAH JOSEPH, VOLGA AND VAIDEHI** is a record of original and independent research work carried out by **Mr. Raghu T.** at the Department of P.G. Studies and Research in English, Kuvempu University, Jnana Sahyadri, Shankaraghatta, Shivamogga District, Karnataka, India, as part time research scholar during the period 2014-2022 under my supervision for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English**. I further certify that this research work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship of this university or any other university.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Prof. Ramaprasad B.V.**, research supervisor for his encouragement and intellectual support. Without his academic motivation and support, I would have not completed my research work. I was fortunate to publish couple of research papers with his valuable suggestions. I am sincerely thankful for his extraordinary insights into literature, culture and literary theory which have shaped the basic premises of this study. My indebtedness to his vast intellectual resources and generous reception of ideas is never ending.

My special gratitude to Dr. Dattatreya M., Associate Professor, Department of English, Kuvempu University, for his academic and moral support to complete my research work successfully.

I am thankful to Prof. Nagya Naik B.H., Prof. Namratha M., Prof. Rachel Bari and Mr. Vinay, Faculty, Department of English, Kuvempu University for their encouragement and good will.

I am thankful to the UGC and Ministry of Tribal Affairs (NFST) for awarding fellowship to carry out my research work.

I am indebted to my parents Mr. Tipperudrappa D, Sharadhamma brothers and mentors Shiva Kumar. T, Harish Kumar. T, Mahanthesha. G, Thippeswamy. G, sisters Sudha. T and Suma. G, sisters-in-law Suma and Kavitha, lovely daughters Navya, Kavya, Shravya, Ananya, Aishwarya, Manasa and nephew Manoj, Abhishek and Chethan, niece Anusha for helping me in innumerable ways and their support.

I am thankful to my father-in-law Sri. Mahalingappa, mother-in-law Smt. Sujatha, nephew Maruthi. M. and niece Mamatha.M.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my better half Anusha. M. and dear son Guruswamy who is source of blessing in my life, without her support and continuous encouragement this research would have not been completed.

I express my special gratitude to my friends, my fellow research scholars of our department and other department.

Though, I have not mentioned many other individuals here, I owe them my gratitude, and they will be remembered forever for their kindness.

Raghu T.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

In a long tradition of arts, culture, and literature, women are scarcely given space. The genderization of literature kept evolving as a dominant form that did not consider the feminine sensibilities. One has to refer to modern literature if they have to find considerable literature contributed by women. The fact that these women writers are countable proves the odds of our civilization and its creative spaces.

When it comes to Indian female writers, most of the early authors are dated in the pre-Vedic period and early Dravidian scriptures, namely, Avvaiyar, Ponmudiyar, and such few names. The comprehensive list of female writers is referred from the 12th century, including Akka Mahadevi, Soole Sankavva, and few more Vachana movement names. Then for centuries, hardly any Indian female writers emerged representing Indian essence. Krupabai, Savitribai Phule, Sarojini Naidu, and many more are considered the first to herald anti-patriarchal ideas. It was followed by second-wave writers like Ismat Chughtai, Mahasweta Devi, Amrita Pritam, Kamala Markandaya, Sashi Deshpande, Kamala Das, and many others.

This thesis critically examines some literary texts of women writers to illustrate specific theoretical formulations. The study argues that selected texts discuss unequal rights, patriarchal discrimination and cultural construction in India. One can't deny the fact that inequality of the patriarchal system in India is reflected in modern Indian writing. This thesis takes a dialectical approach to interpret the literary texts of three Indian writers and puts their involvement in caste, gender, social injustice, and patriarchal

domination at the forefront. Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi are the three writers included in the study. These three writers are known through their literature and represent the crux of vibrant literature from Southern India.

This thesis makes an essential step towards showing how the writing of the selected authors resists the patriarchal cultural practices that have built the very fabric of Indian tradition. Feminism, like Marxists and liberal feminists believe, did not promise to wipe out the traditional way of life and thought in Indian society. Instead, it helped to reshape the tradition and the remaining history to meet the dominant sections of society. The literary influences of the twentieth century in India illustrate this aspect. During this period, although openly based on the universal values of patriarchy, modern literary productions were neither strictly universal nor representative of Indian society as a whole. Overall, it demonstrated a process of modifying itself in desperate manners on the grounds of a writer's community, cultural background, caste, and creed, which was negotiating with patriarchy and fast-changing socio-political conditions in the 21st century.

1.0. Thesis Statement

This thesis is based on the assumption that literature is composed of inscribed texts of discourse. This thesis examines the interrelationship between society and history in the content of female descriptions in the stories of Indian writers. Its definition of the cultural process, appropriate sex difference, literal representation is critical in determining the functional and ideological aspects of gender. The study deals with the reproduction of social relations, the form of feminine language and the form of narrative writing. This thesis seeks to analyse the question of gender in the context of interpreting

stories of formal elements. Gender as a cultural artifact plays an ideological role in the formation of subjects. Women struggle to get rid of the domination and oppression of men. Feminism came into being as a movement against the imbalance in power equations between men and women. Literature by women can be one of the means of this fighting patriarchy.

Feminism generally came into existence to raise the voice against a male-dominated society. That is basically a political culture and an economic movement. The objective is to enhance women's rights and legal protection. Feminism promotes women's specific rights and establishes a variety of campaigns for women's rights and interests.

Women have been subjugated both politically and publicly. Women have also experienced discrimination and continued oppression in the private sphere. Gender-based oppression and prejudice are pervasive around the world. The voices against basic ideas and thoughts were altered. Women's writings have articulated feminist principles with varied protest, resistance, and sensitiveness. These women's writings offer a new perspective to understand the manifestations of patriarchal society.

Women's writing is a part of the literature and a field that captures the experiences of a distinct society suppressed and marginalized. The writing of women draws attention to the voice of women through the vantage point of women. Such women's writings, by default, would manifest as a tool to resist the oppressions. This is an attempt to focus and consider integrating ideas from women's voices to resist patriarchal institutional thoughts. Women's writing has developed and been modernized in many parts of Indian society and is explicitly linked to issues of national cultural order and women's identity.

Although, women's voices are an essential element of custody in bringing justice to marginalization. Literary works by three selected authors from three different cultural

origins may raise questions against the patriarchal system. These short female stories can discuss issues related to gender, patriarchy and resistance against dominated ideologies.

This thesis aims to analyse women's short stories from three different languages and cultural backgrounds. These writers have come from a varied backgrounds of economy, caste and religion. Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada represent three different geographic spaces. These spaces have created clear insights into the voices of women who do not have a voice. Women's writing is reacting to women in different parts of the country. The authors dealt with issues in women's writings concerning gender, patriarchy and resistance issues.

This research, tries to explore how these writers in their works open up debates through the short stories. Patriarchal society has not allowed women to walk, speak and speak in the public realm/sphere. The narratives have re-opened the space and it is creating new waves of resistance. Women have enacted new changes while challenging patriarchal thought and their constructed scenarios/ideology. The short stories also contribute to the domain of literature and contemporary society by adding new methodological possibilities. The study also sheds light on the public and social education of women.

This chapter presents an overview of patriarchy and the feminist approach. In doing so, the study attempts to record the specific ideological stance, these women writers argue. Such women writers are Shashi Deshpande, Anitha Desai, Madavi Kutty, Kamala Das, Sarah Joseph, Vaidehi, Volga, Thriveni etc. Many of these writers have created a new place for women in modern Indian society and effectively break the traditional ideologies built around the woman to tame them as animals suited for men's lust.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Patriarchal System, Caste, Genderization and Women Writing

The dominant nature of the patriarchal system and its diverse significances within its and the obligations and other sections that it spread to is the starting point for multiple critiques and discontents surrounding patriarchy. However, the traditionalist critique of patriarchy in India does not merely emphasize the anguish of patriarchy. The significance of this imitative critique of patriarchy is that it imposes a false opposition between patriarchy and practice. This has also led us to conclude quickly that patriarchal domination over women is opposed to modernity. This thesis argues that recognizing the inequality of women should include its diverse values of differently placed people and groups in society, that is, it should be location-specific. It should also recognize the unequal values of women in the social, economic, political and cultural separations, that is, it should be division-specific.

This thesis makes a case for a differentiated approach to the evaluation of patriarchy in expatriate contexts like India, in the absence of which the critique of patriarchy will facilitate the imposition of a traditional alternative that consolidates the cultural influence of upper castes and masks their pioneering appropriation of patriarchal cultural, economic, and political power. In other words, native intellectuals in the expatriate period did not blindly submit the address of patriarchal tradition. They adjusted, interpreted and implemented a larger address of women's tradition to suit the local needs. This means that even though there was a formed and identical social and political consciousness and consequent cultural/literary articulations across expatriate native literature, they were very much determined by what was happening in the

immediate social and political atmosphere. This aspect compels us to understand the larger discourse of patriarchal tradition in relation to the changing social equations between various social groups within a region in the expatriate period.

To a large section of the Indian literary field, only men were the producers of texts and self-authorized to approve or disapprove of a text. In one of Sarah Joseph's stories, she documents that she was treated as an outsider when she tried to step into a literary circle (*Within Every Woman Writer*). Either woman was not allowed to participate as a rule, or men were concerned about women's safety wandering around literary circles. Vaidehi, too documents the similar stories of her being seen as an outsider. The challenge Akka Mahadevi faced in 12th Century was being a woman in men dominated Anubhava Mantapa of Vachana period (a cult of writers, social activists practicing a new religion of humanity, Sharana Samskruti in 12th Century) is continued till date. Women are seen as outsiders. They could be consumers of the text at most. However, technological changes and more significant economic transformations have made women step into the literary world more efficiently than ever. However, it is still countable, indicating the meagre number compared to established, prominent men writers of our time.

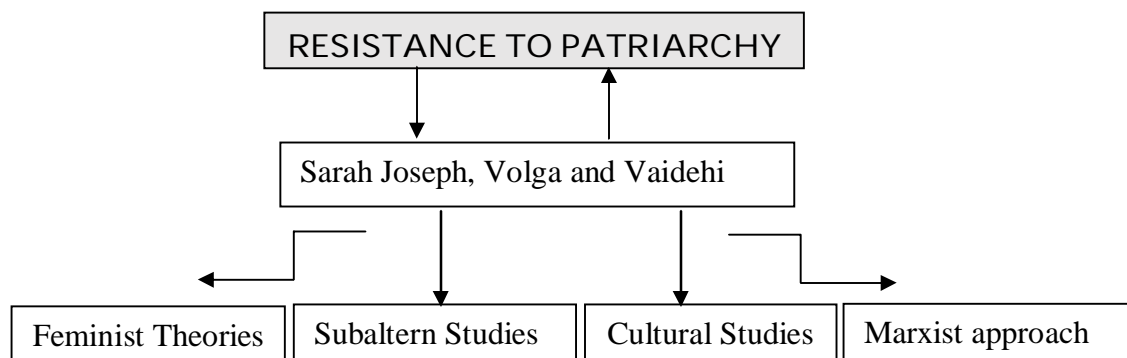
The Dialectic Approach

The dialectic approach to the interpretation of the chosen writings requires the recognition of the partial and routine character of cultural and literary productions. A dialectical approach identifies literature as reflecting conflicts and struggles in society along with the production of contents and parameters of new contradictions. Original modern literature in India can be interrogated on the basis of this dialectical approach.

The dialectical approach points to the possibility that the activist urges in these literary productions of the early 20th century in India are a simultaneous critique and protection of the prevalent logic of domination by reformulating tradition.

This thesis examines by discussing and analyzing the parallels and analogies, the differences and disagreements in the writings of Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi. The positions they take in tracing their characters and situations have been kept in mind that no critical position can be complete or permanent. The study was conducted with the idea that feminist theories must be redefined and re-conceptualized in the context of different cultures, even in India.

1.2. Research Methodology



Flow Chart Indicating the Broad Methodology

This study uses an interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation and critique of the literature. This approach uses available tools of feminist theories, subaltern studies, Marxism and cultural studies to assess and evaluate the writer's context and the formation of the literary text. Society and social processes contextualize the texts and provide new material and a framework for creative efforts. The study examines how the narrative plot and characters simultaneously reproduce and violate the social context, in particular the cultural frameworks of domination in society.

Texts Included

The texts chosen for study are,

- *The Masculine of Virgin*, a collection of short stories by Sarah Joseph in 2012,
- *The Women Unbound and Political Stories* the collection of short stories by Volga in 1997 and 2007 respectively, and
- *Gulabi Talkies and Other Stories* and *An Afternoon with Shakuntala and Other Stories* by Vaidehi in 2007 and 2016 respectively.

The study covers early modern texts in three Indian regional languages. 21st century is a significant phase in the evolution of modernity in India. It coincided with the last but politically and administratively the most intensive phase of colonial rule in India. It was also the period when profound changes occurred in India's social and economic landscape, and the politico-administrative idea of the Indian nation was conceived and established. Contextualizing the selected texts would enlighten us about how literary representations responded to the changes.

The study consists of texts from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, three separate regional contexts with different political-administrative arrangements, histories, social and economic conditions. Although most of these contexts are in the southern part of India, the political, economic and social variations in these regions represent the broader Indian context.

The study covers translated short stories and literary forms like the feminist approach, patriarchal, subaltern studies, and post-feminist concepts. The study points to important reflexes in the social context and provides a broad narrative framework for engaging in social and contextual analysis.

This thesis attempts to examine the correlation between three postcolonial women writers' approaches to resist the patriarchal domination of women in the centuries. The project to redesign women at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century by referring to three influential authors, literary texts belonging to three linguistic traditions.

1.3. Significance of the Study

In India, the late 19th century witnessed a series of changes and developments concerning gender. Debates over gender identities and women's status and women's writing in India have become a central point. Gender has become a very important site upon which colonial domination and the indigenous response to reform have emerged historically.

Although terrible by all accounts, the condition of women in India provided a moral justification for the Empire to strengthen its control over India. Christian missionaries have been helped and believed by saving indigenous women from patriarchal restrictions. Intellectual and epistemological colonial interventions triggered an active response in the form of reformation, which began in Bengal, the administrative capital of the British Empire and later found echoing across the country.

This thesis traces the influences of their contemporary history on the evolution of women writing literary genres and explicit the complex role of women in the modern patriarchal world and reforms in addressing the question of women. A closer examination of the reform process reveals that it was not in many respects liberating or fulfilling women's aspirations for equality, but the renewal of tradition, fashioned to the necessity of the age to recast women to the demands of regulated patriarchy.

Many writers have chosen the path of reinterpreting the mythologies because of their sheer relevance and potential to replace the very foundation of women's portrayal. Hence, the study comprises understanding the methods and themes of selected women writers. What they are arguing against established notions becomes an inevitable subject of study. While addressing the social issues, the selected writers have attempted to introduce a new thought. Be it a highly praised long braid or areas in which women are not entertained, the women writers have vehemently argued against the societal odds. Hence the current study intends to understand how these selected writers have used the literary tools in deconstructing or constructing the thought process elements.

Patriarchy

The word patriarchy is a form of society in which men's needs, preoccupations, and interests are at the centre. In these families, the children and the wife respectively bear the names of the father and the husband. Patriarchy means that men are perceived to own women and children. Men have physical control over the bodies and lives of women.

Patriarchy is a primitive term in the social organization in which a man exerts authority. The Head of the family, extending this authority even to distant relatives of the same lineage. Feminist theories have updated and expanded the comprehension of patriarchy in the second half of the twentieth century.

Patriarchy usually refers to the hierarchical power relation in which men dominate and women are subordinate. The subordination of women is explicit in many ways, in the private and public spheres, where women are denied rights and access to a lot of things that are easily accessible to men. Patriarchy as a concept/tool contributes to a critical understanding of women's status in any society. According to the eminent gender

historian Gerda Lerner, 'patriarchy manifests and institutionalizes the domination of men over women and children within the family, and extends its influence the public sphere in a society. While patriarchy has characteristics common to all societies, it acts differently in every society, combining with other dominant structures' (Lerner, 126).

Patriarchy and Caste System

In India, it was found that this link between patriarchy and the caste system was historically exploitative and mutually nourishing. The word patriarchy is a form of society in which men's needs, preoccupations, and interests are at the center. In these families, the children and the woman are named according to the father and husband, respectively.

In general, the traits of the patriarchal family is as follows

- Gender separation in the workplace.
- Men are controlling women's bodies and lives.
- Patriarchy emphasizes differences in body, mind and behavioural characteristics between men and women rather than similarities.
- Objectifying women as objects to be judged through trafficking in persons and property.
- Patriarchy refers to power over others.
- Body and mind of women not appreciated.
- In their attire, men and women distinguish themselves.
- Patriarchal is an example of autonomy and co-operation.

The framework of patriarchy as a political issue, rather than just as a domestic or personal issue, which injures men and women.

Patriarchy and Gender

From ancient times to contemporary times, women differentiate themselves from society. The lives of women and the writing of women's history have been outlined in the literature. Tales, fables, folk stories and ballads provided evidence for understanding women's lives in male-centered society. Society presented a lot of logical points of view about women and their lives. Illustrated the aspects of social injustice toward women, the structure of values, cultural practices were imposed.

Gender has to be defined in the dual sense on the one hand, it refers to representations of women, stereotyped feminine norms, and cultural forms. On the other hand, it is inseparable from the authors' mediations of such explanations so that the concept of women's writing attains a total experience in the feminine text.

To get an idea of its theoretical and political strength, we need to look at and understand the context in which it was used. One of the great sociologists, Max Weber, put it this way

‘A particular form of household organization in which father dominated other members of an extended kinship network and controlled the economical production of the household’ (Max Weber, 1)

Simone De Beauvoir's declaration in her book "The Second Sex", originally published in 1949, describes the essential characteristics of gender.

‘One is not born but rather becomes a woman’ (Beauvoir, 56).

Gender, the concept, is a social rather than a biologically constructed characteristic. Gender involves the sexuality of a person, which has a private and public aspect and must be understood within the social relationships between men and women.

Consciousness and self-awareness, identity, and experience are constructed to respond to the creation of male and female self-sufficiency. As far as men and women are concerned, it is important to take into account certain divisions of the labour force and biological aspects, such as division of domestic work, sex of children, playground exchanges, and sexual abuse at college, adult work experiences, and elsewhere. These are just a few examples of a problem that shaped gender identities and family life.

1.4. Women, Literature, Resistance – Feminism in Literature

Feminist movements in India have created challenges to establish patriarchal concepts, such as the family, mainstream social values and structures. Most importantly, in the field of violence against women, as a movement that defied the hegemonic notions of the Indian family, the critics brought together Indian feminism as a distinctly Western phenomenon.

History of Women writing documents that the very essence of their texts confronted hegemonic society. One read the celebrated authors like Emily Dickenson. It speaks about feminism, queer references, and the body's exploration beyond just womanhood or motherhood (see the context in the poem, Little Red Riding). The concept of feminism has been a source of controversy in India for many reasons. Traditionalists argue that it takes away women's culture, religion and family responsibilities, whereas, on the other hand, it is a misappropriation of the class struggle against Western cultural and economic imperialism.

Literature is confronted with a similar situation in connection with the sphere of separation of history until the end of the twentieth century. However, we all know today that history can be regarded as some sort of imaginative fiction or convincing stories ordered with already established records of complex relationships and ideologies.

It now concerns mentalities, social concepts and attitudes towards women. The literary construction of a given reality may provide richer information and data for its historical reconstruction. History and literature are equipped to explain life on the basis of the institutions created by males and females.

The literature offers deep perspectives and contributes to the history of gender by providing insight into the broader cultural and historical processes that define the position of women in a given society. Furthermore, a feminist perspective of the literature also points to the fact that a simple historical analysis also focuses on issues of representation of sexual difference and sexuality. Sexuality with class conflict and the struggles of groups of society will not be comprehensive without studying gender experiences and women's identities.

In the context of sexual relationships, Kate Millett stated that “literature does play an important role in female subordination” (Millett, 44). With reference to the lines mentioned above, literature can reconstruct preoccupied notions of women's status can be resolved by educational aspects and ideological thinking.

Another feminist writer, Cora Kaplan has warned that there is a danger that feminist's discussion of literature in identifying sexism and relations between the sexes as the critical issues in human affairs overlook other significant relationships and their social situation (Kaplan, 38).

The current study is not limited to gender and patriarchal hierarchies, in which women occupy subordinate positions, but also emphasizes women's survival and resistance to patriarchal and sexist oppression. Social history and understanding of cultural attitudes have only been provided through the 'literature'. It was consistently excluded from the official histories of an era. In general and individual historians, respectively, have begun more and more to understand the features of women in the short stories, which makes them useful in the reconstruction of traditionally marginalized groups in society, especially women. Reconstructing the idea of concern and ideological perspectives on women's lives is necessary.

The reconstruction of contemporary reality presented by the literary creations of women authors such as Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi is essential for the construction of discourse. The texts by selected authors have been traced through the family tradition. They are therefore not living in an isolated urban life and are therefore not cut off from reality. They are an integral part of social organization and so their vision has come from within, rather than looking at it as a public and cultural spectator.

There are two forms of arguments that prevent the genre of short stories. One is appreciating the genre and being critical about its limited canvas. Acknowledge that the short stories do not necessarily represent to express eternal truths but that they perform a sort of cultural work in a specific contemporary situation by documenting a single thought, an issue, or the concern. It may not provide a solution for the problems but surely compel the readers. By defining aspects of social reality shared by readers and they have resolved conflicts and comprehensive resolutions.

This thesis focuses on the importance of popular stories in the early 21st century, the short stories of women in expressing and transforming the social context of the time.

Therefore, the current study has used stories to be based on the belief that women's stories are an excellent source of social history, particularly the gender, patriarchal discrimination and history of women. The short stories cover subjects as diverse as the story of an individual in society, cultivated from the human race.

1.5. Indian Women Writers - Feminism

Women Writing in India: Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada

Literary writing is the mirror of mankind. To understand society, all living human beings are required to understand one another. Indian writing in English has played a crucial role in building value and understanding the contemporary social order. Indian feminism and feminist writer, academics and activists were forced to fight to mould a distinct for feminism in India. Indian women writing articulates survival through an understanding of the patriarchal structures of the oppressed family.

The current study reveals that India has faced many issues and challenges in attracting women to traditional, cultural and social India. Many activists and freedom fighters encouraged women's education, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Phule and Ranade have encouraged women to assert themselves and promoted women's education as the first step. They have endeavoured to eradicate and abolish the practice of sati, the custom of child marriage and to encourage the remarriage of widows and any other civil practice affecting women.

The early 20th century progressive Indian writers created a space for women, who marginally regarded the background and dragged them towards the mainstream. The contemporary Indian author has created a special public domain for understanding the status of women. Writing for women is strict and straightforward for women and is also a

major factor for male ideologies. While understanding and looking into modern society, the Hindu Code Bill (1955-56) was adopted and proposed equality of rights at all margins of society. As a result, many evil systems practiced in the name of tradition were dented and eventually abandoned, including Sati system, polygamy and many more.

One of the main trends in 20th century Indian literature is reinterpretation of old myths, history, and humanization in the current context. For instance, Ravindranath Tagor's *Nastanirh* (popularly known as *Charulatha*, 1901), Kuvempu's *Sri Ramayana Darshanam* (1949), Sri Aurobindo's 'Savithri' (1954) and many other such literary experiments have created a cult following. They attempted to reinvent women's position contrary to popular myths and historically constructed images. The character of Savithri is steeped in a new meaning and a new life.

However, the daunting questions were raised when women themselves started representing their stance. Malati Badekar, Ismat Chughtai, M.K Indira, Amrita Pritam, M.K. Binodini Devi, Kamala Markandaya, Mahasweta Devi, Raghavan Chudamani, Kamala Das, Indira Goswami are a few to name who have broken the yardstick set by another gender on women (Melanie P. Kumar, 2018).

The Activist within Sarah Joseph and Volga

One of the most prominent literary figures in modern Malayalam literature is Sarah Joseph. Her involvement in feministic activism has evolved over time. Sarah Joseph is just a novelist; she is an activist who is self-driven as she was married off a child at the age of 15. Joseph took a critical look at the perspective on the condition of women and their circumstances. Joseph was investigating the situation of women and the structure of our patriarchal society. For instance, her stories, 'The Moonlight Knows',

'The Masc. of Virgin', 'Conjugality', give a different perspective on women. Her writing has developed completely by force and force, by grace and grace.

Her feminine characters resist the men of the patriarchal society, such as Thankamani, the girl in the story 'The Masc. of Virgin' (unnamed), and Sita, etc. Malayalam literary sphere has always marked Sarah Joseph's writings as centric women. Most of her works portray the more just gender struggle against the diverse institution that binds them in our patriarchal society. Activist Joseph says her works reflect her confusion and anxiety about the state of women who are caught between the moral code that binds them at home and the overt sexual depiction of the gender in the media.

Volga is a prominent Telugu writer whose actual name Popuri Lalitha Kumari and her stories, novels and poems reflect well-articulated feminist positions without compromising neither the quality of the literary form nor representing the reality of the characters. Volga is a writing woman who highlights the exploitation of women in the hands of men making them inanimate. She has written on women from various age groups and states. Her concern is not only for the suffering of upper-class women, but for middle-class and lower-caste women.

Her female characters always talk about their social position and its implications. In her stories, such as 'Sita's Braid', 'Eyes', 'Nose Stud', 'Shut Up', 'Stony Breasts', she reflects the status of women and the circumstances surrounding women in our patriarchy. Volga's literary works incite the readings to contemplate deeper. According to the author's declaration, for centuries, women's bodies had been suppressed. It had lost its strength and had become an outsider to the women themselves. The women became disrespected and began to look down on them. If you think about the degradation, it's heart breaking.

If we look critically at our fellow human beings and analyse them, we can understand how our society has built a deceptive culture around women's bodies. We will eventually understand how gender roles have been institutionalized to create “women”.

Men-dominated cultural customs rigorously oppress women. With its web of stories of myths are woven around the women's body and women's relations with other women, men and society in general. Volga follows the development of female characters and retraces how they become more self-reflecting as well as critical of societal injustices and inequalities around them. Her stories are fraught with uncertainty and many end up on an ambiguous note. If we look at recent times, a number of concerns have emerged as women's issues like of child marriage, human trafficking, lack of education, sexual harassment, rape, financial dependence and many others. It now indicates one day that women want to change their thinking about their lifestyle. Volga's stories touch upon such sensitive issues at multiple layers.

Volga's stories and women's real situations mainly represent our patriarchal system that repressed women. In the patriarchal system, women have no rights to participate in public life. Volga's works investigate such differentiation between what's public and what's not in a way or what ought to be the public.

The Writer Mirroring Inner and Outer Space: Vaidehi

Since it is impossible to include all the prominent women writers, only three writers from three different languages are included in the study. When it comes to Kannada women literary figures M.K Indira, Triveni, Anupama Niranjana, Kamala Hampana, Vijaya Dabbe, Vaidehi, Sarah Abubakar, Geeta Nagabhushan, Pratibha Nandakumar, H.S Anupama are a few to name who voiced out feministic approaches in their writings. For example, Vaidehi describes the social injustices suffered by women in

their personal lives. She appears to be written as if she were aware of a witness. Vaidehi understands from within the life, environment and characteristics of women rather than comprehending their experience through ideologies or theories. Vaidehi's tales still revolve around the house, yet questioning them in the simplest forms. Vaidehi is known to have announced on public platforms that 'the kitchen is my guru; that's where I learned many lessons' (Vaidehi, 4). The naturalness is the very life of Vaidehi's most successful stories.

Vaidehi as a natural writer tends to overlook the sophistication with which the effort of spontaneity and naturalness is produced in the stories and we would argue short circuits the analysis of her structures of representation. *Mara Gida Balli (1979)*, *Anatarangada Putagalu (1984)*, *Krouncha Pakshigalu (2016)* are Vaidehi's popular short stories, apart from noted poetry collections and a novel.

Many instances prove the narrative structure Vaidehi uses in her writing. Her frequent use of the first-person narrative is evident in most of her stories. Vaidehi distinguishes between the public and the private, particularly when the stories themselves attempt to recount their dissolution. When we pay attention to how the monologue is structured, we begin to see how the private is presented here as the space within which large social and historical questions about women and patriarchy are addressed.

As far as Vaidehi's stories are concerned, his women's character stories show frankness against patriarchal obligations. The narrative genre of Vaidehi primarily touches the modernist literary canon. This phenomenon of a very self-centered tradition puts the accent on personal experience. Vaidehi's stories represented a different ideology that also challenges the marginalized segment of women. The Indian woman writer has a unique social and political dimension of society.

Vaidehi didn't take any ideas from anybody. She came up with her own idea because her ideas come from a rural background. Vaidehi's stories tell the tragic and depressing situation and bring together ideas for women beyond the acceptable condition. As the story, Akku presents more than an existing struggle within his home. Vaidehi belonged to Dakshina Kannada District; she has her own ideas and thoughts, which critically examine the problems that existed in the family.

1.6. Convergence of Women's Experience and Identity

The origin of the Indian women writing can be traced back to the twentieth century, but before that, there are stories in fables and tales. There are numerous devotional writers who had contributed through the forms of verses and poems. However, the study is interested in knowing the forms of modern women writing. Hence, it is essential to look for more recent writers if not current.

Cornelia Sorabji, S.M. Natesha Sastri, Dwijendra Nath Neogi and Swarna Kumari Ghosal are a few to name who shaped 20th century literature through women's eyes. Indian writer depicts these women who were traditionally in perspectives and resigned themselves to life. The writers introduce the transition into Indian society.

The stories of Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi represent custody obligations and provide a voice for the unknown section of post-independence Indian society. Their stories speak of the injustice committed to women in marriage, the position of women themselves in socio-economic deprived status. The collection of stories by Sarah Joseph's *The Masculine of Virgin*, Volga's entitled *Political Stories* and *The Women Unbound* and Vaidehi's *Gulabi Talkies and Other Stories* and *An Afternoon with Shakuntala and Other*

Stories, portrays women who battle in their relationship with men and society. Their feminine character deals with the middle class, married, single and divorced and men have left the female identity crisis in Indian dominated contemporary male society.

The confluence of gender identity in their writings is based on preliminary concepts of women in the patriarchal system. Women revolted and played an essential and sensitive role in the uncertainty of women's ideology. The authors and critics argued that women were always considered to be responsible for the well-being of the family. Considered the interaction with the structures of society traditionally considered masculine and the interconnectedness between the so-called public and private sphere. The work of women authors constitutes an important part of Indian literature.

All forms of written responses to address the cultural, professional and political demands of society. Women's voices have challenged hierarchies and made suggestions for oppressing women's past obligations with a man-centered attitude. Various ideological sites, the trajectories of women are constant contradictory knowledge has been removed forcefully. Moreover, we would understand that women's representation consists of drawing attention to the complicity between the institution of writing and gesture writing in the public domain.

The confluence of women writing has its own origins in difficulty to situate the political and cultural questions raised by women within the traditional literary spectrum, and it was closely identified as they are with the axis of male politics and culture paradigm. This paradigm attempt to locate writing by women outside the conventional literary attribute being a woman writer is also not feasible in male-cantered society.

1.7. Chapterisation

This thesis comprises 6 chapters; **First Chapter (Introduction)**: This chapter sets out the comprehensive introduction to the present research work, objectives, research questions, methodology, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapter-II (The Writers and Their Contexts): This chapter focuses on the rationale for choosing these writers and offers a comprehensive look at their writing in Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. In this chapter, the researcher has attempted to address several discussions, discourses, forms of resistance and expressions towards patriarchal oppression by women writers. A brief chronology of major women writers and Indian writers is essential. The representation of sexual differences, sexuality, and subjectivity is a critical issue for the selected writers' text, briefly discussed.

Chapter-III (The Activist Writer-Sarah Joseph): The third chapter attempts to understand and construct the threads of resistance both overtly evident on the surface and sometimes subtly expressed in the selected stories of Sarah Joseph. Gender, caste and religion are recurring themes in Sarah Joseph's stories. The availability of limited English-translated stories might be the most significant limitation of the current study. Nevertheless, the meanings constructed in the translation are studied from different perspectives, including close reading, discourse analysis, and feminism, and post-feminist approaches.

Chapter-IV (The Protest of the Suppressed-Volga): This chapter focuses on suppressing women in the patriarchal society. Volga is a most rebel and political writer about gender inequality. This chapter points out the gaps that existed in creating history and conditioning women by a close reading of Volga.

Chapter-V (Feminism in the Domestic Space-Vaidehi): This chapter deals with Vaidehi's narrative techniques, tools to curb the patriarchal domination, speaks about many things from equality to anti-patriarchal models. Women are part of an oppressive patriarchy in punishing the younger women, and other is branding women as prostitutes if they attempt to break the rules set by men. The following sections attempt to offer such distinctions by closely reading Vaidehi's stories.

Chapter VI (Conclusion): This chapter concludes all the above-discussed findings with essential arguments of the research work, summarizes the results which could lead to another research beyond the limitations of the current study.

1.8. Conclusion

Gender and literature are intertwined throughout the history of humanity. Gender and literature are considered separate domains and analyses, considered separately from one another. This study is based on interrelated fields because they constitute the study of human society and social relations. In current study concentrated the self-employed women of contemporary India on the reality of their lives.

In the literature, gender cannot be treated in isolation as well. The gender relationship changes socio-economic conditions and demonstrates the complex interplay between male and female power relationships.

Modern Indian criticism has exposed women as the nature of cultural expression. Literature cannot be understood unless it is linked to the social structure. Literature and literary genre, genre are both the product and intervention of special historical moments.

Patriarchy functions through 'overt and covert propaganda. The fairness and intensity with which patriarchal propaganda operates can be seen in the fact that most

patriarchal ideologies are not forced upon women. These ideologies have structured and perfected androcentric society to the point where the subjectivity and ego of women are forged according to patriarchal ideology. Woman finds herself subtly in contradictory social relations, building her both as a subject and as an object. So that she voluntarily conforms to her own victimization and willingly partners with patriarchy to victimize her own gender. At one level, patriarchy conveniently blames women for women's oppression, turning women into women's enemies. But here, these women writing are ultimately against patriarchal domination, which controls women to act individually and freely.

The form of women writing responds to certain cultural, professional, political requirements of the period in which they are executed women-centered themes is traced to the development of 'women's space' through the presentation of selected moments. The women's writing projected them as a counter public against the prevailing public sphere in Kerala. The stories of Sarah Joseph mirror the evolution of space for women at different times. Her stories are dominant in the public sphere have attempted to eclipse it in different ways and how it articulates the space of women.

In conclusion, the current study focuses on how women deal with issues in various situations of the patriarchal system. The above arguments and statements indicate that women have suffered from various societal imbalances. The text's content enables us to understand the perceptive thought generally meant one or the other or the two things. One, re-consideration through literature on the role and status of women in society and a new way of portraying women in literature which does justice to her identity as an individual.

Chapter-11

The Writers and Their Contexts

Chapter-II

THE WRITERS AND THEIR CONTEXTS

2.0. Introduction

Karyeshu Dasi, Karaneshu Manthri;

Bhojeshu Mata, Shayaneshu Rambha;

Kshamayeshu Dharithri, Roopeshu Lakshmi;

Satkarma Yukta, Kuladharm Pathni.

The above expected virtue of good women is drawn from the perspective and the necessity of a man. They could be translated from Sanskrit to English as follows :

Karyeshu Dasi: A woman who works like a servant

Karaneshu Mantri: A woman who administers like a minister

Bhojeshu Mata: Feed the husband like a mother does

Shayaneshu Ramba: Gives pleasure like Rambha who happened to be in Heaven

Roopeshu Lakshmi: As beautiful as Lakshmi, a goddess of wealth

Kshmayeshu Dharitri: Highly patient like mother earth who forgives everything

Shat dharmayuktah: A woman having all the above six virtues

Kula dharm Patni: A good homemaker who doesn't work outside the premises of house

These virtues are mentioned in Sanskrit Sloka and many popular mythologies from Krishna's preaching to Subhadra to Kalidasa's Abhignyana Shakunthalam to numerous modern popular art forms, including theatre, cinema and music recordings.

Mostly the first six are considered as virtues and the last two as dogmas reinforced the former virtues. These virtues surround the body and expected-socially approved behaviour of a woman mostly serving the man. If she does not follow these virtues, she may not be promoted as a 'good-to-fit' role of a woman in society. She has to serve a man from cooking to sex. Such age-old assertions are no more than a prejudiced, selfish, patriarchal construction around a woman. It might even sound like religiously fanatic observations forced on the woman.

A stark contrary in the virtues could be seen within these six virtues as she should be like a wise minister (virtue 2) and at the same time, she should be restrained to the walls of the house. Most importantly, she should satisfy a man like an angel Rambha. Rambha, a dancer in the god's courtyard, is often hailed as a beautiful woman. So, a woman has to be beautiful, which may not be applicable for the man. It does not account for the woman's sexuality or her expectations of her husband. These virtues are regressive and the most unequal, unsocial position a woman can be placed in. The current chapter problematizes the above beliefs and practices with the help of existed theories of feminism and Marxism by taking up selected works of three prominent Indian woman writers, Sarah Joseph, Volga, and Vaidehi.

The first chapter is a brief introduction to the research topic and its design. However, there is very little written about the rationale behind choosing the three mentioned writers and hence it is essential to defend the context of doing so in the current study. This chapter focuses on the rationale for choosing these writers and offers a comprehensive look at their writing in Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. In this chapter, the researcher has attempted to address several discussions, discourses, forms of resistance and expressions towards patriarchal oppression by women writers. A brief

chronology of major women writers and Indian writers is essential in doing so. The representation of sexual differences, sexuality, and subjectivity is an essential issue in the selected writers' text, and those will be discussed in brief.

2.1. The Beginning

Probably, feminism is the most crucial development in the 21st century, which influenced women across the globe as quickly as possible with each of its theoretical advancements. Its influence not only restricted to women being more conscious about their writing; it has even revolutionized the very fundamental ways we perceive the man-woman's binaries. Especially 20th century feministic theories have challenged the existing notions of woman. Any theory needs a fundamental philosophical framework that is strongly evident in feminism and feministic writers. It, in fact, challenges the word 'woman writers' (Madhavikutty sees this usage as a politics by men to differentiate the women even in the literary world). At the same time, authors like Sarah Joseph embrace the word, 'woman writers'. As an activist, she believes that it includes more women naturally by saying so and pitches the very essence of a woman writing out something.

Women writers and feminist critics have focussed around gender issues, the current relationship between gender and society, the system that encourages superiority-inferiority based on sex, and an attempt to awaken the consciousness among women. With all these efforts, feministic writing is a genuine effort to change the fundamental functions of society. However, feministic writing could vary depending on the geography, culture, race, caste, religion, class, and more extensive political setup we live with.

There is a mutual exchange between Indian writers and writers from other countries, predominantly English and French writers. If western history documented the

feminist movements parallel to women writing, Indian historiography might not have been documented chronologically. The social conditions of the Indian society hardly allowed women to come out expressing what they are both in feelings and social status. Thus, there is discrete documentation of Indian women writers. If documented chronologically, probably, Indian women writers would have been regarded as the pioneers of feministic ideas. One has to refer to the writers from the 12th century.

Despite the lack of authentic documentation, the current study relies on the post-Indian independence writers and prominent contemporary writers. Hence, the present chapter attempts to re-read certain Western influences from the west, dominant theories raised in such discourses and then document Indian writers.

2.2. Writers without Borders

The current section lists critical writers who strongly asserted feministic arguments and those who have left a strong impression across the globe. It is intentional to call this section writer without borders as these writers belong to different countries and timelines. These writers have shaped the researcher's understanding of feminism, and hence it serves as a valid rationale to discuss them in brief. While presenting the major arguments these writers are known for, the researcher attempts to give a framework for analyzing selected three Indian authors. There are instances where some theories or theoreticians resemble the core expression of selected writings of the study (Sarah Joseph and Betty Friedan). Some directly influence Indianising the larger global feministic approaches (the Volga and Mary Wollstonecraft). As presented by Betty Friedan, the idea of home as the confined box is subtler in Vaidehi's stories. Maybe it is necessary literary politics in the men-dominated Indian literary world.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797): Man and the Society

Wollstonecraft is probably the most potent voice that joined Europe's women's voice in the mid-18th century. Often Wollstonecraft is accounted as one of the earlier English writers who raised severe questions on feminist identity. 'The Vindication of the Rights and Wrongs of Woman' presents the rights alongside a critical review of social conditions. Intellectual progress, individual freedom, and its open expression were the demands of the French revolution. The same assertion could be seen in Wollstonecraft's writings as well, where she demands the right and needs of women. She analyses the disparities based on gender and traditionally denied rights of women.

She raises a critical question on the existence of disparity despite the prevalent belief that every human is equal. If every person is equal, how come there is a difference in the political freedom, legal rights, and opportunities of education. Wollstonecraft's widespread influence is her basic questions on the procession of private property. By assuming ownership of the property, the man makes the woman vulnerable at every instance of society. According to her, the private property concept has given a space for men to treat women as servants.

In her argument in Vindication of the Rights and Wrongs, she clearly distinguishes what prompts a man to a different societal position. If a man's problems are seen as a societal problem, a woman's problems are seen more as a personal one. At the same, she hypothesizes how women's problems are also political, not just a woman's problem. She asks a basic question like why a man decides what is good for the world or bad for society? How come a man got a say in deciding what is right for a woman? When

did a woman's decision-making is seen as inferior to a man's mind? According to Wollstonecraft, intelligence is more complex and a set of misconceived subjects as it is defined again by the man on intelligence.

Wollstonecraft brings in a new idea of education for women other than what man envisages as education. In her 5th chapter, she brings in the reference of Russo on women's education. Why should they decide on the kind of education? A man educates a woman as he wishes to see her. He ensures that the woman learns such skills if he thinks she ought to speak a particular language or know sword fight. The education of a woman is the extension of a man's ego to see her specific form. Wollstonecraft insists on the type of education which lets a woman decide what she wants to be and the kind of education which embraces individual freedom. Wollstonecraft lists the forms of oppression through men, and she utters that women need not fight with men to gain their rights. They should find themselves what they are instead of fighting with another gender. In its constructive approach Wollstonecraft proposes.

Virginia Wolf (1882-1941): Gender and Culture

Starting with *The Voyage Out* (1915) or in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Wolf clearly brings in political demands through a feministic perspective. One of her foremost contributions to modern feminism is her assertion that gender roles are defined by culture and can be changed or questioned. In a patriarchal family, gender bias is inevitable and obviously constructs a stronger cultural influence on the members of a family.

In her *Three Guineas*, Virginia points out that the Military, Fascism, and Injustice through law is the manifestations of the patriarchal system. Salary for mothers, reforms in

divorce laws, education, right to any occupation are a few demands Virginia proposed. Most of the woman-friendly workplace concepts which we are still trying to implement are what Virginia Wolf prosed at least a century back. Her work on documenting the tradition of woman writers is commendable, and it has served as a crucial work for numerous studies.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986): The Body and Politics

If there is an evident leap in the 20th century feminist movement, Simone de Beauvoir and her literary work, *The Second Sex*, contribute significantly. Probably no one had written about the body as transparently as de Beauvoir. She relies on materialism, psychoanalysis and existentialism to construct her argument on the oppression of women.

For her, the woman's body is both a biological unit as well as a historical journey. At every step, a man has attempted to restrict her body. The feel of womanhood is within a woman's body, and everything else is an extension and manifestation of this inner feeling. However, de Beauvoir does not jump to the simplistic conclusion that the only body defines a woman's identity. She attempts to test the woman's identity through the lens of economic, sociological, and psychological aspects. All these factors define a woman's existence and her identity.

As against the popular notion that a woman equates a man's achievement through science or innovation by giving birth to a child, de Beauvoir denies it to point out that reproduction is part of nature and having kids or becoming a mother does not elevate her socially.

As Angles argued, de Beauvoir points out that the woman's denial in social interactions has led to private property enjoyed by men. As private property increased in number, it impacted the woman's identity to a large extent. She was denied every social space and the ability to make her decisions.

There seems to be a slight contractor in what de Beauvoir argues. She concludes that every oppression a man does is ingrained deeply within a person. If such is the case, she is not taking the role of socialization in making a person act in a specific role. She also overtly argues that the economic progress of a woman is crucial for the independent woman. In 2021, where a section of women has seen economic progress, it is hard to accept what de Beauvoir provides as a solution. The essential role of women is still a highly prejudiced mold, especially in a country like India.

Betty Friedan: Home as a Concentration Camp

Being a feminist activist, Betty Friedan has identified as a significant contributor to America's second wave of Feminism. Her work, *The Feminine Mystique*, offers a philosophical grounding for the feministic movement. Betty's work influenced many middle-class American women. She writes primarily on educated, middle-class, non-working women who are primarily unsatisfied and not enjoying the rights as equal to men, and the plight of such women is what Betty focuses on in his writing. Though Betty, in a way, reiterated what Simone has argued, she strongly condemned stereotyping women in the post-second world war. Betty opposed the psychologists' generalization of women's crisis idea.

Betty identifies the root cause of stereotyping women. Right from childhood, a girl is raised inside a fort of a family where marriage and children are seen as the most

fulfilling part of life. In the process, a woman is made to believe that it is her fundamental responsibility to take care of the family, and she is conditioned to accept that her life is within the four walls of the house. Betty brings the metaphor of concentration camps and houses in arguing that.

Mary Ellman: Politics of Sexuality

Mary Ellman's *Thinking about Woman* (1968) came much before the *Sexual Politics* of Kate Millett. Ellman writes extensively on the politics of sexuality and how it has played a crucial role in gendering women, especially women writers. The very nature of men critiquing women writers is based on equating their writing with women themselves. Someone may not be reflecting what they are on what they write. However, a set of men critics tend to equate so, and they fail to understand the fundamental difference between the writer and writing. In the whole process, Ellman attempts to identify the problem of patriarchal values manifesting in various spaces a woman represents.

Shulamith Firestone: The Dialectics of Sex

The Canadian-American writer Shulamith is one of the key influencers in the second wave of Feminism and the founding member of early radical feminism groups in the USA. The *Dialectics of Sex* is a major work of Shulamith. According to her, the fundamental problem of women is the very system she lives in. The bourgeoisie system, which has bonded a woman from all possible oppressive ways, is what Shulamith points out.

According to Shulamith, the biological perspective of a woman itself is a prominent drawback of a woman's expression.

The biology of a woman's body gives space for patriarchies as she is not aware of seeing her from a different perspective. Unless a woman is seen beyond her body, it can never change the existing problems around the woman. The radical feminists conclude that all men are oppressive, and the bodily difference between men and women leads to various forms of inequality. Such inequality is proposed by our religions and is strongly rooted in our society and culture.

According to Radical Feminism

- Men and women are born with different bodies. However, they are not equal privileges.
- Due to the reproduction cycle, women-specific diseases, periods, caring for and raising children, a woman is made to depend on men.
- Since a child takes a more extended period than an animal in the developmental stage, a woman is assigned a prolonged period of caring work.
- The mutual dependence between the mother and child decides the psychology of both.
- The reproductive competency of women has led to the division of work and division of economic and social structure, mostly favouring men.

Shulamith proposes two radical yet efficient solutions for change in the role of woman and man. The woman should never be treated as a child-producing machine, and raising children shall be shared equally by men as well. Unfortunately, we live in a society where fertility treatments literary considers a woman as a children-producing machine. What Shulamith identifies as the center of the problem is what modern medical

science has challenged as the viral importance of bearing children. The idea of womanhood is defined and surrounded by the reproductive capacity of women. Her existence without bearing children is unacceptable in our societal setup.

The above writers have shaped their argument from various perspectives, including Marxism to Psychoanalysis to Lesbian Feminism. It is essential to define a few dominant ideologies which also served as sects for many writers in the last century. Modern Feminism has not moved very far from these basic theories, including Marxist Feminism, Radical Feminism, and French Feminism. The other sects or branches that developed on Feminism are not discussed due to the study's limited scope.

Radical Feminism

A few groups of women organizations identified themselves as radical feminists in the late 1960s and 1970s with a specific purpose. There was initial negligence expressed after 1968's innerwear burning in public. The radical feminists raised due to subtle, less explosive methods of then-existing women organizations. The moderate feminists attempted to see the alternatives within the existing system. However, radical feminists approached a new system other than the existing one.

As Shulamith Firestone identified, radical feminism could be summarised as a holistic approach on how a woman has been pushed down due to her biological basis. This sexual oppression has always existed ever since civilization was formed and in all societies. The only way to escape from this patriarchal oppression is to get away from the system that created others for her. The family system denies the right of a woman and forces her to be a sexual slave and a forcible mother. Unless the family structure change holistically, there is no way a woman can be free from oppression. The woman should

own her body, and she shall make every decision in contrast to how others decide for her. *The Dialectic of Sex* (1972) is a classic reading to understand what a new world of woman could be and possibly the better one than anything created for her to date.

As a continuity of Shulamith, Mary Daly widens the discourse on the manifestation of patriarchal oppression in her book *Gyn/Ecology*. Killing women as witches, cuffing legs of a woman in China, genital mutilation practice in African countries, and burning wife along with husband's pyre, Sati are a few examples Mary Daly cites. It is a woman's body a man violates in various forms, both in person and in public. The world, including economic or industrial setup, is created by men. Even if some women are given space to be there, they are mostly there as fillers rather than in dictating positions. Capitalism has made it more categorical. Unless a woman creates her world without any dependence on men, she can't be expressing herself. If done so, her language will see a sea change, and her approach to the real world is more pragmatic than nominal, as in patriarchal decided roles.

Marxist Feminism

While Firestone, Brown Miller, Farah Griffin were constructing the oppression on women from a historical perspective, Marxist feminists started offering a newer perspective from the class perspective. Carl Marx and Engels revolutionized the idea of feminism as it critiques the foundations of society. The class assertion of feminism focuses on woman's economic and physical aspects, and its relation to society.

Though Marx's work on a woman is less, he was never against the idea of women's liberation. In the book, *The Holy Family*, he makes an important observation. For him, the liberation of women is just the question of humanization. It is a scale to

measure the success of humanity against the animal within us. According to Engels, the root cause of woman oppression is because she was separated from social production. If she is part of the production process, bearing a child and caring for household work would be more of a communion and public responsibility. However, the private property concept has denied her participation in the production process. If the state acts as bourgeoisie in the society, the man is a bourgeoisie within the family structure dominating the woman. Frederic Engels presents such ideas in his thesis, *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*.

According to Engels, the fundamental reason for a woman to be seen as a second citizen is her inability to work outside the house. Hence, if she works more outside the house in the social industry, her burden within the house decreases, and it is possible to assert her decision.

There are two approaches to Marxist feminism. If one believes in the social mobilization of women towards movement, the other section believes that Marxism is incomplete to address the women issues. One of the three writers studied in the later chapters, Sarah Joseph, is one such writer who firmly believes in Marxist ideas of women's liberation. Hence, her participation in social movements and activism is rooted firmly in the socialistic ideology. At the same time, another writer under study, Vaidehi, seems to have internalized the problems identified by Marxists on a woman being restricted to the house. If Vaidehi looks inwards, Sarah Joseph socialized the woman within. Probably both of them are aware of the status women gained in post-October Soviet Russia, where women had become an active part of politics.

Though there is a severe problem of universalizing men and women in Marxist ideas, one can't negate the identity it prompted women. Marxist ideologues planted the

ideas of equal rights, equal payroll, and equal social participation. It does speak about liberation from the responsibility of reproductive labour, domestic slavery. However, the idea refers to class differences raised out of a capitalistic society. It fundamentally speaks about the inequalities due to misappropriate resources and wealth. However, it is still debatable on the equalities it argues between the sexes.

Probably it took at least a century to accept and conceive Marxist analysis of women. In the 1970s, while the feminist movements were more substantial, the Marxist theorists reinterpreted the meaning of class struggle in the context of woman liberation. It was mostly theoreticians in Britain who theorized Marxist feminists in more meaningful ways. Juliet Michelle (*Woman-the Longest Revolution*, 1966), Sheila Rowbotham (*Woman's consciousness: Man's World*, 1973), Michelle Barrett (*Woman's Oppression Today*, 1980), are a few names who deserved to be mentioned in this context. Most of their writings have attempted to analyse women's current situation and attempt to revisit the history to understand the cultural politics of women's oppression. In this context, the current study attempts to analyse the Indian women author's selected literary works.

2.3. Review of Literature

The researcher has made an in-depth study of the works done on the selected writers. It varies from research articles to book chapters. There has been a lot of work on the three writers chosen for the study. The following are some of the essential works that are primarily indicative.

Devika. J. *Women writing = man reading?* Zubaan and Penguin Books, 2013

This book aspires to reflect on the possibilities of renewing feminist literary criticism in the Malayalam literary public. It seeks to unset entrenched notions and

debates in mainstream and feminist literary criticism, indicating possibilities of alternate readings of women writers and pointing towards new ways of critical history-writing. This work consists of four significant women writers of Malayalam fiction Lalithambika, K. Saraswati Amma, Madhavikutty, and Sarah Joseph. Author Devika. J., a critic and a writer, argues that their writings reworked and explored the possibilities of gender in the current context, often challenging the specific sorts of masculine power that is authorized. Devika's reading gives a glimpse of the right way of reading Sarah Joseph's stories as it simplifies the mystical and surreal elements of Sarah Joseph more comprehensible.

Vijayan, Shanthi. *Post-feminist Mythopoeia: Oppositional Consciousness at Work in Sarah Joseph's Oorukaval*. 2016

The article analyses Sarah Joseph's *Oorukaval* (translated as *The Vigil* by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan) as a writer's discourse to construct the voice of protest in the post feminist context of increased ecological and human rights consciousness. This work focuses on non-hegemonic feminist consciousness in the works of Sarah Joseph that seeks to achieve a new paradigm of a renaissance. The article argues that her novel *Oorukaval* is a theoretical narrative that uses oppositional consciousness to anchor Sarah Joseph's feminist politics in the post feminist phase.

Samuel, Lucy Mariam and Prathibha Sabastian Vellanikaran. *The Womb of Creativity: Tracking the Metaphors in 'Inside Every Women Writer' and 'The Vein of Memory'*. 2017

This research paper focuses on the two short stories, 'Inside Every Woman Writer' and 'The Vein of Memory', written by two women writers, Sarah Joseph and K.R. Meera, respectively. Both the stories depict the psychological commotion of female

characters, who desire to become creative individuals through writing. However, their wings of objectives are clipped by patriarchal norms and morals. This study stems from an interest in understanding the unrecognized connections between women writers across history, cultures, and languages and attempts to identify the underlying parallels in both the selected texts. Both the stories present the domestic circumstances where multifarious repressions suppressing women's creativity are brilliantly unfolded.

Francis, Dr. Deepa Mary. *Subjugation and Emancipation: A Comparative Reading of Kamala Das's "Flight" and Sarah Joseph's "Inside Every Woman Writer"* 2016

This paper highlights how the feminist writers from Kerala, namely Kamala Das and Sarah Joseph, portray the essence of feminism in their writings. It has expressed their progressive thoughts by making the subjugated protagonists in the works selected by these writers. The paper finds emancipation by freeing women from the shackles of marital bondage when their suffocation exceeds the bearable limits. This paper analyses how the protagonists of these two works, who remain silent because of their restrictions, challenge all power structures through speechless narratives. The writers in question become the voice of the voiceless, thus bringing the issues to a wider spectrum of interaction. This paper raises a voice for gender equality and ends gender discrimination, subjugation and exploitation. Domestic violence is widespread- be it verbal, physical, and economic and manifested at every step of a woman. The study attempts to elicit such elements from the works of both Sarah Joseph and Kamala Das.

Raveendran. P.P. *Myth, Truth and History in Contemporary Malayalam Novel*, 2003

The paper articulates myth and history have long been used in asymmetric contexts, which are opposed to each other in terms of their correspondence to truth and

reality. This paper examines a few fictional texts from Malayalam to see how the myth and history formulation become meaningful in concrete situations. The novels chosen for analysis are M Mukundan's *Kesavante Vilapangal* (The Lamentations of Kesavan, 1999), Sarah Joseph's *Alahayude Penmakkal* (Alahas' Daughters, 1999), and N Prabhakaran's *Thiyoor Rekhakal* (The Thiyoor Documents, 1999). All three texts represent the relation between myth and history. They are interrogating the fundamental obligation of women and their rights. These texts are a reference to the resistance of the people against social oppression.

Moolechalil, Shalini. *The Conflation of Public and Private Spheres into "Womanspace" in Sarah Joseph's Writings: Through Histories of Women-Writing. 2009*

The present study is undertaken in the context of identity politics, and it is challenging to sideline the importance of identity politics while problematizing the dichotomous nature of public/private spheres. The study examines mainly writings of women from middle-class backgrounds. This thesis argues that the conceptual framework of the woman space would be reviewed in Sarah Joseph's works. The work attempts to contextualize women's space within the history of Malayalam women writing at different junctures.

This work looks at the short stories of Sarah Joseph, the trajectory of her writings from those confined to the private sphere to those which take personal matters to the public space of discussion, or the private scrutiny of the public sphere itself. Meanwhile, the study deals with the blurring of the dividing lines between the public and the private

spheres in Sarah Joseph's works. This work traces the stories and a novel written by Sarah Joseph based on the Ramayana, in her attempt to read the text as a tool of political domination.

The study deals with women's engagement with public spaces like region, religion and community, while also focusing on private spheres like domestic space, women cramped in the kitchen, sexuality, etc. The study argues that while mainstream feminism tends to draw more upon established female identities, narratives from non-privileged or non-middle-class women deconstruct the established notions of femininity and free women from the constraints of pre-existing definitions.

Nanjappa, K. Yeshoda. *Re-visioning Relationships: A Feminist Critique of the Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Volga*, 2006

The main thrust of this work is to bring to the fore and discuss the various periods/phases, events, movements, and the fundamental/patriarchal forces in the Indian context, which impinged on women's lives and formulated the women's question at different periods in India. The work also traces briefly the history of women's writing in India and the socio-political, economic and cultural strictures operative in the society in which early women's writings were produced. It discusses Western Feminism and Indian Feminism at length on the premise that Indian Feminism cannot be dealt with in isolation and is independent of Western Feminism.

This work discusses briefly the vastly different strategies Shashi Deshpande and the Volga adapt to ground their positions as feminists, tackling social prejudices women themselves have to break away from. Without compartmentalizing the writers into rigid feminist positions, they are located within the liberal feminist and socialist feminist

traditions respectively for convenience. This thesis examines how marriage, the chief institution of patriarchy, incorporates women into the "sex-gender system" (Gayle Rubin's term) and how man-woman relationships within the sphere of marriage are power struggles and hence rarely fulfilling (Yeshoda, 22).

The study explores how the hierarchical society in India exerts social, economic, political, and sexual power over women's lives and continues to model them upon the so-called "cult of true womanhood" and are portrayed in the selected works of Shashi Deshpande and Volga (Yeshoda, 24).

This thesis explores how the construction of women within the patriarchal social context and the phallogocentric discourse socializes some women to enact forms of oppression and wield power over women defined as the 'Other' within the private space. Thus, women's subjugation within patriarchy is primarily aided by women themselves due to internalized sexism. In the context of the works of Shashi Deshpande and Volga, it also explores how alongside such oppressive relationships exist positive woman-to-woman relationships that go a long way in strengthening a sense of independent/gendered identity.

Sitaramaya, Ari. Translated. *A Quest for Freedom*. National Book Trust, 2003

This translated Volga's fiction focuses on several problems confronting today's woman like restricting the freedom of a girl child, husband dictating terms to wife and oppressing her. The book deals with rape in married life and the laws that decide that children stay with their father when husband and wife are divorced. This work tries to argue that to free women from family bonds and help those helpless and oppressed women. Volga's arguments have strongly condemned the restriction of women, inequality in marriage, oppression of the body, etc.

Sreedevi, Ch. *The Portrayal of Indian Women in the Selected Short Stories of Volga*, 2019

This paper strongly argues the patriarchal domination of women in modern Indian society. Every writing of Volga has created some social awareness and made us realize its social need. This paper attempts to establish feminism on par with a Marxist ideology with many philosophical implications. The paper highlights that Volga's stories have shown all the different shades of women's experiences and women's attitudes in the present society from different angles.

In almost all Volga's writing, the writer tries to explore the process of making women as women. This paper states that 'sexuality, household works, reproduction' are not related to women and there is no direct, close relationship with the politics made on them (Sreedevi, 33). This paper has shown that Volga's writing shows all the shades of women's experiences and the attitudes of women in the present contemporary society.

The researcher has not come across any work that undertakes a comparative study of these three writers. However, *Revisioning Women's Voices from The Ramayana: A Feminist Analysis of Volga's The Liberation of Sita and Sarah Joseph's Ramayana Stories*. Silpa Joy, makes a comparative study on Sarah Joseph and Volga. Otherwise, many studies compare Sarah Joseph or Volga with other contemporary feminist writers.

Nagabhushana Swamy, O, L. Translated. *Vaidehi Kathana: A Critical study of Vaidehi's Narratives*. Manipal University Press, 2016

The book *Vaidehi Kathana* provides is a broad explanation and critical insight of Vaidehi's short stories. It is a translated work, originally written in Kannada by

T.P. Ashok. The text denotes a critical and comprehensive work of Vaidehi's works. This book provides a context for her works, placing them among other works and examining the space for women in the public sphere. This draws the readers' attention to the verbal structure of Vaidehi's short stories.

This comprehensive work is a document, has expressed Vaidehi's views on society, culture and politics. Her stories have investigated the institution of marriage and family; she has problematized caste and class. She has narrated social and cultural changes. The book shows how Vaidehi's poetics has so subtly blended with her politics, thereby creating outstanding poetry and fiction masterpieces.

This work articulates the problems of gender inequality with a rare kind of maturity. It denotes different shapes, forms, and states of experience and feelings of women. This work also looks at society, gender equalities. Vaidehi's narratives would create big cultural debates in a patriarchal society. Vaidehi speaks various kinds of partialities, prejudices, violence and exploitation of women. The book discusses the unique feature of Vaidehi's feminist perspectives and the uniqueness of her narrative skills.

Nagabhushana, Savitha and Tarini Shubhadayini. *Iruvantige*. Vaidehi Gaurava Grantha Samiti, 2019

Iruvantige is the full-length literary-critical study of the fictional, non-fictional, and poetic narratives of Vaidehi, who is considered to be the most celebrated contemporary Indian writer in Kannada. This work reviews introduces, discusses, and interprets all the writings of Vaidehi, which include poems, short stories, essays and a novel. The book has extensively dealt with Vaidehi's uniqueness in her writing and the

broad feministic perspective of her narrative. The book has a deep and compassionate understanding of the inner world of women, allows her to meaningful mirror the ordinariness of their lives, and yet eloquently depict their resilience in the face of sorrow and poverty.

Sajjan, Gayatri Devi. *Gender Relations A Comparative Study of Vaidehi and Katherine Mansfield*, 2004

Gayatri Devi Sajjan sees a parallel between Vaidehi and Katherine Mansfield's works. According to Gayatri, similar politics and characterization are expressed in Vaidehi and Katherine's works. Both writers have attempted to portray the women in their realities and their struggles in the same fact (Gayatri Devi, 23).

The thesis depicted the unequal gender relationships and discussed how women writers have succeeded in asserting their identity within the philosophical, literary and linguistic traditions shaped by men. This work traces the unequal gender structure in the European and Indian literary context and explores the tragic, invisible phase of women's subordination down the pages of history. This work depicts oppressive patriarchy, where women remain mute against social injustice.

This thesis focuses on women's fight against the false images of womanhood created by uneven gender codes. The study questions the social norms, cultural constructions, and how they restructure women's severely distorted and repressed images. The work brings out the silent protest of female characters, their quest for self-hood, and the struggle to create new social order.

K. S. Nayana. *Living 'Life' – An Elusive Reality: Reading Vaidehi, 2015*

This paper intends to study the elusive nature of 'life' as seen in the protagonists' lives of the prolific Kannada writer Vaidehi's short stories. The paper establishes how with the evolution of the world when everything of the past has changed in some way or the other, subjugation of women is manifestly the only unchanged old-world paradigm. This paper also reveals that this 'unchanging tradition' is primarily supported by marriage in India.

The paper attempts to highlight through women protagonists the lives of unmarried girls and the suffering of women caught in the network of social prejudices and struggling to free themselves. The paper also explores that women suffer silently; at times, they protest too, but sooner or later surrender to the larger forces, suppressing all their aspirations and anger finding no other alternative.

By considering these texts, articles, and research works, the present research inspects diverse aspects of resistance to patriarchy. The work draws on all these evaluations and discusses them from feminism and its ideology in the Indian context. This research examines south Indian women writers and their select translated short stories to understand the forms of resistance in their writings. This thesis makes an essential step towards showing how the writing of the selected authors resists the patriarchal cultural practices that have built the very fabric of Indian tradition.

It can be noted that though there has been some scholarly work on these three writers, no work has specifically tried to connect the writers to their contexts. Further, no work has made a comparative study of these three writers. In this sense, it is hoped that this research will be a significant contribution.

The current study critically examines some literary texts of women writers to illustrate specific theoretical formulations. The study argues that selected texts discuss unequal rights, patriarchal discrimination, and cultural construction in India. One can't deny the fact that the inequality of India's patriarchal system is reflected in modern Indian writing. This thesis takes a dialectical approach to interpret the literary texts of three Indian writers and puts their involvement in caste, gender, social injustice, and patriarchal domination at the forefront. Sarah Joseph, Volga, and Vaidehi are the three writers included. These three writers are known through their literature and represent the crux of vibrant literature from Southern India.

2.4. Context of Selected Women Writers

In the 20th century Indian writers, the history of modern Indian women writing traces from Savitribai Phule and her two poetry collection books, *Kayva Phule* and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar* (Urmi Chanda-Vaz, 2018). Though Savitribai Phule tirelessly worked towards women's education, the poetry collection is seen as the initial resistance to patriarchy in India in the literature of modern feminist writers. The second wave of Indian feminist writing is credited to literature produced after the 1950s, including Amrita Pritam, Mahasweta Devi, Ismat Chughtai, Kamala Das, Krishna Sobti, and Kamala Markandaya, and many contemporary writers. If some of them, like Ismat Chughtai, are known for their radical feminism approach, Kamala Das is more vocal about women's body and sexuality politics. Likewise, many others have explored sexuality, identity politics, contemplation on alternatives to the patriarchal system, and many common threads could be seen.

The post 2000 women's writing does focus on caste and gender politics, mostly on the critical lines (Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste, Writing Gender*, 2006), Sujatha Gidla

(*Ants Among Elephants*, 2017) are a few examples to cite here. A stronger voice on the lines of Dalits, women could be seen in Shilpa Kambale, Pradyna Pawar, many other writers.

It is impossible to study compressively about all these writers and many more who are not mentioned. It would also be an injustice to pick an academically convenient sample of writers. However, it had to be done with the restriction of the research time frame. Nevertheless, though the selection of authors is nominal in nature, their voice could be seen as the pan-Indian pulse of many other women writers. Hence the researcher has attempted to include writers from different languages and states, which provides a hermeneutical approach to the research design. The writers are chosen based on their substantial work, the text's translated version availability, more importantly, a specific genre from all three writers. Only English translated short story collection of these writers is included in the study. As short story form is the most improvised, compact and yet possesses an element of the revealing moment of reality, one can never negate the scope of critical reading of text within and beyond the text. The following sub-section serves as a preliminary introduction and a bird-eye view of the selected author's work, biography, and the context of their immediate literary world.

Sarah Joseph and Kerala's Dominant Public Sphere

Women writing is a form that reciprocates to certain cultural, professional, political requirements of the period in which they are executed women-cantered themes has traced the development of 'women's space' through the presentation of selected moments. Women writing was projected a counter argument against the dominant public sphere in Kerala, mostly dominated by men writers. Even though some of the writers

were (are) strong supporters of socialistic ideology, the Kerala society wasn't ready to accept a new knowledge from women's perspective. One can list the series of women writers who have faced harsh criticism including attack on their personal lives. Aashita, Gracie, Chandramathi, C.S Chandrika, Priya, Sitara, Geetha Heranyan, B.M. Suhara are a few prominent Malayalam women writers who are not heard generally.

Sarah Joseph, Madhavi Kutty are known to larger world as their works were quickly translated to English. Now, through these two writers, many other Malayalam writes have come to limelight. Some of them mentioned here are no more and some are still posing critical questions through their sharp, yet aesthetically rich literary works. However, they have been highly active and their writers are more discussed now than ever. Sarah Joseph's stories reflect fundamental questions like a mirror is held to the evolution of woman with their space at different time frames. Her stories are dominant in the public sphere and read more carefully due to her rich experience through public movements.

Questioning Man-Centered Societies through Poetry and Novel

Sarah Joseph's poetry, novels and short stories primarily address the patriarchal system that existed and manifests still in contemporary Indian society. Her writings are primarily aimed at sensitizing women and promoting them to write. The structure and narrative of her stories are primarily located in the regional part of Kerala. Her stories and characters are representative of the middle-class family. Her works are significant documents in the analysis of women's space, which demonstrates the fabrication and redesign of those spaces while recording their resistance to the outside world. Her works go against the prevailing values of man-centred societies. She spoke out against women's

social obligation through the patriarchal system. One of the recurring themes of her writings is resistance to socially accepted notions and ideologies built around women.

Sarah Joseph ingrained progressive thoughts by making the characters subjugated in the works chosen for study. To find emancipation by liberating oneself from the chains of marital enslavement when their suffocation exceeds tolerable limits. Her stories analyze how the protagonists of her works, who are silent because of their restrictions, challenge all power structures through voiceless narratives. The author becomes the voice of the voiceless, leading questions into a broader spectrum of interaction.

What is interesting in Sarah Joseph's writing is the usage of traditional, cultural symbols, the value system a family lives with and yet being critical towards it. She doesn't believe in the family system which is regressive in nature. At the same time, she doesn't like to oppose or breakdown the existing system. Till a new world of alternative is found, the existing world is not broken in your stories or literary works. She attempts to follow a middle ground between the old and new or making use of the old to her aspired alternative.

Malayalam Literature and Women Writing

The short stories in India emerged as a literary form in the later years of the nineteenth century. It was natural to suppose that it was fashioned after the West and especially the English short fiction. Malayalam language and literature had their own dialects, specific to regions, communities, religions, sectors, many cultural-specifics, and many Malayalam short story writers had spoken and received language which has to be extended to accommodate these culture-specific usages and dialects. In the same way, the different communities such as Muslims, Christians, and Namboodiris have their own

language within the spoken context and have made their way into written to literary work through the different dialectical writers Vaikom Mohammad Basher. His short stories are in the Muslim dialect, the short stories of Paul Zachariah talk about the Christian dialect, and Brashtu mentioned earlier for Namboodiri Paadri reflects on Malayalam dialect.

Most of the short stories make extensive references to myths, legends, epics, folklore, and are culturally specific to regions, etc. The style of writing the social reform stories are strongly influenced by the English short story writings. The writers borrowed a new form and animated it with a culture and language situated in the colonial Kerala of the 19th century. Dr. K.M. George stated and recognized the development of Malayalam literature; in his introduction to interior space an anthology of women's news in Malayalam highlighted two factors.

1. The short story genre in Malayalam is the most developed branch of literature.
2. The influence of the West is clearly visible in the development of modern novelty [George 1993; 7].

From a structural point of view, the Malayalam short story genre was influenced by the classic narrative structure of the West. However, the themes are more significant in the language used which later influenced the structure itself. The influence certainly came from local dialects, customs, habits, folklore and other cultural contexts.

Sarah Joseph and Contemporary Malayalam Writer

Sarah Joseph's stories depict the hardships of life found in rural middle-class society. There are few attempts to break away from more traditional frameworks. Her

stories emphasize the daily situations of domestic life and record the responses of the characters.

In the Kerala region, we have seen many renowned writers such as Saraswathiamma, Rajalakshmi, Madhavikutty (Kamala Das) and many more, who have made great contributions to women's education and in large women movements. Unlike the writers mentioned above who were from upper-middle-class families with access to education and literature, Sarah Joseph was from a middle-class Christian family, born in 1945 in the Trissur district. She married when she was 14 years old. She completed her education through a correspondence course. Later, she joined the governmental college Puttambi as a lecturer in Malayalam, she participated and she was deeply involved in the activities of student groups and theatre groups. It has become a part of progressive movements and progressive thoughts.

Sarah Joseph's stories had been promoted by subverting the dominant versions of both feminist and subalternity. Sarah Joseph has taken a line to constitute the ideology that promotes women education and plays a pivotal role in order to explore the voice of muted women in the modern contemporary period. Sarah Joseph's writing was divided into three phases, the first phase being between 1960 and 1970 denotes personal opinion and commentary on her own life. The second stage gave rise to a revolutionary attitude towards women's education and reversed the dominant dimension towards the rise of women. Phase three fostered contemporary diversity to deal with unexplored narrative traditions in contrast to conventional vision.

Sarah Joseph Ramayana's story defines the status of armed men who could reiterate the possibility of understanding debates about identity politics. Sarah Joseph's

subjective stance regarding her attempt to tell the Ramayana story is multi-level. Her manifesto as a Southern Indian, her position in rewriting also stems from her ideological position as a feminist. Her writings are intended to sketch out the experiences of women, in particular their social, political and economic inequalities.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Sarah Joseph's writings on feminism and feminist theory focused largely on middle-class women's issues while pretending to represent all women. She began the awareness in society through her writing represent women's struggle for concern. That's because, like their heroines, women writers were almost exclusively confined at home. While the creation of their female characters was a reaction against the constraints under which they lived.

Since 1970, Sarah Joseph's feminist ideology has also engaged in an in-depth discussion about women's portrayals in the literary tradition. Her stories related to categories of oppression and revolt against patriarchy, it perhaps an even greater achievement of the interaction between feminism and rural movements was widening of the boundaries of feminism to other oppression, which was all attached to the land. Sarah's short stories are mentioned in three phases. These phases explore a private sphere without problems portrayed characters who try to escape from the frames of the private sphere. And her stories analyse the different ways in which the author mappings different types of space occupied by women in her writings.

Sarah Joseph writes the transformations in her writings because of the change in ideology, perspectives and activism. Malayalam literature has found a new direction out of the waves of the Western genre as short fiction or story. Likewise, the modern era began in the seventies and eighties with the first publication of the novel by Sarah

Joseph *Alayudu Penmakal* (1999), but her short stories constructed many layers in literature where women were incorporated.

In the chapter-3, the researcher analyses selected stories of Sarah Joseph and gives a picture of the crucial arguments in those stories. As a writer, she has written over the last four decades and her writing has undergone a variety of changes and adaptations. Her works will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter to map the growth of these patriarchal resistances and in search of woman's identity.

Volga: Looking from Inside

Volga believes in reflexive nature of conversation rather than external manifestations. According to her, women's resistance is not the world outside; it is within, and its bigger struggle is within a woman itself. There is body and mind conflict of woman which needs a serious contemplation rather than speaking out to other.

In reference to the stories of Volga, the characters' resist and rebel against the male-constructed society. Women face challenges when it comes to the dominant views of patriarchal institutions of "rape in custody" which have not considered women's voices. They emphasized an informal way of understanding women. Patriarchal societies have neglected an adequate response to women who are incognito to the mainstream in the public sphere. The public response to women may imply that they are the protagonist of their own issues and the public response of women includes a very dramatic form.

To formulate ideas for new and old texts, a women's perspective is essential. Rajani and Nirmala, the two characters of Volga's stories represent radical views on the institution of marriage like the early radical feminists have raised. They can also show limitless empathy, great sensitivity and self-effacement against patriarchal thoughts

which is slightly different from the approach of radical feminist theories. The story, 'Security' depicts women's oppression with great self-awareness and commitment. It depicts a deeper understanding of the historic and social sexual backgrounds that produce women suffering without resistance. Understanding the above story, the struggles become unbearable oppressive.

The importance of Volga in literature through her poetry, novels and short stories explores a blend of different methods of narration. Her privileges are connected with his examination of social conscience, oppression and discrimination, in particular in her chosen short stories. Volga's stories form a web of the myth woven around women's bodies and the indifferent relationships of women with other women, men and society, which are elaborated in general. Volga follows the development of women's characters and recounts how they become more self-reflective and critical of social injustices and inequalities around them.

Telugu Literature and Women Writing

Telugu literature has an existing tradition that can be traced today in minority writing of all sorts-Dalit and women are also. It was generally acknowledged as rich in short story. And women writers have a strong status in the indigenous tradition, even though they respond to their own particular problems and other issues that are connected to society. Writing in the 1980s and 1990s focused largely on politics and ideology, which in its own virtue raises several other issues, such as the relation between ideology and literature, aesthetics and ideology. Contemporary short story, even as it addresses political issues, traditional myths and symbols and on conventional idiomatic expression, creates a base for the transformation of ideas to the modern experience. Activist and writer Volga's stories shed light on the oppression suffered by women.

Indeed, the literary perspective Telugu today is intriguing, on the one hand we have the revivalist tendency to write in the classical tradition, and on the other hand, anarchy ignorant of the whole tradition in form and content. In Telugu literature the short story is an important genre and can be related to the exponent of the classical tradition. The form (short story) addresses the subjective response to recent developments. Unlike the short story, Telugu literature consists of productive engagement in the areas of short story, poetry, drama and novel.

Today, Telugu writing has exceeded expectations when it comes to story writing. Telugu short story forms and observers to the richness and variety of key questions about women and their traditional practices by many authors. Telugu literature has different cultural colors in realism, apart from genuine attempts to present life in different occupations and different local narratives. The kind of short story denotes this common feature of humans. Male writers of short stories have noticed and portrayed the life of the common folk tradition. There are also a few popular female writers like Y Sulochana Devi, T Janaki Rani, Sarojini Devi, Volga, J. Subbulakshmi and so on.

Telugu's short stories had gained a special space and appreciation. Telugu's stories have special characteristics for educating women who experience suffrage in the dark. Volga's translated short stories had been read around the world. Telugu literature had created a bright future to solve the problem that was formed from patriarchal ideology. The structure and design had made women as though placed only in four walls. Volga's short history illustrates and considers the pillars for building a house that holds hope while resisting patriarchal ideology.

Volga and Telugu Literary World

Popuri Lalitha Kumari, known by the name of Volga, is a pioneer writer of the feminist literary movement Telugu, born 27 November 1950 in Guntur. It was a Russian name called by his father in remembrance of a girl named Volga who died in the Nazi war the day Volga's sister was born. When Volga was sixteen her elder sister died and from there Volga began to use it as his pen name. His father, Venkata Subba Rao, was a communist who read a great deal of Russian literature. As a result, she also read Russian literature when she was young, she had assimilated these ideas. Besides this, she also read the works of Telugu writers like Srisri, Chalam, Kodavaganti Kutumba Rao, Malathi Chandur, Ranganayakamma, Vasireddy Sitadevi, Vishwanatha, Adavi Bapiraju, Dwivedula Visalakshi, Yaddanpudi Sulochana Rani and other writers.

Volga's work extends beyond the western perception of feminism and provides the strength and vision of Indian feminism. She portrays a zeal for a world with better human relationships breaking the myths woven around women in the name of femininity and motherhood. Through her writing, she proved that feminism is not limited to the problems of the middle class or women in the upper class only. But for women in the lower class and have written numerous stories focused on women in the lower class. She has proven through her stories that women of all generations, irrespective of their caste and beliefs, have been despised by patriarchal society and directly or indirectly affected. All her works explore an urge for self-esteem, a thirst for individuality, a quest to know oneself and make the readers to empathies, the feelings and concerns she has for women. Her writing primarily explores better human relationships that wreak havoc on myths about women. Her stories have been centred on lower-class women. The voice of the

resistance arose through the female characters. All her works, mainly short stories, represent directly or indirectly the need for self-esteem for individuality.

Volga's short stories are distinguished to conceive of the existing social disorders that are built upon women. Stories ignite a spark and ignite to give and take the marginalised into the mainstream. Telugu writer and reviewer Sachitananda K. mentioned that Volga's narrative techniques are given a voice for the deaf-mute and very kind to raise Dalit and marginalised women. The main elements of Volga characters are derived from lower class individuals. They fight back and rebel against patriarchy. Women-centered stories are such as 'Stony Breast', 'Nose Stud', 'Eyes', etc. that promotes and builds a vacuum for credible oppressed women. Despite my opinion of her writing, in a nutshell, stated that women not only repressed or oppressed by men only, but also by women represent.

Volga's stories were considered very important for her skilful narration, storytelling, and themes and provide logical reasons for resisting violence against women's social injustice. Traditional femininity had slowly changed the possibilities of bearing the child, working in the kitchen, bedroom, and etc. women identity was the major conditions and traditional patriarchal notion imposes on consider child marriage, motherhood and family should be changed.

Volga is a feminist activist and an emblematic writer of Telugu literature; Volga's writings were the modern branch of Dalit humanism. In general, these tendencies are found in modern Telugu literature and particularly in the Telugu short fiction. Although many Telugu writers set the tone for Telugu feminism in a grand way, even taking responsibility for the leading writers, who wrote widely in Telugu and Volga, wrote numerous short stories that portray women as members of society.

Vaidehi: Personal is Societal and World within Home

Vaidehi's ideas were individual as well as personal. Majority of her ideas were of a rural backdrop. Vaidehi's stories are not only tragic and depressed but bring together ideas of women beyond the acceptable condition. Vaidehi is probably the first to popularise the path of asserting women's voice in simple everyday actions yet in striking forms. Her short stories embody a sense of reflection, primarily through women characters.

‘Ammachiya Nenapugalu’, ‘Puttammatte Mommagalu’ and ‘Akku’ short stories depict the actual world Vaidehi constructed with her experience of being raised in a joint family. Through the perception of women characters, the central narrative arranges an engagement with women centric discourse. It doesn't just come as a mere statement. Instead, these assertions constantly struggle to strive for what has been denied socially ever since a concept of family is constructed. While doing so, different faces of men are exposed in her short stories. The central women in Vaidehi's short stories strive to be liberal like a bird, stretching its wings to the fullest and wondering how it would be like to fly wherever it wishes to. The current study attempts to capture such ideas through various forms and methods in the further chapters.

Kannada Literature and Women Writing

It is important to have consciousness of the geography, history, and culture of a society to perceive its literature as literature represents society. Karnataka has an extensive and distinguished history which has a magnificent backdrop in the arena of sculpture, literature, architecture, painting, music and administration. Karnataka is a unique region with a combination of historic beauty and modern technology.

Women writing in Kannada literature roughly determined from the twelfth century. As for the women's point of view, Akkamadevi was perceived as resisting patriarchy. But later, there is no evidence that women's dominant voice had begun to write to verify their identity in the man-centred society through literary works. But those writers have still found no recognition, just because they're supposed to be women. In Kannada literature, the idea of feminism arose in the early 1940s and designated writers were found in the 1970s. They are primarily Triveni, Kodagina Gowramma, Shamaladevi and others. Contribute to their understanding of transition and resistance to patriarchal concepts.

Throughout the 1970s and 1990s, in Kannada literature, there were a number of movements to make women's voices heard. During this period of the 1980s, in Kannada literature, the Navya movement began. The literature is gradually changing its trajectory into mobility. Literature had seen many women writers, but in the contemporary period Vaidehi had a prominent place in Kannada literature.

Kannada's women writers made an important contribution to the accomplishment of Kannada literature. Many researchers look at women writers and their writings as a change in social attitudes towards women. Women were interested in writing regardless of opposite conditions. As a matter of fact, these women were very rare, but their ingenious writings cannot be minimized.

The Kannada women writers of the 20th century, liberated from the old promises of tradition, began to write independently but did not recognize social consciousness in their stories. During this transition phase, they wrote histories based on the family setting. Women writers have been exhibited through their masculine characters how the code of

ethics and family values are different for men and women. Their female characters are most dynamic, brave and courageous. The characters have an understanding of gender inequity, which is of course, through tradition. Throughout this period, many female writers were chosen for history to communicate with other forms.

Vaidehi and Her Less Explored Karnataka

Vaidehi, Kannada's modern writer, took modest emotions from women in her stories. The main subject of her stories is the life of an unusually rural sphere. Traditional values are deeply embedded in the lives of downtrodden women. In her stories, she concentrated on efforts to break the patriarchal structure.

Vaidehi gives the impression that she does not plead for and against men, but denotes the complexity of human relations within the patriarchal system. For her family is a conventionally large home, in this situation Vaidehi grew up.

Vaidehi was involved in modern Kannada literature with the intention of socio-political changes that discredit women. She co-operates with women of the lower class and against the humiliating influence of women's identity. Her character was determined on culture and her practice did a remarkable analysis of patriarchy.

Vaidehi bears the active strength behind her work. Her outstanding books, for example, *Mara Gida Balli* explores the ambition and desires of her mother on a deathbed. Parallel to this, human relationships are also reflected. The stories are self-explanatory lies of Akku and Bhoot about the institution of marriage. Akku is an abandoned woman who lives an abusive and humiliating life with her brother. The story focuses indeed on the mental scene where one has the impression of opposing injustice, the revolt against repression.

'Goodinolgin Ondu Hakki' (A Bird inside the Nest) and 'Gulabi Mridu Padagulu' (Rose-Tender Feet) are the stories that turn readers into introspective readers. The story of 'Goodinolgin Ondu Hakki' (A Bird inside the Nest) reflected on women's empowerment. In this story, the desire for women's liberty is symbolized significantly. Malati decides to be completely naked the day following her husband's arrival at her office. However, Malati finds that this condition is more necessary, but she cannot do it in the home because certain tasks are still present. The anxiety about 'what if others came to know about me...' restricts her (Vaidehi Kathana, 25). Restraint is a mindset; it's not necessarily imposed by the outside world. Malati cannot enjoy liberty in the nude state as well. This story is a clear example of how mental restrictions govern our behaviour.

2.5. Conclusion

Like it's mentioned above, each writer had certain specific and common traits expressed in their literary work. The common characterizations, political assertions, and the question on sexual freedom are not commonly found in all three. Sarah Joseph seems to be more vocal on an exploration of the body, and the sense of ownership of the body belonging to women is strongly expressed.

In contrast, Vaidehi raises questions on the social positing and moving up in the set social strata. The literary experiments Volga has instrumented is much different Vaidehi and Sarah Joseph. Apparently, Volga is the most discussed and translated, celebrated author in India at present. However, one can clearly reference personal crisis and challenges these authors have forced or faced. Sarah Joseph being married as a child shaped her to be a stronger activist than a writer first. Hence, one can see critical questions raised in her than other two more directly.

Vaidehi being patronised by renowned writer, P. Lankesh by publishing a book initially gained her different exposure and a kind of mentoring. These three writers have to be discussed in depth with a separate and common comparison to understand the literary politics they were campaigning for. Hence, it demands extensive reading of these three authors, including those which are not included as a sample for the study. This would widen the understanding of the researcher in order to frame necessary arguments.

It is an exciting journey to study writers from three different states having similar as well different opinions. The similarity is that the feminist outlook, characters, and potentially identified victims are portrayed with all the genuinely. The difference being the politics of texts, call for annihilating the crisis, and the quest for solutions vary in each of these writers. If one literally sounds like an activist on the street (Volga), the other is a prisoner standing behind bars (Vaidehi). One can see the pattern of ideas and the choice of themes overlapping like marriage and differ like the stance of characters in each story.

Chapter-III

*The Activist Writer -
Sarah Joseph*

Chapter-III

THE ACTIVIST WRITER - SARAH JOSEPH

3.0. Introduction

Sarah Joseph is a well-known literary figure in the Malayalam and Indian English literary circles. She is credited as one of the forefronts of the feministic movement in Kerala. Throughout her life, she has participated in social activities as an activist. Her inclination towards Marxist ideology probably made her a common figure in social movements. However, her writings were specific to women's issues and feministic assertions. Sarah Joseph has written on the lines of class, caste and religion. However, such texts are lesser compared to feministic texts.

Sarah Joseph was introduced to a larger Indian and global audience through her English translations published by Oxford India in the early 1990's. By the time her writings were prevalent in English translations, Kerala had gone through a sea change through the communist regime. She even becomes critical of communists' policies. One of her stories, 'Sweat Marks', is an example of her crucial stance on communistic social welfare schemes. It has reached a minuscule society not included the weaker sections.

As J. Devika, translator of selected stories of Sarah Joseph (*The Masculine of Virgin*, Oxford, 2012) asserts, is an intimidating pile of words and a complex discourse to translate her stories. Sarah Joseph's stories leave a reader shocked if not amazed. On the outer layer, Sarah Joseph's stories seem like an interplay of literary logic played with times, myths, and surrealistic elements along with the everyday narrative of ordinary women and men. Each of the stories the current researcher read has an enormous value in

the literary and social context. A close reading of stories like 'Asoka', 'Jatiguptan and Janakiguptan', 'Conjugality', 'Paapathara', 'Scooter', 'Coffee House' and 'The Moonlight Knows' lets the reader construct a new history, a sense of resistance and might prompt an individual to take a stance. These stories offer a set of questions never asked earlier in such aesthetic forms.

There is satire, fine humor on religion, intense usage of neurosis aspects of the psychological base, sharp questions, self-reflection of each gender are common throughout the stories of Sarah Joseph. The global changes and their implication on Indian writers could have contributed to the acceptance and celebrations of Sarah's stories, especially in the post-liberalization period. As Devika J. (2012) puts it, a strong sense of a hysteric woman trapped in socially measured morals is Sarah's stories' recurring theme. Despite differences with Stalinist socialistic ideas of consecrating of women writers, Sarah Joseph broadly supports the very ideology of socialism. She not only wrote with a strong feminine sense but also did encourage social movements towards constructive society. With all the praises and worship as a genius, she is conscious of the very choice of the male-dominated literary world to have a place for women. Such categorization offers a duality of identification and seclusion. She critically looks at the usage of 'women writing' yet embraces the opportunity.

Being critical, Sarah's focus on the troubling gendered system is constantly dealt with throughout her writing. Each story studied here is not different from this problematized process (of the gendered system). She seeks the plurality in every space dominated by men's world hitherto. Whether it is a story of jackfruit trees' disappearance or the mourning of Asoka's Seeta, her voice raises a universal question that is not answered until now. For her, there is no middle, temporary or specially reserved space for

women. It's all about the mainstream and equally opposing alternative. She demands it as a right, not a courtesy of men. It is an absolute demand, like B.R. Ambedkar argued for the marginalized group. Even though it sounds ideal, it does have a long history of oppression and social logic to fix the past and present.

The following sections attempt to understand and construct the threads of resistance both overtly evident on the surface and sometimes subtly expressed in the selected stories of Sarah Joseph. The gender, caste, religion are a common recurring themes in Sarah Joseph's stories. Availability of limited English translated stories might be the most significant limitation of the current study. Nevertheless, the meanings constructed in the translation are studied from different perspectives, including close reading, discourse analysis, and feminism, and post-feminist approaches.

'The Moonlight Knows', 'The Masc. of 'Virgin', 'Conguality', 'Asoka', 'Jatiguptan and Janakiguptan', 'Hark!', 'Love...!', 'Dimwittude', 'Within Every Woman Writer', 'Paapathara', 'Black Chinks', 'Cloves', 'Vanadugra', 'To the Sea', 'Dead Land', 'Sweat-Marks', 'Scooter', 'The Passion of Mary', 'The Rain', 'Coffee House', 'The Broken Bridge' are the stories revisited and reinterpreted in the following sections. Specific recurring themes are discussed under unified sections and some are discussed with separate headings.

3.1. Countering Patriarchal Ideologies

Sarah Joseph uses a subtle satire and surrealistic narrative in most of her stories. On an outer layer, it looks like a piece of satire. However, the underlying meanings make them contemplate a strong sense of criticism of the man-constructed world. Such criticism could be seen in from a simple scooter to a piece of land. The women characters

speak less in her stories and she makes others speak in what is supposed to be the socialistic way. In some stories, women do not have utter a single word, yet their portrayal hits hard on patriarchal constructions (for example, 'Rain' and 'Jatiguptan'). In some of the stories, women are mute spectators to all the barbaric acts before their eyes (for example, 'Seeta' and 'Dead Land'). The irony of the relationship's burden shared by both husband and wife points out the victimhood of both genders due to patriarchal impositions. Certain characters strive to break out from the system, like in 'Within Every Woman Writer', 'Clove', 'Coffee House', and 'Scooter'. Some characters succeed in doing so ('Within Every Women Writer' and 'Paapathara') and some continue to hold back to the dominative system due to their helplessness and the domestic responsibility they are forced to take up ('Rain', and 'Hark!').

In the story 'Coffee House', a sense of sexual power is presented to define what a woman wishes to choose. Pramila, Jessy wants to fulfil their bodily demands. At the same time, they are aware that her freedom is being arrested if they bind their needs with the formal relationship. They are happy the way they are and do not want to wear a marriage ring. That act becomes problematic for men as they cannot live like a woman. Men want a formal celebration, a house with kids, and a happy wife. They are not able to answer to society to live, as Pramila argues. For them, it is nothing beyond promiscuity. They do not perceive the woman's choice as a socially acceptable form. Instead, they brand such women as prostitutes.

According to common friends of Vipin and Pramila, it is mostly Pramila who ditched Vipin who is in the state of depression. It is Pramila who rejected the marriage proposal of Vipin. She was firm on her identity and believed that marriage was the end of

a woman's sexuality. Irrespective of whether these words are of Pramila's or the men around her, it indeed reflects a different politics of sexuality. The woman is the decider of her sexuality and autonomy to agree or disagree on her choices; a chance to keep men always on the bay and go beyond the four walls of marriage is an essential political stance. Most men are not aware of color, scent, tune, or rhythm of a woman's sexuality. Everything is perceived in between the color black and white, just as grey, burned ash. Everything is in color grey, for men just like the color of ash fallen from their cigarette.

While John Clitus, a lover of Jessy who is about to make love her, is disappointed due to his loose statement. He is shooed away for his dumb statement on asking whether she is seasoned on the bed. While Jessy undressing on bed, he asks her whether it's her XXX time, denoting popular pornographic act. Struck by John's statement, Jessy dresses back and ask him to leave for ever. She breaks their six years relationship after his statement. She wanted to satisfy her biological needs. For that, men need not to equate her with a prostitute. She says,

“I can't live a life in which I'd be considered chaste if you undress me
and a whore if I undressed myself” (Coffee House, 32)

Jessy is clear about what is doing. She is not a free woman, a prostitute meant to satisfy men. She is a loyal girl friend who demands respect. When John uses the phrase, XXX time, she protest that it's not and it will never be by shutting herself for him ever. Sexuality is in mind, not in the body is what both Pramila and Jessy convey. It is not impossible to pluck it from the mind and plant it on the body.

The wife in the story, 'Conjugality', explodes when her filthy husband touches her. The phrase "Get off! Now" is the only statement she makes in the story. She has no

other dialogue except the husband's point of view descriptions. She bears every nonsense husband does and carries her life unintendedly. However, she breaks her silence when her body is touched. In a way, her words convey that the first thing she should have done not to spoil her fate is to avoid her husband/any men touching her without her consent. Here, her sexual energy is what makes the husband scary. She learns to keep to his limits through her body.

Probably, 'Within Every Woman Writer' is the most experimental surreal short story in the Sarah Joseph's *The Masculine of Virgin* collection. Often it is difficult to say what is real and what is fantasy. The central character narrates the story in the first-person perspective and she happened to be an ever aspirant writer. She is not as she had to address her household responsibility and raise her kid. 'Within Every Woman Writer' classically brings down the structure of marriage institution, criticizes how a woman is tied to a house from birth to death. It does criticize the attitude of renowned men writers while pointing at the space the society created for a woman being in public or public figures.

It is not clear whether the woman, the aspirant author is hysteric or husband Purushottaman is. According to the narrator's perspective, a writer's aunt, Mable, is economically independent and a public figure. The narrator imagines the life of self-made Mable, her social circle and the peaceful life she is leading without any dependence on anyone. Aunt Mable has a beautiful house by the seashore where the literary discussions are an ordinary affair (it's only in the imaginative narration, the wife never visits the place in the story). The narrator wants to go there, but the husband attempts to convince her that there is no such aunt or house. Though it is a tricky narrative structure, it is clear that the wife, the narrator, has constructed her mental picture of the ideal way to live as a

creative individual. She wants to have a life of absolute independence, a proud writer's life. However, she is married; got a child, need to manage the house. Although opportunities were abundant before her, she could never take an active part in the literary world for a trivial reason of bringing vegetables or taking the child to the hospital.

It is the most aspiration of a creative mind who is not meant only for domestic help. The man as a writer or a public figure has less to worry about. He is not tied to the house, and hence he gains the fluidity of time and space. For a woman, it is a complex road, and a self-carved path. 'Within Every Woman Writer' struggles to achieve what they are. It is not an easy road to proving their identity. If every woman is allowed to exercise their freedom, they have probably, seen a diverse literary world. It does not mean that every writer is liberated and freed to act according to their will. Hence, 'Within Every Woman Writer' offers a comprehensive thought on the existential questions. It is not only questioning the world she is forced to live; but also the path a woman envisages moving on. Economic liberty is something strongly suggested in the story. If a woman can break away from economic dependence clutches, she may see other options to live more meaningfully.

When the scooter breaks down for the second time, being assertive, wife ask the husband to hold the child, takes the Scooter, and starts pulling towards the raised road. He wonders how could do she pull when he is exhausted doing the same. She starts laughing and becomes amused at her husband. He too starts amused as he had many secretes including every property, household material he bought without her knowledge and everything is in his name. Clearly, they are not happy in the marriage. They seek their pleasure in various material forms.

Man can't resist the idea of a woman being on the Scooter and man being the caretaker of his child. He orders her to pick up the child. That makes her stronger and she pulls the Scooter swiftly. She loses her balance and falls down along with the Scooter at some point on the slope. On the other hand, the husband loses his balance and leaves the child. Here the author bringing the analogy of what women can do and what men cannot. The author attempted to address most of the machines the men believe that women cannot handle. While doing so, the author points to the men who cannot even hold the child properly. A woman can balance both a scooter and a child. However, the man believes that caring for children is not his obligation. His ego gets hurt when his wife does something he never thought of, and he cares least for the child.

A man on a bullet motorbike comes to help them and fixes the Scooter. She feels he is more like a priest. Somehow the Scooter brings them to the city and breaks down again on a busy road for the third time. The Scooter now symbolizes the stale state of their relationship. A marriage that breaks up resists moving ahead and yet fixed by others every time. She feels like going away from her husband by asking strangers for a lift.

While husband, again clueless on fixing the Scooter, feels nauseated by the awful smell coming out of the bike. She feels the unbearable smell too. They move out from the Scooter and sit further to avoid the smell. Slowly, the crowd gathers, noticing an intolerable stinking smell. Someone notices that it's an old dead rodent that is dripping from the Scooter. Even when the couple argues that the Scooter is not theirs, the locals force them to carry it on their head part by part. While they carry the scooter piece by piece, the foul-smelling rodent flesh drips on both of them, and the child follows the crying.

Symbolically, both of them don't own the marriage. It has reached a rotting stage and started stinking with an unbearable foul smell. However, everyone around forces them to carry without worrying how horrible it is to carry further, not leaving a chance for them to escape the nuisance.

'Scooter' and 'Clove' seem like the continuation of each other. The central woman characters' aspiration of moving out from the marital structure and its everyday burden is the dominant conflict in both stories. However, there are more fun, surreal sequences and metaphors created by the writer in 'Scooter' than 'Clove'. 'Scooter' is a kind of story that revolves around both material and immaterial subjects. Till the end, the 'Scooter' resembles a woman, which is assumed as granted for men to ride, however the way he wants to. He would be upset if it did not run as he wished. He would punish it with his kick; throw it down when the Scooter does trouble the rider. In a way, the 'Scooter' is associated with his wife, which he treats similarly.

The husband behaves just like the Madavankutty of 'Clove' who only wishes for his wife and Scooter's fun. It is conveyed in the words of the woman directly in 'Scooter'. The men "... want to fuck, just like the bolt-less scooter, thumped and laid on its side..." Boltless here connotes the sensual organ of the woman and seat as the belly of woman, and the Scooter as the body always rode by men. She has contempt towards what her life is and the lousy careless husband she got. Someone on the way helps them and the Scooter start moving further.

Moreover, in the end, the 'Scooter' becomes a burden for both the parties, the husband and wife. They had enough of Scooter's unending trouble and their variations in their marital relationship. However, the people around the couple come from nowhere

and attempt to make the Scooter run a little further. When they decide to leave the Scooter, the people around ensure they clean their debris. They cannot carry it any further, but the people around them make them carry for fun. The broken Scooter and its pieces are literally made to carry even when an unbearable stinking rat's liquid flows down from the Scooter on their bodies.

3.2. Sexual Objectification – Body, Gender, Caste and Religion

“Today, she is very calm. Unusually calm” is the first sentence of the story, ‘Conjugality’. This indicates she (wife) was never calm before. The story doesn't have the names of individuals. It's she and he which accuse universal application to all the men and women under marriage institution. The reasons for her disturbances are rooted in many things; since the day she was married at the age of 15, her body was abused, she had two children before she realized what sexuality is, and a long-lasting unbearable stink from her husband. She is living like a lifeless machine carrying the household responsibility of every day. The husband is aware that it's his fault for not seeing her as a person equal to him.

She is a beautiful woman and had two boy children from her husband. Eczema spoiled her skin and left a forever scar on her legs and thighs. It transmitted through her husband and he is aware of it. Often, she is pushed to express her rage by smashing whatever she gets against the wall or ground. When asked why she does so, she replies,

"It's my life I'm smashing. It's my suffering I'm breaking. What's it to you? Are you losing anything?" (Conjugality, 20).

These words have meaning beyond just the act of smashing a pot or vessel against the wall. The marriage never let her express what she wanted. Neither had it gained good

friends nor it made her happy. She has to raise and care for kids and satisfy her husband, who stinks horribly from a distance. They could never kiss passionately for the very reason of his stinking mouth. It also reads on mating lines without even caressing her or not even worrying about her sexual satisfaction. Despite not being a good husband, he is a typical man having his fun and relations outside the marriage. Hence he carries many scents with him. He hasn't even realized how his long, harsh nails, rough hands would have scratched her tender skin. Though she has a specific alluring fragrance, she had to bear the stinking husband because they were married, and she had to obey and fulfil his demands. He would look as ugly as a face of a corpse. In a way, she lived with a coarse-faced man.

Towards the end of the story, when he attempts to touch her body on the bed, she explodes, "Get off! Now". The husband knows that the marriage has reached saturation, and it can have no happiness for both parties. Yet, they lay in the same room without breaking the 'sacred oath.' They are just ill-matched couples who continue to live within sacred marriage boundaries in an open public cage.

In 'Conjugality', the female character suffers so much within the marital relationship and builds an ever-bursting anger that it scares the husband to touch her. The couple had two kids and it is clear that both of them never shared a happy movement. She was married off at a young and had kids before she realized her own body. The husband, who is still demanding her body for lust, is kept away as the woman knows that he is not a necessity to her. He is neither the one taking up domestic responsibility nor the woman's choice. He doesn't possess a single character a woman deserves for. Then the question of marriage, living in a marital knot, becomes an obsolete relationship.

Abuse of Children

A school-going boy in 'The Masc. of Virgin' attempts to answer an equivalent word for Virgin in the male gender's context. His quest to know the answer continues while the 15-year-old girl is pregnant due to masculine abuse, and the whole family is unaware of it. No one in the family is aware initially, and the mother senses something through her daughter's deteriorating health. The daughter is losing weight, and her eyes are pale with dark circles around them.

It is not that a 15-year-old daughter is pregnant. Holy Mary, a virgin share the same faith in Sarah Joseph's writing. In a subtle form, the story lets the viewer think about whether Mary was abused as a child and had to bear the child at a young age. How can one worship the religion so blindly without learning the lessons which are out rightly evident? Sarah Joseph's questioning of faith, religious practices is so subtle that the reader would inevitably refer to the character in the story with religious reference she is citing.

It's a simple Christian family which prays thrice and doesn't encourage cinema, music, or books, assuming they would corrupt the minds of youth. Even when the family learns the lousy faith the daughter had to face, the grandmother utters that there is no prayer to Holy Spirit in the house. The religious belief is confronted and shares similarities with reality.

"There is the lack of prayer to the Holy Spirit in this house" is what grandmother says as solutions to all problems of the house. Every problem is tied to the higher god and the mercy of it.

The daughter cannot give words to what has happened to her, and it's only in the final stage of the hysteric daughter that she senses the wrong. By the time she approaches her daughter, all she can see is the corpse hanging down. An autopsy report reveals that the daughter was pregnant. The story points towards the value system and religious practice we offer to our children without even making them capable of expressing their sorrows and atrocities.

In the story, 'To the Sea', a small girl, Durga, is sold to a pimp by her poverty-ridden family from Madhya Pradesh. The pimp, Lakhan, who mediates the deal, is no more than the poverty of Durga had been in. He can hardly buy a saree for his wife, nor can he buy a decent Salwar for his daughter and some sweets of the same age as Durga. The exploitative economy treats both the victim and mediator equally, forcing them to be in utter poverty. He wanted to sell the girl to a place where she is at least appropriately fed and provide some security. However, it does not happen in that way.

The naïve Durga always wanted to see the sea she had heard in her grandfather's stories. However, when she sees it, it's not decent water. Instead, it is a roaring sea that is ready to consume everything nearby. The metaphor roaring sea refers to the sea of men, brutal, drunken, and would not refrain from doing anything for sexual gratification. All they want is a feminine body irrespective of whether it is a child or grown-up. It is just the body a man needs irrespective of what the other gendered person is going through.

For the pimps, it's all about their share,

“The good's share?”

“I'll put aside a hundred rupees. I'll go there again to buy mutton” (To the Sea, 184).

A girl's body is nothing but a piece of meat for the abusers, the pimps, and the men who see a feminine body as an object of desire and lust.

In 'Vanadurga', and 'To the Sea', Virgin stories, the author sees the whole system as an oppressive unit against girl children (women). The system comprised lusty men, fetish-rich individuals, greedy kin and kith who would exploit anything for their benefit. This is how man has always exploited nature, however, the way he wanted, without choosing nature to decide its course. The author's inspiration for portraying women's exploitation might have roots in her ecofeminist readings.

Caste and Sexual Exploitation

Both 'To the Sea' and 'Sweat Marks' overtly bring in the issue of caste and how it manifests fate at present. Probably, the girl in 'To the Sea' wouldn't have been sold to prostitution if she belonged to the upper caste. In a stratified Indian society, caste has a direct connection with social upliftment and social recognition. Caste might sidetrack the economic status as there is easy accessibility to the system. The girl in 'To the Sea' belongs to a removed village, mainly a tribal region. It is evident from how they live without a job or money to feed and have full meals. The girl's naiveness of never seeing a sea is a testimony of their innocence and restricted mobility, confined to a hamlet or a village. She is sold, forced into prostitution and dies because she hails from weaker sections of the society.

Similarly, the girl in 'Sweat Marks' who won distinction in the SSLC exam is dropped from the merit list and only features in the reservation list. She still qualifies for the same course or programme, but not as general as she deserves. Instead of giving her the admission in general merit category, she is pushed to the top list in the reserved

category. She is dropped to make space for another upper caste student in the merit list while ensuring that a scheduled caste student's name is removed from the reservation list. It is not a big deal for the girl until she is scolded by Chandrika Chechi, a local newspaper agent. She forces the girl to write a complaint to get what is rightfully hers. By doing so, she could prove that she is not lesser than any upper caste student and secure a place for one lower caste person through reservation.

She knows that something is wrong with her selection. However, she has no words to defend herself. When upper caste mentality finds a way in impossible and unconstitutional ways, a lower caste person cannot even raise a voice for her rights. She cannot even open her mouth before the committee hearing her case. She has bathed inside her clothes, and the sweat marks created a footmark on the dust deposited on the floor. The deposited floor symbolizes the long history of dirt the reservation caste people are made to stand. All they can do is just gazing at their own feet marks and the fear which never lets them speak out. Even a professor who belongs to a scheduled caste cannot even speak a single word as the same history makes him nervous while looking at the sweat mark on the floor.

3.3. Institutional Establishment: Domestic Space and Questioning the Conventions

Each of Sarah Joseph's characters has its psychological frameworks. If some are calm and composed and less worried, some are extremely sensitive to the world around them. Going one step ahead, characters like Unnikrishnan, Virgin's Daughter, Seeta, Jatiguptan and Grandfather in Hark! are all hysteric, sometimes extremely neurotic. They do not perceive the natural world as accurate and live more in the fantasized world.

Unnikrishnan of 'The Moonlight Knows' has an obsessive-compulsive disorder that aggravates from simple things like obsessive washing hands to dig a hole deep in a deserted river in search of water. There is a subtle reference to why he turned hysteric.

Before he was missing from his house, the author creates another incident of him washing the sins. The man's sins refer to a long history of sins since our epics, mythologies. He rests the Rama's idol near the well and starts plucking each page of holy script Ramayana and washing them with water to sanctify it from the atrocities caused. The pages lay scattered around the well when other family members notice it. He asks with all the innocence like a child, "shouldn't it be washed? Isn't it dirty?" such constructions of a man tearing and washing a holy script page by page are demanding to fix the misrepresentation of woman and ill-treatment since the epic's original timeframe. According to the story, it is not Unnikrishnan who has mistreated his wife but the ideal man, Rama. Both of them are culprits in the same act and have not altered since then and now. Unless the wrong parts of the scripts are torn off and purified, a question of oppression persists.

A reference like,

"when he had dragged her down the staircase of the five-story building, somewhere, on the stairs, or the front yard, or the road or the traffic square, Thankamani, too, was nauseated, seeing the rain of blood" (The Moonlight Knows, 52).

It indicates what her husband Unnikrishnan has done to her. It hints that Thankamani was physically abused, beaten, and dragged out of the house while they were in Bombay. Possibly, she had bleed everywhere from the house to the road as she

walked or dragged. This act itself has shaken Unnikrishnan, and he stinks blood everywhere, even in its absence. A reference like, Unnikrishnan's baby heaved and jerked hard is another clue for the fact that it is the child she may not have wished for.

As Unnikrishnan grows his illusions and fears of blood, he assumes everything is poisoned to kill him, from food to wind. Thankamani is just a mute spectator and cannot help anything except bringing him home. He spends his time next to her in the room or the bathroom. One day, he is not found at home and searches for water to wash away his sins. He goes a long way for it in a deserted river that was lush once upon a time.

The cycle of abuse on women is not just the story of Unnikrishnan. It is the long existed patriarchal values of the whole family as far as one could identify. Unnikrishnan's father, Sankunni, also had similar faith. He vanished in the sand tornado while searching and pouring for non-existent water from his bronze pouring vessel. Likewise, Unnikrishnan also vanishes in the deserted river digging his own grave.

It is not just the Moonlight that is the testimony for Unnikrishnan's journey. It is the well, the water, and the baby in Thankamani's womb who are aware of Unnikrishnan's misdoings and mental health. The Moonlight is not a complete light equivalent to sunlight. However, it is enough to see someone as a shape. It does hold a mystery that only Moonlight can share.

The Religious Models

Sarah Joseph attempts to fill the gap existed in the popular version of Christian beliefs. If the bible focuses on the politics and crucifixion of Jesus, the agony and pain of his mother, Mary is left out. Here is the mother who is not happy about her son's

persecution and standing against the wind waiting for him for his safe return. The story, 'The Passion of Mary' goes beyond a popular version of praising Jesus. Sarah Joseph crystallizes all in a single sentence,

"Today is Mary's sacrifice..."

The initial description of Mary's house and the strong wind, snow, rain, uprooting tree connotes the emotional turmoil within her.

"My God! The destiny is more than I can bear!"

She utters in the pitch dark night when the wind is hitting her windows. She gets the news that people from Jerusalem are hunting for her son. They have, in fact, spread the net to catch him. Many say that he cannot escape from them. However, his mother is firm that nothing will happen to him. However, all she can hear is the wolves call from a distance, approaching as close as possible. She could never sleep. Like a caring mother, she is always awake for the son's safety.

"Mother must stay awake, and keep vigil," the writer concludes.

3.4. Societal Injustice and Inequalities

Many stories of Sarah Joseph critically look at the measures taken by the socialistic government in securing equal opportunities for socially and economically weaker sections of the society. The story 'Sweat Marks' critical of the Kerala government's affordable housing projects for the poor. Technically, it did not help those who were in need. Instead, a middle class prospered. However, a few lower-class people were also able to be part of this one lakh housing colony. It is difficult for an economically and socially downtrodden community to pass through these one lakh

colonies due to the cost of education or the affordability of many things. Despite succeeding in the effort, the girl who won the top score in merit list is looked down on because of where she comes from. The girl is pushed from merit list to reservation list deliberately. The girl is scared to appear before the committee while her complaint is heard. She cannot even raise her head and standstill. She is sweating throughout the body out of fear. Her family, color, caste, faith, clothes, language, everything is a barrier for her to rise from where she is and to look through the eyes of the committee members. All of these have strongly oriented her not to raise her voice or defend her against societal odds.

For the committee members, it is not even a valid case and they behave as if they are not aware of anything. She had to get an admission and she got it. What difference does it make for her? The young girl is turning back without justice is a continuation of history. The history which always betrayed a community from the rights it deserved is again repeated. While leaving the room, her footprint formed on the floor due to extreme sweat flown down from her foot. It is carved on the floor specks of dust clearly.

While passing by, professor Tevan sees her and he feels like helping her out. Unfortunately, Prof. Tevan could survive only because he did not have the guts to question. He knows that something is wrong. However, he cannot question that. He is even afraid to look at his wedding photograph where he and his clan is dark-skinned against his wife's hair color. She could stare right towards the camera and Prof. Tevan is uncomfortable standing there even for a minute of posing. He is afraid everywhere from the public, bus station to the shopping mall. The same shy fear is ingrained in his daughter, Namita as well. She always criticizes him, saying that she too inherited his

genes, indicating her color in subtle words. Things could have been different if his name was Devan instead of Tevan. It is evident that the word T in his name roots back to history and societal stigma.

While seeing the young girl, Prof. Tevan firmly decides to demand her rights before the committee. However, he trembles again the moment he reaches the door of the committee members, and all he can see is the footprint on dust left by the victim, the girl. It seems like his own footprint and he is unable to demand anything. The fate of the girl and his daughter Namita seem the same. Irrespective of whether you are in the system or outside the system, you are always the outsider and given a restricted place. You are moulded not to question the atrocities on yourself.

‘Vandadurga’ and ‘To the Sea’ are twin stories that continue the characters and the central plot. Vanadurga seems like the second part of the narrative but deliberately placed in the first in the collection, *Virgin*. Vana defines the forest and Durga as the goddess of protectors who lose their identity and raped both literally and metaphorically.

‘To the Sea’ is the preface for the Vanadurga story. The girl, Durga, who appears in ‘To the Sea’, is whom Anitha meets in Vanadurga. Hailing from a poverty-ridden remote village of Madhya Pradesh, Durga is sold for 302 Rs to a pimp (IPC section 302 is what the author refers to as murder). All she wants to see is a sea and nothing less or more. She is promised to show the sea, provide good clothes and some ornaments. Durga is compared with a baby goat which is about to be sacrificed while she is sold. The family could afford some atta-lentils, mustard oil which is an extravagance with the meagre amount they made by selling Durga. Shortly before Durga’s sale, her brother died due to hunger. She is sold for a penny price to afford some food which is still a luxury for the family.

Poverty forces a mother to sell her daughter and the girl who always wanted to see her fairy-tale sea never wanted to do that anymore. She knocks on the door of Anitha with blood flowing from her head, drenched in the rain, the whole body turned red as if she is bleeding throughout her body.

Soon after they reach destiny through a train, Durga realizes that the sea she imagined does not exist. Instead, it becomes monstrous and fearful sea drowning her to death. It is not precisely the metaphor of sea. It is the people who drown her like the sea on her body. Durga is brutally raped and again sold to another woman who runs a brothel. Somehow she runs for survival on a beach without clothes. An American tourist attempts to document her through his picture. He does not have an idea of what has happened to this girl. The tourist correlates the image in his memory. The reader gets the picture of Vietnam's naked girl running after American troops bombed their shelters for survival.

Anitha of 'Vanadurga', about to be a divorced woman, tries hard to save a piece of land inherited from her grandfather. With the proper land division, the piece of land Anitha is stubborn to give away is supposed to be her sister's share. It has trees planted mainly by her ancestors. However, the sister wants it to convert. She wants to remove those trees and plant coconut, primarily for its commercial use. The land, though small in size, has sentimental value for Anitha. However, no one understands it. Despite the lawyer's friendly advice, she knocks court's door and loses it eventually.

The narration starts with her receiving a notice from the court to evacuate the disputed place and ends with another divorce notice. In between, probably a day or two, on a heavy rainy day, a girl appears on her doorstep. The girl is raped brutally, naked and she is covered with blood. The girl is a stranger to Anitha. When Anitha hears the girl's

name for the first time, she feels her womb awaken. All she knows is just the name of the girl, Vanadurga/Durga. Symbolically the name refers to the forest, life, origin of life and goddess. Here is the goddess, who is raped and soaked in blood, standing drenched, shivering and finding it difficult to breathe. Anitha is even afraid to touch her as fearing her wounds would hurt.

Due to rain, she could not step out with the girl to the hospital. Durga is infected with Pneumonia. She could not be lived for more than a couple of days. Anitha brings in the child's body home and cremates in her ancestral land, which exists between the dispute borders of Anitha and her sister's. The girl's body looks like the statue of Buddha, the symbol of peace and harmony but with a shattered head. The body gets covered with wet earth, wind, rain, and leaves, referring to the cycle of life.

The greediness to have a larger border, colony, women irrespective of whether it's a child or a grown-up, everything is out there for exploitation. Anitha doesn't get her desired ancestral piece of land, nor does she get the man she loved and married. In order not to be cheated, she is served with divorce. 'Vanadurga', who appears for a brief time, reminds her of what she is about to lose. The mutilated body of Vanadurga and the soil unloaded from her lost land become the same.

'The Broken Bridge' is an abstract work of Sarah Joseph which could have multiple interpretations. A woman visits the hospital and sees that 27 children are admitted there. They are all in a secured area, and her entry is considered trespassing. The police, the doctors, private security, everyone secures the place leading to more suspicion. For some reason, she feels that her two kids are also inside this protected hospital.

The children are brought from different places of India like Uttar Pradesh, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. When she attempts to enter the secured area for the second time, a couple of bouncers question her whether she is a client or a policewoman, if not a journalist. These children are for sale, possibly for household work. The children are still sold as slaves brought from remote areas of poverty-ridden states. When she says that she is searching for her children, she is kicked and grabbed by her hair, and thrown out of the place.

On the day of independence, she looks at the beautiful kids passing by smilingly. The author compares the children walking freely on the street and children sold as slaves kept in cages. When a child comes cryingly and tells her that his little sister is dead, the mother runs towards the riverbank with him. She realizes that the dead girl is wearing her daughter's bright-coloured frock. The frock, which has seven colours of the rainbow, is what her daughter was wearing. Now the child wipes her tears.

One might assume that it is her daughter who is dead. Subtly, it could be read as that the woman could have employed this child or given away her daughter's cloth. The mother cries and the boy wipes her tears, indicating a universal appeal that all these kids are no different from their biological kids. Since the whole system protects the identity of these kids in secrecy, one could imagine the other ways these are used.

3.5. Post-Feminist Perspective

A bunch of friends gathers casually as a social act in the Story 'Coffee House'. The rain makes them glue there for a more extended period. Each time they lit a cigarette, various layers of human boundaries and body are discussed. They resemble a young flock of intellectuals who happened to be budding poets and the story satirically makes fun of

each character. Out of four, three seem to be amused with the pun and humor on a woman's body. One of them becomes serious for obvious reasons, which are revealed in the end.

Pramila, a familiar friend and a lover of their other friend Vipin Das is the hot subject they are discussing. According to them, Pramila is the victim as Vipin used her. They discuss both sides of the story on whether Pramila betrayed Vipin or the other way round. According to them, Pramila is the leftover of Vipin. They make fun of each other for giving fresh life to Pramila out of her victimhood. John Cleetus is the odd person on the table and critical of his friend's perception of a woman. They do not forget to peep on other girls around them while discussing, and one of them glances at a girl intentionally to lure her numerous times.

According to one of them who spoke to Pramila, she rejected the marriage proposal of Vipin. She was firm on her identity and believed that marriage was the end of a woman's sexuality. Irrespective of whether these words are of Pramila's or the men around her, it indeed reflects a different politics of sexuality. The woman is the decider of her sexuality and autonomy to agree or disagree on her choices; a chance to keep men always on the bay and go beyond the four walls of marriage is an essential political stance. Most men are not aware of the color, scent, tune, or rhythm of a woman's sexuality. Everything is perceived in between the color black and white, just as grey, burned ash. Everything is in the color grey, for men. Sexuality is in mind, not in the body. It is not impossible to pluck it from the mind and plant it on the body.

John cleetus is isolated from this discussion objects to any connotation to woman's sexual organs. The name, Cleetus kind of sounds synonymous with Clitoris

leaving many things for the reader's imagination. A woman dejected John himself for asking a fooling question just before she was undressing on the bed. When he is about to make out with Jessy, he asks her whether it is her XXX time. Jessy cuts off her long love relationship with him instantly after that question. She questions whether she is considered chaste if a man undresses her and a whore if she does by herself.

When an accident occurs near the Coffee House, everyone in the hall hugs each other without even knowing what they do. Similarly, people hold on to each other during a crisis or an emotional disaster. Hardly they realize what they are doing. A lesbian couple is the only two without fear in the corner. It indicates their clarity and firmness to challenge the rest of the world. A man who sleeps with a priest every evening among them passes a comment on homosexuality. John shuts him, reminding his own sexual orientation.

Towards the end of the story, John is serious than ever. Everyone is busy discussing a woman's sexuality, the tenderness of a woman's body, and politics. John reveals that he had seen his mother naked the other day and he has been awestruck since then. She went through a Mastectomy, removing her second breast due to breast cancer. Her upper body is empty without the bosoms he was fed as a child. She may not have the breasts anymore but she is still the same mother. It is hard for him to see another woman in sexual gaze after seeing her mother. By now, it is public that everyone has seen his mother naked. While he was sharing this with friends, he received a message that his mother passed away. Everyone discussing Pramila's sexuality is self-aware of limitations in their intellectual ability and move to see their loves quickly. None of them discuss anything further.

'Cloves' is a story that poses questions on a woman and her sexuality. There are many layers to the story, from simple dissatisfied marriage to seeking a new life. A middle-aged married woman, Radha has long developed tooth issues. However, the story does not just stop at the tooth. It juxtaposes the stale marital relationship and a year to give a new start in life. Radha tolerates the tooth pain till everyone around starts complaining about the stinking mouth, including her child. It worsens during her husband's forceful lovemaking. All the pain and moaning of Radha are perceived as thrilling expressions by their husband. He closes her mouth and attempts to forcefully further in making love. He does not let her share her unbearable pain till she screams out. Radha feels like spitting on her husband, who is just worried about satisfying his lust.

Breaking endurance and with unbearable pain, Radha decides to visit a dentist to remove the tooth. The doctor conducts his test and concludes that it is treatable without removing the tooth. He does not even see her face, and he is fixated only on the mouth area, trying to cure in the best possible way for Radha's pain. She likes this dentist who does not touch a woman unless she wants to be touched. He treats her as a person rather than a stereotyped woman meant for consumption. She attempts to gain his attention, but he is all worried about the problem she has come to him. During the procedure, Radha feels like touching the dentist and saying that she loves him. However, the hard reality of being in constructed societal norms makes her not make any move.

The author brings the metaphor of tooth cavity as the gap that existed in her marital relationship. The husband does not even understand her needs and feeling. Instead, he is self-centered and suggests that a piece of clove can fix her tooth. The husband, Madhvakutty, wants a regular, ordinary wife who takes care of the house, kids,

and enough womanhood to tempt the husband for his bodily needs. Radha feels something is missing in the marital relationship. It aggravates the toothache. For her removing the tooth along with the root is a solution. In a way, it connotes the exact solution to her stale marriage. However, according to the dentist, the tooth need not be removed. So, it circles back to the marriage of what is missing or the gap that has to be fixed.

3.6. Anti-Patriarchal Voices

Sarah Joseph does not only construct what is happening around. She also offers a solution. The ultimate solution to save their girl children is to leave the husband and abandon his house. He would not have any choice except to embrace what comes out of the woman by doing so. During Lakshmikutty's sixth delivery, she attempts to pursue the midwife to take away the child as far away as possible where women bloom. Is there is such a place? Sarah Joseph names those places Narimaan hill and Pulimada. There could be real names as such. However, the literal translation of Nariman hill is a hill of women. In a way, Sarah Joseph is calling for a place run, ruled by women. It is the only place they can be safe and bloom.

'Paapathara' takes the evil of female foeticide as a central theme. It reminds of Kamsa, who kills every child. Here, both the husband, the whole hamlet, brothers kill every child Lakshmikutty gives birth to. The name, Paapathara could be translated as the seat of sin. The question here is who sin is? The men or women? Lakshmikutty's five infants are killed in front of her eyes. Every time she gains consciousness, she sees the splattered little brain, muscle and bloodshed on the floor and wall. The midwife, the mother-in-law, and the people in the village are all part of this crime.

A man should prove his potency by having a boy child. If not, he is unworthy to be a man. Hence he not only wishes for a boy child but ensures destroying the girls to level his anger. All the pooja praises to the goddess of fertility (Kurumba Bhagavathy) is just a drain. She has no luck in saving her girl children.

Goddess Bhagavathy has a specific reference to mythology. There are statues of Bhagavati or Bhagavathy in a few temples of Karnataka and Kerala. The statue doesn't have a face. However, it is a feminine body with exaggerated bosoms and carved in an inviting position, laying upwards with a large lotus carved instead of a vagina. Sometimes it is carved with peepal tree leaves or lotus flowers. The statue is a symbolic celebration of the birth cycle or giving birthing itself, a symbol of the life cycle. The goddess Bhagavathy is a very fertile woman ready to bear a child and ready for mating, awaiting a seed. Such god's blessings have become a curse for the people around Lakshmikutty.

When Lakshmikutty delivers the girl child, all she can hear from the corners of the house is, "You girl-making bitch". It's not just the husband who calls so, the mother-in-law and the villagers too. It is not just Lakshmikutty's fate alone. Younger women, their children are too killed for the same reason. Lakshmi is alive because she belongs to a wealthy family. The elders utter that this is the only fate because we are born a woman. Yet, another life is taken away. Lakshmikutty wants to feed the god better this time to save the next child.

In one of her dreams, she sees a sea of girl babies with shattered heads floating effortlessly. It's a most daunting picturization as the reader too, feels like in a bloodbath. The baby floating does not have a gender yet. All they have is "just a feminine between

chubby thighs like golden peepal leaves...” they are just babies. Lakshmikutty picks them and kisses the golden peepal leaves between those chubby thighs a hundred times. They dissolve in her fingers. Countless babies flouting signifies the prevalent practice of killing girl children across the country. The only way they could be saved is through growing backward and becoming part of their mothers. The author opines that they should not be born in the first place if they did not want to face the wrath of ill fate.

If the ‘Paapathara’ questions the right to give birth, ‘The Hark!’ Takes it to something outside the womb. A jackfruit tree that defined the matriarch of the family, is just dissected from her without even her knowledge.

The matriarch of the family, Miriam in ‘The Hark!’, manages the entire house by fulfilling each member of the family; husband, children, and father. The jackfruit tree before their house is an immense joy they have seasonally. They had all sorts of jackfruit recipes and were enjoyed even by servants and domestic animals around them. It is a tree lived for a long time for generations.

At some point, modernity peeps into the family and demands a television set. It could come only at the cost of selling the tree. The son wanted to sell the tree to have a Television set. On one fine day, towards the end of jackfruit season, the tree gets vanished overnight. A deep hole is left, and not even the roots are visible like an angel took the whole tree. It becomes an astonishing incident, and everyone who hears the story comes to visit the place. They can say that the tree cannot fly or sunk in, and it can vanish only with family members' knowledge. However, no one in the family has sold the tree, nor do they hear the sound if someone tried cutting it.

Going by the magic realism perspective, the tree just vanished. If so, it would have reached heaven, if not hell. Going by the reality, it was stolen overnight by a large

number of skilled woodcutters cum thieves. There is a reference within the story to believe this argument. It did not bear fruits the year Miriam became pregnant. Some vague clue that the tree did not like the new members of the family could be connected. Towards the end of the story, the husband tries to break the wife's silence by asking whether she thinks that he has sold the tree. However, the men in the family had something to do with the disappeared tree. The men never understood that Miriam's meaning of life was shared with the jackfruit tree. By stealing a tree, they just killed her as well.

The tree took care of generations, grew old yet became strong, unlike a human. However, the people who aged became weak. There is an element of mortality Vs. Immortality brought by the author. An old tree is valued more due to its strength and more layers in its pulp. A grown tree never dies. It always sprouts from roots or trunk, shedding the old branches, leaves space for young ones. However, a man is born and dies uncertainly. The only thing he can do is to vanish the good things and destroy its evidence.

There is only he and she in the story love...! The man builds up anger and wants to kill her as revenge. What has she done to get killed? Nothing, except loving him like a child. She often hid him in her bosom and consoled infinite times. With her, he becomes the most alluring person. However, he wants revenge to become independent and wants to live without her. He realizes that he is too addicted to her and can never leave her out of sight. All he can do is destroy her and gain his independence. In love, anything is fair, even if it cost a life.

The story sounds abstract as there is no solid reason to kill a girl. All he knows of her is just the good deeds and loving heart. However, he wants to destroy as it is fair in

love. He has all sorts of thoughts of blood splashing her throat when sliced, keeps the knife always under the bed to easily access it when needed. He even comes to her office to kill her.

By the end, he presents her with a little doll which brought if not killed her. The story is a simple moral question on how to treat your loved ones. You don't need to kill her to get rid of your mind. A priceless doll can make her day, and you, the man, bear the tasty fruits from her. She could have been killed in a fraction of a second. But what do you achieve by doing so? One can't love if you destroy or mutilate. It has to be earned by giving back; love is what Sarah Joseph is attempted to convey in this story. A woman needs to be loved, not harassed, and not forcefully made to love. She can fly only in the space of mutual freedom. Not in the cage. Her soul is dead if caged.

3.7. Politics of Myths

Probably, the most experimented in terms of language in the collection *Virgin is 'Jatiguptan and Janakiguptan'*. Yet again, the hysteric husband's palpitations, bizarre dreams, surreal experiences are the significant content of the story. According to the story, he is a public figure, and anything he does would become a piece of major public news. He badly wanted to sleep, but he had all sorts of surreal dreams. The dream shares some part of it with Arjuna's Gandeeva and Rama-Seeta's exile term in Jungle.

In his dream, the couple enters a thick jungle. All the animals are living in harmony. While a leopard challenges him, the wife is not worried and helps the husband by shoeing away the leopard. Jatiguptan is naked, and all he has is his knives and swords, and he attempts to cover his dick with the sword while the leopard is sitting close to him. The man's obsession with the blade/sword resembles the extension of his private part for

a moment. He is afraid that some animal would eat his penis and ensures that the sword is always hung on his waist to protect it. Such doubts are confirmed with the questions of Janakiguptan later.

She has a simple question on why he has to possess all the swords, arms and weapons. He is reluctant to answer those questions as he thinks she is foolish to ask such questions. She poetically cites how the trees, fruits, yams, animals, birds, lotus, mountains are living by themselves without worrying about having a weapon to protect themselves. Only the man wanted to watch him and his processions is what puzzles her.

At another point in the story, Jatiguptan wakes up by the bird's call teasing him that he is naked. All the clothes are in a room where Janakiguptan locked herself for three days. All he left was a set of the pillow. By the time everyone in the nation knows that he is naked and his wife has locked up herself, the locked door has become a national conscience. The story was published in the early 2000s where the television news had become a national nuisance. The writer attempts to bring in subtle humor by making the surreal experience of the characters and their trivia a severe issue of concern for the nation.

Finally, the wife arrives on the fourth day after a good bath, and without any further shock, she offers a lungi to him to cover his naked body. She has locked herself during her periods for three days and only meets her husband on the fourth day. The author is bringing the old-age practice of women being isolated during three days of her menstrual periods and the man's nightmare without her. The man's life could be on track if a woman is not locked up. He couldn't even have a single piece of cloth in her absence. She was needed for his gratification, and at the same time, his earned weapons-arms couldn't even cover his nudity.

Revisiting Cultural Obligations

The Story, 'Asoka' is the reinterpretation of the last leg of Ramayana's battle from Seeta's perspective. Sarah Joseph's horrible war description makes it more evident that the war was for an extension of monarchy than for bringing back Seeta.

The author critically looks at the betrayal of men otherwise thought loyal by Seeta. Starting with Veebhishana who is supposed to be faithful to his land, and to his brother Ravana, she questions the integrity of Rama in treating Seeta as a lost asset regained through courage on the battlefield. She is critical that men in war can not only destroy the soil and jungle but only increase the number of widows. Seeta shares her emotions with Mandodari's who lost her husband, Ravana. According to Seeta, the whole sky is poisoned due to the plastic valor obsessive to men.

Sarah Joseph makes Seeta say that the war was unnecessary. Seeta questions, is it wrong for a woman to aspire to marry an Aryan? (Shurpanaka's desire to have Rama or Lakshmana). It was a crime what both of them did, chopping off an innocent girl's nose and breast. Was it necessary to do? Isn't it an incite for the rest of the other events? They could be behaved humanly with Shurpanaka and stopped the further skirmish and the next battle.

Seeta waited eagerly for months for her husband to come royally and caresses, consoles, pour all the love hid during the separation. He was everything to her. But she was not the only thing in his life. However, the whole Lanka war turns out to be the man's obsession with being imperialist and proving that he gets back what rightfully belongs to him. The belongingness includes the person who he loved or married as well. Seeta is no more than an asset stolen and regained by Rama. There was no question whether she had something to say or invited with much celebration back to Ayodya.

Seeta, now in Asoka vana, is aware that Ravana and his kith and kin were killed with the help of his own brother's betrayal. Veebhishana had no chance of ruling Lanka and he opposed the hijacking of Seeta by Ravana. Hence he joins hands with Rama leaving all the secrets of Ravana, which costs the entire Lanka to burn down. For the loyalty shown by him, Rama declares Veebhishana as the new king of Lanka. Seeta was expecting Rama to come and but instead, he has sent this new king who cannot balance his new crown. She doesn't want to obey his orders. However, she is forced under the name of Rama's orders to take her out of Asoka vana.

She was doubted and questioned on the lines of her chastity during her term in Ravana's Asoka Vana. She was perceived as guilty. Seeta is insulted in public and the rumors make it worse, which are not spoken but everyone is aware of the rumor. Ravana wouldn't have resisted himself with this beautiful woman is what everyone is talking behind. Rama utters the words that he did not win this war to recover Seeta. Instead of the insult, he suffered, and the lineage made him launch the war. At that point, the author brings in the beautiful metaphor of raided, burned down Lanka, and Seeta are the same. When Seeta's beliefs are shattered, she questions the purity and devotion towards her husband; what else remained to define her identity? At that point, she decides to kill herself by self-immolating.

She orders Lakshaman to light a pyre and jumps to it. At the same time, she is literary melting down in a fire, the crowd's eye, mind, and wit shrinks and focuses on the pyre. The eyes and minds of men get cleansed at the cost of Seeta's self-immolation. At that point, Seeta utters that she is the daughter of earth, who bears the rain and seed. The author brings in the elements of resistance to the whole patriarchal values, making it

evident that there isn't rain (food) and seed (chain of production) without a woman. It's not just Seeta who is on the pyre. It's the rain and seed which the foolish man is not aware of destroying.

3.8. Rewriting Patriarchal and Matriarchal Restrictions

In the story, 'Within Every Woman Writer', the metaphor of anklet is instilled in woman's body gives chilling testimony of how every mother is also the criminal in raising the daughters in a cage. As a child, whenever the narrator wanted to be part of literary meetings, she could never because of her mother's special anklet during her birth. It was a pretty anklet she had as an infant. However, she grew, but the anklet was small. As it was never removed, flesh grew on it, becoming an inseparable part of her body. Slowly, it started cloning many small anklets and it's now all over the body with tiny baby anklets. This is how society institutionalizes a person, especially a woman. The mother makes it more evident that the girl gains feminine values by every costume or property she puts on the child. The child grows the consciousness of what is socially approved or what is not and learns not to cross a boundary as a girl. The anklet symbolizes many things here, including the value system we have constructed. The anklet on her leg was not separable, now the same anklet has become part of the body, and it is flourishing day by day. Her marriage, restriction from public participation, lack of encouragement to be a writer, household responsibility, caring for a child, managing house...everything is nothing but a multiplied anklet the mother instilled as a child. The mother wanted her child to see as a mirrored image of herself and not beyond.

She is aware that life is still possible without dependence on her husband. She can live with all her consciousness, eyes and ears opened and possibly fly with golden-hued

wings. However, she needs to have economic liberty at least to have a bus fair to travel. The monetary control by men made it impossible for a woman to get out of the house. Even if she had tried to be part of the literary group, the group ensured her safe return home. Because they were men, they didn't want to encourage another odd person by gender, rounded body, delicate skin and thoughts. She was made to feel that she was not supposed to be outside the house as dusk poured down. The golden-hued wings and the joy of stretching them to a lovely breeze were highly dominated by men.

She, in fact, had a friend Jayadevan (Puroshottaman, the husband sees no such friends exist for his wife) who travel in thoughts and feelings in the same wavelength. She admires him but not to marry him or have a family with him. Its unconditional happiness without any strings attached. If her husband hears any reference to such discussions, friends, he loses his temper.

The writer sees no point in staying within the married relationship, which is regressive for a creative mind. She leaves the house by pushing aside her husband, who tries to convince her that no such ideal place exists. She sees it as a conspiracy to stop her and stay back. It is a symbolic representation of a woman coming out of her house; cutting all the bindings is what Sarah Joseph is conveying. All the qualities Jayadevan had could be in her husband as well. However, it is not in reality. Aunt Mable is not just a fantasized character in the story. It also looks like the future of this young mother who is liberated from her house just now. By the time she is old, she will have a life for herself, a space filled with peace and happiness and intellectual discourses on her doorstep just like how she imaged Mable is having. The hysteric wife and Aunt Mable are the same but

at different timeframes. One at present and the one in the future. The common answer of what a married, less skilled, dependent woman could accomplish is what Aunt Mable is a destiny. A woman can live alone, live a meaningful life, and construct a fresh world for herself.

'Dead Land' has references to the sight of the battlefield of Mahabharata where everyone is killed and hardly any men are alive. On the other layer, the story criticizes the futile fights over religion. The central character, the mother, resembles Gandhari or Kunti who search for children and find the head slaughtered children. The men on the battlefield had killed themselves and the grass, soil, a bushy plant just witnessed that. However, these patches of grass survived the bloodshed. In a way, men were not lucky as grass and it seems insignificant to the life that those small blades of grass cherish. She did not raise her kids to fight and butcher each other. This is not the reason why mothers gave birth to them.

The mother searching for probable children who are alive is again pregnant and bearing a fully grown infant. She somehow escapes and survives through the war. She feels thirsty and she starts having labor pain. All she gets is the blood-wet soil instead of water. She does not even get a drop of moisture from cacti. She chews thorns of wild and swallows the soil. She screams that even the soil is bitter. She questions herself whether she has to drink the blood of her children? If so, why they came out of her?

Children cannot be biased or greedy as they were born with a clueless world. However, the religion (metaphor of Trishul and Cassock in the story) makes them feel that they ought to kill others for their survival. Now with the new born kid, the mother carefully tries to make him learn to let life cherish. She makes her child plant the seed of

the Tree of Life. While holding the son's hands, planting seeds, her tears wet the ground. The scent of breast milk spread all over the Land of the dead. She tells the son to make sure the Tree of Life grows taller, and yields golden-colored ripen fruits. By the time, the scent of life would have washed away the sins of the battlefield and those who are buried over there. The people will come and start living around the Tree of Life. However, she cautions the son that if he picks up Trishuls and stone crosses, the Tree of Life will die, making the mother a mute spectator.

Whether it is a battlefield, temple, or church, men's constructed idea is to win over others and dominate the place with just sheer blood. Unless the fights over these futile constructions are taken away, life can never exist, and the cycle of planting something new and letting it grow and destruction exists forever. It leaves no choice for the mother except the pain of witnessing violence and hope of a new day, yet planting a tree of life.

Language and Gender

In the story, 'The Masc. of Virgin' a school going boy as his father for the masculine word of the virgin. The very title of the story itself questions the absence of such expression. There is no equivalent word for virginity for men denoting the exact meaning in the male-gendered context. The boy's quest continues to find the equivalent masculine for Virgin. However, he won't get an answer. The author is demanding a new word, new perspective to what is always missing and vomited. It is not just the word but the question of identity, a definitive role to assume, a sense of belonging in the society. The quest of the boy is the quest of writer to make our language more diverse and inclusive.

'Rain', though a simple story, strikes the readers with the language and words it imbibes. When a woman is protecting a life (bird) in the rain, the husband calls her whore without realizing what she is doing. He is a well-read man and reading throughout the narration. Nevertheless, all he could say to his was the meanest set of words. Sarah Joseph brings in these contraries of a learned man and protecting woman.

Padma in the story 'Rain', the wife in a middle-class family, is hanging between the confusion of being alive for the kids or to kill herself. The story starts with her children playing with a paper boat on a rainy day. Amidst the denial to play outside, they throw the boats from window grills. The girl's boat, made carefully as light as possible, quickly runs on water and the boy's boat is just stuck as it's heavy like a round ball. The wife tries to block rain from entering the house while the husband keeps reading his newspaper. By the time the son goes out to help the paper boat flow again. The mother comes out in the rain and hits him to get inside. Noticing a fledgling falling from Chicku tree, she rushes to the garden in the front yard and holds the bird in her left palm. The bird is saved and protected from heavy raindrops. While she is stood in the rain, holding the fledging in her palm, the husband angrily calls her inside. He may not have seen what she was doing. The call does not reach her ears in the heavy rain droplets' sounds.

The working-class woman passes by noticing the Padma. A man peeps into the garden and towards the drenched Padma. The husband feels ashamed. The husband, who has lost his temper by now, calls her a whore loudly. She comes inside the house, drenched and water flowing down from her long hair. She feels like hugging his son, whom she had hit sometime back. She does not hug. Instead, she changes and contemplates what rain brought her. The rain symbolically washes her clutches, sorrows, pain, and loneliness.

The husband plays some record of pop music, which she does not like. It seems like he played deliberately to irritate her. She has no choice than being silent to his tastes. She feels she is neglected and murmurs herself,

“I do not have the strength to bear such terrible neglect

How trivial am I, in this place!

How alone in here, God!

I will die

My poor children! They will have no one!” (Rain, 198)

She feels like ending her life due to a lack of her identity within the family structure. All she has is caring for children and the house. She wanted something else than this monotonous life.

3.9. Establishment of Myth and Breaking of Old Myths

Sarah Joseph critically looks at the upbringing of women in religiously reserved family setups. Girls are taught or punished to orient in specific ways. They are not supposed to question the elders, nor do they look at other men, and they should always care for their values, virtues, chastity than anything. Those who lose these are unfit to be alive. Sarah Joseph punches such beliefs in many stories, including ‘Dimwittude’, ‘Coffee House’ and ‘The Masc. of Virgin’.

The word Dimwittude seems like the author invented it as an opposite of attitude and it also has the dictionary meaning of orientation of an aircraft relative to the travel direction. Gracekutty, a village girl raised in a hard life, somehow enters ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) as a trainee and now chooses to travel to space. With sheer

luck and unbelievable turns in her life from being a farming girl to a scientist, now she is worried about an attack on her chastity. She is afraid that her colleagues in space would rape and attack her chastity as she is the only woman travelling to an unknown world. She is on the crux now.

All her family has is five acres of rubber plantation and seven children at home. Probably, Appan, Chakkarakkalathil Thomy Mathachchan had nothing but farming and producing children. He is a typical Syrian Christian. Amma was always busy giving birth and raising them. Being the elder, Gracekutty had to take care of six of her siblings and household and farm work from milking cow to washing shit out of her sibling's asses. The author indicates how an elder girl is oriented to take up responsibility at a very young age. She can barely graduate from an intermediate programme (pre-degree). The author has brought an exciting criticism on how these Malayalee Christian set up offers a few choices to girls. Failed in studies, now at home, probably in 17 or 18 year, Gracekutty had three options before her. She was at home, playing the role of mother, had to decide on marriage, or to have inevitable choice of Malayalee Syrian Christian girl, nursing. Both parents are reluctant to send her to nursing studies as it is challenging to manage their farm and house in her absence. She was the right hand of her father. Somehow, Gracekutty makes her immediate sister, Leenakochu to play her role and proceeds to nurse studies. If not the elder daughter, the next one faces the same fate of being farm labor and domesticated worker.

Gracekutty lands as a trainee in ISRO and somehow, the senior scientist chooses her to be one of the members of the team travelling to space. She and three men are a space team under training now. Meeting their respective families is mandatory before the

space project. Till now, Grace was flying and suddenly thrown to ditch of same old cow dung. When she lands in Kerala's airport, she feels the cow dung all around and over her. Surprisingly, the society around seems more accommodative and progressive as Grace has become a national pride by now. However, her upbringing confronts her space travel aspiration. She was never in love with any boy, nor was she touched by them. She was punished for looking at the boy; her mother burned her thighs once for stealing a boy's look. Everyone around the house was concerned about her chastity as it is directly proportional to her marriage perspective. Going out of her village was no less than climbing Himalaya for her during her formation years. All these memories become a substantial hurdle for her now to cross the line.

The chastity saved till now is at stake. In the absence of any law, police, or neighbourhood, the men can be animals and eat Grace's much-protected virginity. She wished to lock her chastity with metal undergarments wore in Europe during the Victorian era. She is confused and clueless about the ways she can protect her chastity. She spends sleepless nights in her house. It becomes a puzzle to come out of it. She cannot withdraw from the space project now as it has become a national pride. Finally, her semi-literate sister, Leenakochu, clarifies her doubts by asking a simple question on how no one can touch each other as there is no gravity in space. Relieved, Grace takes up the space travel, and she is sure that her training to save chastity will save her somehow. Even if something unfortunate incident occurred, she wished to wander in the space instead of returning to her mother with shame.

The author is wittingly presenting how hard the girls are trained on their chastity, virginity, and repressed sexual knowledge. The girls could reach the other planet but can

never come out of the orientation given primarily by the mother at a young age. To whom she has to preserve the chastity? Should she sacrifice every opportunity to prove her virgin identity? Can't women decide what they want? Is it wrong to look or stare at men? What kind of religion are we practicing which speaks only of chastity, if not anything else? We should be at home as a happily married woman or should be a nurse. Can't we have any other identity?... are a few questions Sarah Joseph is voicing out through Gracekuty with sharp wit yet striking questions.

Sarah Joseph's stories are thickly composed with multi-layered meanings. They range from a question on sexuality to a set of values that need to recreate. If some stories speak about the marginalized community's struggle, some make the male gender question their acts. In specific stories, she demands a re-look into mythologies in fixing what was neglected. In doing so, she critically looks at the marriage system, religion, and the need for woman's inclusion in decision making.

An inevitable question she raises does include the politics of sexuality. According to her, a woman should convert sexual energy into resistance and more significant political effects. In doing so, she does not keep out the other gender as a culprit. It makes the dominant gender mirror their own mistakes despite not a single word (like in 'Conjugality', where an unhappy marriage reflects the same mistake in the institution of marriage).

Through 'The Moonlight Knows', Sarah Joseph makes both Unnikrishnan and Rama the culprits of their acts. The ideal man, Rama and the Holy Scripture, Ramayana, needs proper washing for the generations to come. Otherwise, the fate of Seeta keeps repeating. Both Unnikrishnan and Rama are culprits in the same act and have not altered

since then and now. Unless the wrong parts of the scripts are torn off and purified, a question of oppression persists.

If Asoka speaks about betrayal Rama to Seeta and her loved turning evil, 'Within Every Woman Writer' seeks liberty from the marital bindings and the socially constructed notions around the woman. Similarly, 'Dimwittude' attempts to punch the idea of protecting chastity instead of taking up opportunities to grow out of cow dung.

Hysteria is a constantly recurring characterization in Sarah Joseph's stories. It's probably a common manifestation of the mind of those living with guilt, unhappiness, and negligence. Unnikrishnan's lost mind in the Moonlight is connected to his own guilt of being an abuser. The daughter in 'The Masc. Of Virgin' is hysteric due to abuse on her body and the fact that she couldn't vent it out.

The children are both physically and mentally abused, turned into prostitution, servants, and stolen from their childhood. Similarly, the land is also exploited, just like the way the innocence of children is stolen. 'Vanadurga', 'To the Sea', and 'Broken Bridge' are the stories that speak about the children who never celebrate independence.

Dissatisfying marriage and the burden of it is another theme Sarah Joseph dealt with. In doing, she abundantly uses many references to mythologies, popular stories, and beliefs. If Conjugality speaks about unheard oppression within the institution of marriage, 'Jatiguptan and Janakiguptan' question woman's objectification as only meant for sex and the man's obsession with possession of arms. Even when a woman loves and is loyal towards her man, his suspicion could turn into murder.

Love...! is one such story that speaks about a young woman who is still a victim, whether she loved or got loved.

'Paapathara' search for a place where women bloom, escape the murder to save girl children. From the time of Mahabharata's Kamsa, children were killed only because they were of feminine gender. What do these highly sought sons do is kill themselves like in 'Dead Land'. The mothers of 'Dead Land' have nothing but children's blood to drink for water as their sons have destroyed everything. No mother raises their kids to kill each other.

Certain stories demand an alternative to the marital system, a family of clutches. Can a married woman have a better life? Can the concept of marriage be rejected? Yes, one can, as some of the characters of Sarah Joseph does. 'Scooter', 'Cloves' have those women who are not happy with what they are, a house, a child, and a husband. Both husband and wife share the irony of the relationship's burden, yet they drag it for another day to save the marriage for society. The women are fed up with husbands who only come to them for their lust. 'Cloves' Radha is in search of a lover who does not only look for lust and lovemaking. She is attracted to a dentist who does not look anywhere else except the place of diagnosis. Pramila and Jessy of 'Coffee House' question the very existence of marriage and the binding it brings on their sexuality.

3.10. Conclusion

In most of the stories of Sarah Joseph, the lead character is a woman, and generally, they are introduced in the first sentence itself. Thankamani ('The Moonlight Knows'), Seeta ('Asoka'), Mariam ('Hark!'). Gracykutty ('Dimwittude'), Lakshmikutty ('Paapathara'), Radha ('Cloves'), Anitha ('Vanadurga'), Durga ('To the Sea'), Chandrika Chechi ('Sweat-Marks') are few examples. Sometimes, the stories have just been addressed as pronouns or third person for their universal appeal. Man on 'Scooter', He,

She are used in stories like ‘Love’, ‘Scooter’, ‘Conjugality’, ‘Passion of Mary’. The characters are introduced with the ongoing process or in between the action.

Trees, rivers, deserted rivers, water demons (Jalapishaachu) birds are the constant metaphors in Sarah Joseph’s stories. They could be viewed in two ways. One goes by the argument of feminine values of nature (ecofeminism) and the other is the sole company of women playing an equal role in the absence of space for expression. If man destroyed or tamed nature, including the forest, river, flora and fauna, perhaps their reference is directly linked to oppression happening on a woman. The attack and burning of Lanka (‘Asoka’) and its rich natural heritage is no different from a widowing woman over there. Each tree, bird, destroyed, has a tale of unending sorrow like in ‘Asoka’. Such concerns are rooted in ecofeminism. In most of the stories, women are equated with nature.

The moonlight varies every day and sometimes one can see as if the whole landscape is lit, and sometimes it’s very musky, especially during half-moon days. It creates shades that could be confusing often and we tend to get misguided. The moonlight lights a person or a subject that can be identified as a mere shape from a distance and sufficient to identify vaguely but not possible to reveal the identity of an issue. Every time the search party for the missing husband is misleading towards the path he would have followed, the moonlight laughs even on dry sand glitters. It is very surreal of the moon laughing on the glittering patches of sand. Sand is not a mirror, and the moon is not sufficient light to reflect enough.

“What all could have happened in the night, only moonlight could orate and narrate if it had a bigmouth.”

Such metaphors are thickly used in all the stories of Sarah Joseph. An element of mystic, magical, and hysteria are pretty common in Sarah Joseph's stories. The marriage system, the relationship between man-woman and the atrocities conducted by men in domestic spaces are the recurring themes in Sarah Joseph's stories. Feministic and post-feministic arguments are logically offered in the stories of Sarah Joseph. There is criticism and a call for a new search in most of the stories. It strongly voices out that life is possible without a husband or bindings. Sarah Joseph is critical of the abusive marital relationship. The author is critical of a woman being tied to a relationship in which she is never happy. However, she also portrays a few men in empathetic tones, for example, 'Within Every Woman Writer'. It is unclear whether the wife has lost her mind or the husband is aware of it and trying to console the wife. For wife, it looks like he is penancing her, but the husband struggles to convey that the world she imagined never exists.

Chapter-IV

THE PROTEST OF THE SUPPRESSED - VOLGA

4.0. Introduction

Probably, Volga is the most vocal and political writer about gender issues among all three writers chosen for the study. While discussing gendered literature, history, battle, and one-sided patriarchal writing has ignored females and always exaggerated the men, the heroes. Volga points out the gaps which existed in this whole process of creating history and conditioning women.

Problems portrayed among all three writers, Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi are somewhat similar and vary at times. However, the latter seems to be loaded with more political ideas, and each story depicts the way men have separated paths for women and men through the patriarchal challenges which women face haven't changed much for thousands of years. The author points out those historical betrayals and offers an alternative to challenge that. While writing forward for the collection of political stories, Volga says the following phrases

"Other stories in this collection are about the web of myth woven around the bodies of women and the relationships of women with other women, men and society in general. Writers have not spared the description of even an inch of the female body. It is unnecessary to go into the exaggerations of these descriptions. Writers have described the female body in ways that they thought were mouth-watering. A collection of the poems on women's bodies would rival the Encyclopaedia Britannica in

size. The consideration of a woman's body is always attractive and can judge women through the colored perspectives. It is common in more practice in our patriarchal society...So much of their energy describing the physical beauty of women's bodies also tries to deny women any trace of individuality..." (From author's forward, *Political Stories*, Volga).

Feminism slowly enters our literature and gradually becomes a formidable force in this new atmosphere of feminist idealism that women try to read discover themselves. They begin to understand their bodies and their natural rhythms not according to the myths and ideology spread by others but based on their own experiences. This was not easy. However, for centuries, the body of the women had been suppressed. Suppressed, it had lost its strength and had become a stranger to the woman herself. Women lost respect for themselves and began to look down upon themselves. We will understand how gender roles were institutionalized to create women. Women who were employed do not have any liberty except for what is granted them by their husbands and fathers; inequalities in marriage continue and wait.

The researcher contemplated why these women writers who also share the same period are critical about the marital system? Within the patriarchal system, all three writers have written their major stories between 1980 and 2000. They would have been translated to other languages, including English, much later except a few nominal ones in the late 1990s. All these three writers have reached the pinnacle of literary popularity and received major literary awards in the mid-80s and mid-90s and this is also a time of drastic sporadic quick successive change in the Indian economic system. The city's demands changed drastically, also affecting the role of women.

Globalization came to India, turned most of the public sectors to private and created even more private enterprises. A portion of India's population moved to the city and it offered numerous jobs which included both genders. The cities are no more villages, and one cannot live with a few bucks they make towards the end of the year by selling off the crop or exchanging in the older barter system trading primarily agricultural products. The city demands more money to live with, more investment in technology and upgrading to technology investments of skills, education, and a costlier house compared to the village. Hence, this made men think of sending women to work.

The working woman now would have gained some liberty of moving out of the family space for a few hours, but it is an added work the women had to adapt themselves to work outside. Nevertheless, men have not adapted themselves to take care of the home. They hardly raise kids. They are ready to have fun with the kids but not baby sit for them. They could neither feed them nor comfortable crying toddlers. They do not have the patience to listen to these children's stories or tell a story to children to put them to sleep. So the work has become an added responsibility of women. What men want is the money they can bring by working outside. She has become more engaged and the man is happy in processing things from house to gold. If a woman does not have to answer to a family or a husband, to a father, she could decide on a life she could control and have a say in whether she wants a child or not. She could decide whether she is ready to take up the significant challenges and responsibilities. She could decide to satisfy her body needs yet not married. She could design a life outside the marriage system. Families, villages, communities arrange Indian marriages. If the married couple swore before a large

gathering fails to live up to society's expectations, it affects not only them but also the parents and the community and the village. The bride's family of the bride becomes laughing stuff.

"One of the biggest myths propagated by our society is that marriage provides security to a woman that women without a husband there is no security" from forward, (Political Story, 2).

Women outside the marriage could decide the life she wants. If she is not part of the marriage system, she does not need to live up to the expectations of men like father, father in law, husband, or brothers-in-law. She could design life in a much different way than it is in reality. Hence, all the writers have spent enough energy on creative expression to find an alternative to the marital system. The marriage system has become the most oppressive regressive system every man has found, especially for the role of women. If there is a space for women to live by themselves, it is to break away from the family, which is a reality. If you want to satisfy your body needs, she needs to own a body. If she wants to have a child, it is decided that she does not need a man if you want to raise a child.

It is always the bride's seeing ceremony and it is never a groom seeing ceremony. The practice itself shows the hypocrisy we society possesses. It is not just hideous but also vulgar because women are not given a chance to decide their lives. She needs to decide by herself and she needs to own her body. This is what all three writers have specifically emphasized in many stories. If Vaidehi had focused on the miniature of the society, a family village, Sarah Joseph's characters would have stepped out of the family and tried bringing a social circle like a coffee shop, a space outside the family. Volga has

gone one step ahead and that is what is discussed in the further chapters. A couple of sentences that have been written in the forwarding itself shows the strength of the clarity of her thought in finding a liberating path for women.

We are used to accepting the dictates on how our bodies should and should not look. We decide how we should look based on how a man wants to see us or does not want us from a completely saree-wrapped body to cleavage. If a man wishes to see a woman in a bikini, she is considered a sexy object. In the same way, every cloth she wears is decided by the man. Unfortunately, women think that is the way to dress. This can be extended too many spaces women have negotiated and firmly believe that it is a reality and woman's choice.

"We are trying to despise the very nature of our bodies. We are trained to worry about escaping what we have come to believe as the richness of our bodies. We accept the physiological functions of a body woman's body as being the consequences of a sinful nature and therefore the transit is committed on our body are own fault" (Political Story, 47).

Such beliefs have given royal highway tickets to abuse women, fundamentally against women's expression. The rapist, the abuses, the culprits' acts, including our fathers, husbands are all socially accepted, approved because women too believe that it is the way men have to be; that is the way women have to be. It is as simple as right-wing political leader saying wearing shorts lead to more rapes. If a man can walk bare chest, no one says it is indecent or showing cleavage, but women can never think of walking bare-breasted in public because women believe that it would invite trouble.

Volga's clearly depicts the alternative paths,

"It is as necessary to fight against the societal myths built around women's bodies as it is to think about power relationships built on the basis of class caste and gender...the two operations-operating our intellect and squash our individuality and the operation of intellect to strengthen our individuality are inseparable."

Volga is writing these words to attack the widespread belief that mind and body are different. Minds can be different. The body can be different, body needs can be different and the mind can be different. Volga is highly critical of such serious stands for body and mind and asserts strongly that it is not different. The body does not act if the mind does not need it and mine does not think if the body does not want it. It is not separate. It is inseparable, according to Volga. In such a situation, an attack on a women's body is an attack on the mind and intellect of women denying the expression, rejecting her opinion is denying her body as well. In this context, an individual's problem is also a societal problem. If Radha, Seeta or any other woman has an individual problem, it is no more unusual to attack. Sita is not seen as a human; instead, she has been perceived as the valuable ruby in the collection of Rama. Nevertheless, for Seeta, Rama was only ruby. Hence Rama's collections, Seeta's happiness is not just the question of Seeta in the space of Ramayana. It is a universal question by default.

4.1. Countering Patriarchal Ideologies

The author brings in the politics behind women's features or demands of women's features. Hair, the nose ring is also hyped as an essential feature. According to the context, the most beautiful feature on a woman's face is someone with a particular shape,

sized nose ring, or without nose ring. The central character Rama goes through a cycle of piercing nose, removing stud from the nose and again forced to piece nose. But Rama finds a way to resist; she is ready to break up the new marriage alliance if she is forced to wear nose ring again against their will. Stories like 'Shut Up!', 'Stony Breasts', 'A Political Story', makes it more daunting from the perspective of characters. 'Shut Up!' speaks about the mouth. A mouth that is nearly to express herself becomes a curse like Rama's nose ring and Janaki's mouth also goes through a cycle of silencing and instigating to speak and finally dictated to shut up.

In the story, 'Seeta's Braid', Seeta, a child, witnesses a servant in the neighbourhood head shaved for accused of stealing. A man does not need to punish a woman physically by beating her or harming her body. All he can do is just shave or clean a tonsured head that is a sign of greatest shame.

"She was sent away with her head shaved off clean and painted with white streaks of lime. She was neither beaten nor handed over to the police. Sita could not help getting herself hurt seeing the neighbors for shaving the maid's head rather than beating her or handing out to the police" (Seeta's Braid, 3).

Sita could not bear this pain. She cried that day so much. She cries in her sleep. The next day when she is about to be combed by the mother she still cries and that kind of incident witnessed by young women makes them respect their hair so much. If they lose their hair, they will leave a futile life. Their life is valued by the amount of hair they possess on their head. Shaving of the head is the greatest shame a woman can have. Such kinds of assertions are baseless and question the very nature of men's constructed world.

If a man can shave his head and be a hero, why does society treat a woman's shaved head as worthless?

According to the author, the beauty industry survives only on the woman's strongly ingrained beliefs. If women wish to have good-looking hair, they have to visit a salon, and they have to buy shampoos; they have to apply different kinds of oils. Even if they do not have hair, they will get fake hair which still costs. There is no escape for women. The beauty industry is a trillion-dollar business primarily owned by men.

"I do not know if these things help hair grow or not, but their business has certainly grown into crores of rupees. If the hair falls out, the business of fake hair will bloom as long as our delusions about our hair continue to grow. Their business will flourish" (Seeta's Braid 8).

This is what Subhadra, an elderly neighbour says to Sita. Subhadra is an activist mind set relative who clarifies the doubts of Sita whether to have long or short hair. It is supposed to be the women's decision that the word Subhadra convinces Sita. The decision of the woman arose entirely with the woman's consciousness.

It could be that hair on the chin or moustache is basically connected to hormones. If boys are proud of their growing moustache and beard, why women are seen low if they have the same hair. She becomes an object of fun. Similarly, Sita's niece falls ill, becomes sick, and gets into depression because of worries about facial hairs. The author uses an analogy of a woman's facial hair to punch the long-existing looking down a woman because of it.

"While the boys went around proudly showing off their sprouting moustaches and beard, this girl was struggling to get rid of it. God knows what evil she had done in the past. She is paying for it," thought Sita" (Sita, 9).

This questions how the woman (Seeta) was made to think that it is a curse to get hair on the face and it is connected to Karma. By inserting such simple questions, the author is trying to offer a sense of gender neutrality to hair. It is just hair on the head, moustache, or somewhere else on the human body. Such simple questions are highly political and have come out quite effectively in Volga's stories.

Seeta now owns her hair and people stopped criticizing her long hair as she has grown old. She should have shaved when her husband died decades back.

"... grow old and weak as its captive and fall off like hair? if I could escape from the grip? What would have happened if I had not been controlled like that? What would have been?" (Sita's Braid, 10).

"It is just the hair where there are many dimensions of gender society constructions. What about other parts of the women's body? Isn't it also controlled, rejecting one societal demand, is also a rejection of long-suppressed freedom?" (Sita's Braid, 5)

Volga's experimentation with explaining the politicized body organs does not stop only at Seeta's braid. The author questions eyes, nose, mouth, breasts and many other body organs that are stereotyped according to men are themes in the other stories.

"You look beautiful with that beauty spot on your face, cheeks and the black kohl lining your white eyes" (Eyes, 11).

A girl with big eyes is considered to have a beautiful face. A boy can have the tiniest eyes like a leaf of tamarind. However, she does not enjoy the freedom the boy can enjoy. A girl is never allowed to see things around or before her. She is supposed to shut her eyes. The author questions the way women's eyes are routine to see limited things before them.

"My mum and sister-in-law look only at the ground when they go out. I don't understand why my mum scolds me on top of that, why do you stare in all directions? Look at the ground and walk and often mother hits me on the head looking away" (Eyes, 12).

The author is questioning the way eyes are trained to see things like their mothers and sisters-in-law. They are the role models to train the young eyes. A woman is supposed to cry and it is the primary reason why she has eyes. If she does not cry, she is considered as someone with a hard heart. She has to cry when her husband scolds and she has to win the men over with pleasing teary eyes.

A woman cannot express her joy in her eyes. The author brings in the analogy of father and mango. When she sees her father coming home with a basket of mangoes, she feels like screaming and jumping with the joy of seeing mango. But she can't do so as to be forbidden from expressing her enthusiasm until the mango is on a plate. She can't even smile or laugh while eating. She has to eat quietly. The other questions of the eye usage and purpose of seeing mango, jumping on it with joy becomes an unwanted exercise.

Kalyani, a little elder to our central character in the story, 'Eyes', tries to help a boy fallen from his cycle and his leg is sprained. She helps to fix the cycle and helps him to stand and walk. It is registered as a complaint with Kalyani's father. Kalyani is beaten

badly for helping a stranger. The father of Kalyani insists and dictates that she should not see anybody on her way except the ground sufficient for her to walk or should not help those who are in pain.

Similarly, the eyes of women and the face of a human is valued based on whether she has good, big eyes. When a woman working with a brother comes home happy, she is perplexed at her bare forehead. Having no battu becomes the stuff of criticism by mother. The daughter fears whether her eyes too become like the set of her mother's eyes. If so, she will not be able to see what her eyes can naturally see.

"Her brothers would always be roaming the village, coming home just in time to eat and sleep. They would talk and shout joyfully when they were out playing in the streets" (Shut Up!, 24)

Janaki was always pulled into restricted walls and she was never encouraged to speak out. Contrarily the boys had all the freedom to roam the village, speak loud and have joyful moments. When the brothers are having fun swimming in the canal, Janaki also decides to have fun but not in the canal; in the water tub behind the house. She undresses, gets into the tub and with happiness, she screams. For doing so, Janaki is punished by her grandmother and father with a slap,

"Shut up, you shameless creature," utters the grandmother (Shut Up!, 24).

As Janaki grows, she realizes that her mouth is a complex organ. She stopped speaking. She stops understanding that the mind is the origin of words. She is married off and she does not speak much. She starts speaking like a child, blabbering, cooing and struggling to construct a couple of sentences. Finally, she succeeded in speaking with

much effort by time. The husband encourages her to speak. However, she questions her husband's mistakes. The irritated husband shuts her down, just like her mother, father and grandmother did in the past.

"Shut up with such a big mouth; never did any good for a woman. You are women shut up and behave like one" (Shut Up!, 28).

Hearing this fatwas, Janaki laughs like a madwoman till her eyes are filled with water. She laughed till she could not stand anymore and rolled on a bed. Her mouth is restricted, encouraged to speak and when she speaks her mind, she is tortured like hell.

"Why are you laughing so loudly? Are you a woman or what? Screamed the husband.

The laughter did not stop until it turned into a sob, "shut up shut up shut up!"

The words ring in Janaki's ears, even when her ears are closed. The words have settled in her head now. They are in her blood (Shut Up!, 29).

The story of Janani in 'Shut Up!' reflects the story of many oriented or groomed women not to speak. When they say their mind, men prefer them shutting their mouths. The caution might come through verbal abuse or physical abuse. In either case, a woman ensures that she doesn't speak much as it is ingrained in her blood. A woman is supposed to speak sufficient words to make the husband calm and happy. Not a single word about his character, personality, misdoings, affairs, money or his domination. The author is trying to voice out her opinion of women's ability to speak, which could potentially shake the fundamental foundation of men.

4.2. Institutional Establishment: Domestic Space and Questioning the Conventions

Like Sarah Joseph and Vaidehi, Volga criticizes the marriage system and the sacrifices women have to make. To just leave with the nose she has been given, the story of Rama goes through hell and heaven. The grandmother made Rama's nose bleed while piercing when she was three years old. Because of the resistance of the Rama, two holes got pierced at two different places in the nose and the jeweller made a big hole joining both the holes. Rama falls sick; she grows older with a big hole on her nose and it becomes a hurdle for marriage proposals. She has studied bachelor, is employed, independent yet finds it difficult to find a perfect groom. She is criticized by her classmates' friends forever, living with a hole on her nose and black skin around the hole.

"That is the only problem for you," they told her.

"Why is it a problem? It does not interfere with my breathing. I can still smell things. I do not have any nose-related diseases. I have not even had a cold in 4-5 years. What is the problem with my nose" Rama asked

"Well, it doesn't interfere with all those other things. But it will surely come in the way of your getting married," responded Saila, (Nose Stud, 19).

Shobha is rejected because she is too white. Vani is rejected for having big eyes. Apparently, big eyes have weird looks, according to people. According to the parents, Rama is rejected for not being very fair because her complexion had to be a little fair. Rama goes through embarrassment and humiliation because of the nose hole and black

skin around it. But the father was unable to give more dowry, found a surgeon, and got it fixed apparently. When she was studying, nobody had a nose ring, and that was out of fashion. The teacher who wished to marry Rama wanted a diamond nose ring on Rama's nose. When she is demanded to get a nose pierced, she resists that she will not marry. While criticizing the man's construction of beauty and women for having a particular size of eyes, nose, and ears lips just like the way romantic literature was constructed, that is critical of the specifications and the society regulations to accept women as one among them. The marriage is not between a man and a woman. It's a marriage between a woman with specific body organs with particular proportions and ratios and these rules do not apply for a groom.

The author criticizes marriage as a process of selling women and ensuring children come out of our uterus. Women should have no meaning otherwise in the absence of marriage and the potential to bear children. The author criticizes 'the marriage system to the core and calls it a never-ending business' (A Political Story, 47).

One thing which Volga is obvious and constantly criticizes is marriage. In most of the stories from the political collection stories including the title story, 'Political Stories' the natural look at the system married the conjugal relationship and staleness monotony the operation rejection of opportunities reduction of the women's intelligence creating is towards only family responsibility all these are recurring themes in most of the stories of Volga. The wind lost his fingers in a workplace accident; the wife takes care of him, but spend does not care surely because she loses a child and can bear no more children. She is just a mother for his children but for her he was everything.

"She kissed his blood-stained medicine smelling bandage with my lips tenderly and lovingly, but you had other concerns about his job. How do I

work without fingers? What would he do if a factory threw him out? Would anybody I remember him? No matter how much I tried to talk courage into him, he remained depressed. I managed to put him into bed eventually with sleeping pills. But I remained awake through the night watching him" (A Political Story, 50-51).

Despite all the sacrifices, she is treated just like a machine

"a child who could have grown up to handle the machine in factory work in bank labour on a construction project or become a doctor but no conditions were made for my efforts and no helping and was extended to me I was thrown out of my job, nobody came to console me, to comfort me or stand by me I was all alone. How come? How come? How come? (A Political Story, 59).

Volga critically looks at all the instruments oppressing women's expression. Sushila ('Torment', 'Political Stories'), who grew up in a middle-class family with all restrictions and hiding are an absolute pleasure, is looked down on and treated ill for being herself. She actually tries to be herself, which is not approved off. When she was married, initially, she was happy. But her behavior becomes a bit odd for the husband. It is not her behavior that is unnatural. It was actually expressing herself.

"....after the wedding I was quite happy in comforting him and being comforted. I was quite pleased with myself as a woman for pleasing him and enjoying sex. I was eager for it. Though I did not pay much attention to it initially, it was not long before I noticed that my behavior agitated my husband. I was astonished to hear him say that it was unnatural for a

woman to desire sexual pleasure.... I did not realize I should hide my desire and pretend to have none that I should feign to be interested in sex and behave as if I did it just to please him" (Torment, 75).

A man can have a lewd expression, show his eagerness, and force women for his pleasure. If a woman expresses the same, it becomes unnatural. She is not supposed to do so. If she does, she is the same as a person practicing promiscuity. She is unfit to be a respectable married woman.

"I kissed him when I had the urge. I would go to him on my own and take him into my arms. He would be uncomfortable about it. Gradually I realized that my behavior raised suspicions in him about my character. I made strenuous attempts to suppress my desire but depriving my body of the pleasures it so naturally desired left a void" (Torment, 75).

Slowly the relationship turned worse and ugly. Somehow they will have two children and life goes on. She manages housework, office work and taking care of children. But her husband never liked any of that. He used to be suspicious, constantly inventing new reasons for her happiness and he decides that there is another man in her life and seeing him makes her feel happy.

"All that marriage does is kill the joy bubbling from inside you! Turning an individual into a slave, a machine" (Torment, 81).

Volga attempts to address different issues from subject to subject with varied issues in her stories. If the beginning stories focus on criticism about men's gaze at women's body parts, the middle stories like 'Torment', 'Marriage', 'Walls' speak about

how is regressive a marriage system in practice for women. In Walls, both working women Chandrika and her mother-in-law Revathi begin understanding each other beyond the societal constructions of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law relationships. Daughter-in-law Chandrika sees mother in Revathi and Revathi sees daughter in daughter-in-law Chandrika. Sharat grandson is expelled from the school and Chandrika seeks the help of mother in law. Her husband criticizes Chandrika as the sole reason for spoiling Sharat. Having lost the balance between works, home and raising son, Chandrika can no longer take her husband's criticism of her husband.

Revathi comforts Chandrika by telling how Ravi, Chandrika's husband, was naughtier during his childhood. He was neither good in studies nor behaved like a good kid. Chandrika was surprised knowing that her husband was worse than her son. Every mother goes through it. This kind of sharing makes the bonding between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law stronger.

Revathi cautions,

"Don't pay attention to what Ravi says. He is a man. What does he know about the problems of mothers?" (Walls, 135).

Enlightened Chandrika shares her prejudices about Revathi. She had seen worse things happening in her family as a child, her mother's juggling with her mother-in-law. In general, society has constructed a pretty bad mold of women's roles, especially in the marriage system.

"I was afraid of the mother-in-law from before the marriage. In fact, right from my childhood, I was afraid of the very word you know how mother in law torture daughter in law. I used to hear that daughters-in-law

committed suicide because they could not put up with their pestering mothers-in-law. I decided even before I met Ravi that I would stay away from my mother-in-law. When I came to know that Ravi was your only son and you did not have anybody else, I was terrified.” (Walls, 135)

Such strong constructions of young women ought to be disproved by the maturity of older women giving space for each other's expression.

Shantha comforts Shobha in the story, ‘What is to be done?’

"Unmarried women are accepted as intelligent unless men can benefit from them in some way, but they cannot be trusted. They always suspect if a married woman is intelligent, then they try to separate as much as possible" (What is to be done?, 203).

The author is trying to break the walls we (or men) have constructed between each member of society, especially women. Over time, women have oppressed and imposed patriarchal values on a woman. They are more perseverant than men in some instances. The demand for dowry and killing daughters-in-law is more by mothers-in-law than men. The author is trying to break these stereotypes and unite all women as one. Unionization of women and ignoring the social role is a primary condition to set their foot firmly in the liberation path. The author is of the firm belief of the same.

4.3. Anti-Patriarchal Voices

Like Sarah Joseph, Volga also finds liberation in working women's spirit and her financial independence. Volga strongly argues that a woman working is necessary and makes them not dependent on their husband. Unfortunately, her employability itself can

become a problematic issue for husbands like Susheela in the story torment. He tries to convince his wife not to work. When she denies it, he pretends to love her and insists on decreasing her work outside the house. When she is firm about it, he scolds, abuses and eventually assaults her.

"You should quit this college job. It has made you headstrong", he ordered me one day.

"If I am headstrong, that is my nature. What has that got to do with my job? I would not quit even if god comes down and asks me to" (Torment, 82).

The opinion of Sushila, which is of a very specific tone, is also a universal opinion of Volga. She wants women to work. She wants women to be independent. As the story proceeds, Sushila working outside becomes a critical issue to decide to keep the marriage knot or break it. Then husband tries to control the money she is earning. He tries to snatch the almira key. It becomes a daily affair of the fight to control the money. He throws her out of the house. Sushila could not go back home or go to her parents' house. The parents strongly believe that a married woman coming back to parents' house is a curse.

In the story 'Marriage' the writer's opinion on marriage is crystal clear. Rajani who always hated marriage is now enthusiastic about getting married. She tells her dearest friend Nirmala,

"Trust me, marriage is nothing but a business just to prevent women profiting from it. They created these illusions like love, fidelity, motherhood and such garbage. But in truth, marriage is profitable for

women too. You just think of me. I cannot feed myself unless I have a job paying me 1000 rupees a month. But if I marry a guy making 2000 rupees I will be fine. It is true I will have to do household work. But it won't be any order then what I will have to do in any other job. No job would compensate me any better. Anyway, isn't marriage a more profitable deal?" (Marriage, 105).

In the story 'Security', two women struggle with a man. Rajarao, a married man, father of two children, has an extramarital relationship with Sujatha. Dhanalakshmi the wife of Rajarao happens to meet Sujata. Sujata is guilty that she is breaking the marriage knot of Dhanalakshmi and Rajarao. To her surprise, she comes to know that Dhanalakshmi is a beautiful woman but put down by her husband. In fact Rajarao who gives a very glossy picture of himself, has taken one lakh dowry during the marriage. Dhanalakshmi wants to kill her husband. Finally Sujata and Dhanalakshmi become a good friends. They will start a hostel for working women. It becomes good business for them. They realize that they could live better without dependence on a man.

When Sujatha reveals that she is the one Dhanalakshmi's husband was seeing, she is not angry, nor does she hate Sujata.

"Trust me I could never get a good night's sleep. In fact, I started being myself only after I decided to separate from him. Today I have none of those insecurities. I can't tell you how happy. Knowing that you are responsible for all this I can't help being fond of you" (Security, 124).

The story 'What is to be done?' is the most extended story in the collection of all translated stories of Volga. Shanta and Shobha, college mates, meet after two decades.

Shobha is 100 times intelligent than any boy around her; in fact, smarter than Shanta lives a domesticated life. Shanta had clarity about life and her career. She is of the firm belief that marriage is a futile exercise and a job is more primary than a marriage.

Shanta does not want to marry. She behaves like a revolutionary. She struggles to study further after B.Sc. On the other hand, Shobha is married off immediately after B.Sc. Santa wants a free life, economic independence.

"Yes, I will, and I will live my way. I will read as long as I want. When I feel like sleeping, I will. I wake up at my will. I will invite to my house the people I like. I will not if I don't like it. Will not be allowed to enter my house", declares Santa. (What is to be Done?, 181)

Volga's intention in her text is multi-dimensional. It attempts to educate readers about seeing their bodies and listening to their minds call at one level. On the other level, it attempts to bring all women together. She is not worried if her husband sees someone as she wants to get away from him. It is pointless to hold back the family when there is no happiness or space for expression. Volga's call to start a new life, a motivation to create a new life at any age or any point of life, is more like a solution to end every suffering. Probably this is the best way a woman can challenge patriarchy. However, the author relies heavily on economic independence than the intellectual. This would be hard for most women in a rigid society like India, where women are not allowed to work in many communities. Even if they are working, the money is controlled by men. It is essential to tackle these issues first.

4.4. Post-Feminist Perspective

The stories of Volga take the learnings of post-feminism to the texts and constantly attempt to offer a solution to end the woman's suffering. It's a post-modernistic and post-feministic assertion, especially in the context of denial of the impositions on the physical body of women and marriage.

In 'Torment', the husband takes away the children on a fine day from school without Sushila's knowledge. Sushila was left with no option except to bargain for the same old life. Even the lawyer she meets proposes the same. She decides not to go back. Even the children who have come out of her body become his property because they are not young anymore as her husband also has a better job.

"It is not whether the children are your property. You yourself are the property of your husband and he has the rights to anything his property produces. That is the current law" (Torment, 95).

Despite all the hurdles, Sushila never stops fighting to get back her children, to stay sane. She believes that she is a mother and she decided to bring a child into the world. She gave the blood for it and she is ready to fight until our last breath. There is no question of a compromise.

Shanta meets Shobha after two decades. Shobha is living a domesticated, humiliating life with her husband, Mohan. Shanta could not have passed her B.Sc. without Shobha tutoring her. However, in reality, she is living a low life; less intelligent Shanta is in better economic status.

"What he has on you is an authority not love you have accepted his authority, but you don't love him that is why you feel like that" (Torment, 97).

This comes when Shobha dislikes Mohan's kiss during her initial marriage days. Shanta knows that a kiss can become a very alluring act if both men and women genuinely love each other. Shobha cuts off Shanta's friendship for being transparent and criticizing her decision to get married. In reality, decades later, Shobha realizes each word Shanta uttered. According to Shanta, every woman should behave by themselves even if society criticizes them as crazy; they have to deny men's' restrictions and their constructed world. It is better if women are educated and economically independent. It is even better if they can walk out of the marriage.

According to Rajani women do not treat marriage as a business. They drone themselves in sentiment, thinking marriage would bring great happiness. In reality, according to Rajani, it is not. If a woman treats a marriage as a deal, she could have the rights she could fight for employment as such an employee demand. She is more like a businesswoman doing to get good returns on investment. To satisfy her bodily lust, she cannot call it love in a relationship. It is lust, is a better word. A married woman is not easily suspected, even if she has an affair. Even if she is caught, it is unlikely that she will be punished. Instead the man is punished.

Puzzled, Nirmala asks Rajani, can a marriage be treated as a business? When Nirmala tries to hint the same to the groom Rajani is going to marry, Rajani herself opens up the truth.

"We want to live together without getting married. But our folks do not think that is respectable. So they are telling everybody that we are getting

married. On the first of next month, we both will move into a new house. Our folks are announcing that we are getting married that day. That is all there is it too" (Marriage, 108).

Vivek, who has agreed to Rajani's arrangement says,

"We will live life to friends. We are not like husband and wife" (Marriage, 108).

Volga's emphasis on the knowledge of the law is evident in many of the stories. While showcasing the loopholes in the existing law, the author also argues the best part of legality concerning marriage, custody of children and sharing wealth and resources. The author proposed that a woman could leave with marriage, without children and as she wishes. She could construct a life beyond the societal construction of a woman's role.

4.5. Oppression of Woman's Body

Every part of the women's body is trained to serve the wishes of the man. Each story is titled on the same lines. 'Eyes', 'Nose Stud', 'Stoney Breasts', 'Shut up', all speak about how a woman cannot see what she wishes, cannot speak her mind, cannot decide to wear jewellery on her nose. In the story, 'A Political Story', the woman loses her identity because she can no longer have children.

She turns into a machine that does not function anymore but comes in the way of everyone. Her husband loses a few fingers during an accident in the workplace. The whole union stands with him and ensures enough compensation and reduced work. In a couple of months, he becomes almost normal with the care and love a wife gives him.

By the time she becomes pregnant. However, it is a complicated pregnancy. The fetus grows in the tube instead of the uterus. As a result, ovaries and tube bursts are

removed to save her. As a consequence of the operation, she can no longer bear a child. She becomes barren forever. She becomes an object of obscure, becomes a subject of questioning. Her parents look down on her as a disgrace. Her mother-in-law criticized her directly. Her husband stops speaking and behaves differently. It concludes when the husband decides to divorce and marry someone else. The job of a woman is to marry, bear children, and raise her husband's children. Otherwise, she has no life, no identity, no other purpose is found in her existence. She is just an old sewing machine coming in the way for everybody but of no use in reality.

"The marriage was meaningful only if his lineage could be extended. Otherwise, they were meaningless. They were told so this job was meant simply for bearing and raising his children. The job I acquired by paying a bribe of 50,000 rupees. Now that I failed in my job, they would throw me out and hire somebody in good health. This is what the real meaning of marriage was? Why did they hide this reality and allow us to keep daydreaming about love, affection and companionship? Why this deception? Because if it was really called a job, that employees would make demands as for compensation, inquiry about bonuses. But if it was called a family life if it was called pativratayam" (A Political Story, 58).

The story, 'Stony Breasts', takes the oppression to a different level on women's bodies. If 'Eyes', 'Nose Studs', ears are subjected to routine training, the breasts have become an object of physical assault. Sushila was all fine as a child and it changed when she got to have breasts. Everyone around her uncle, neighbour, the teacher, a stranger in the bus, a stranger in the auto, even a husband obsessed with the breast. Sushila's gross

fear to go out. She wishes she did not have breasts. She feels like cutting them off and discarding them. Her husband squeezes her breasts during lovemaking without even understanding whether it hurts or not. In the process, she becomes numb to any touch. Her breasts become stones. Now she doesn't feel anything no matter who touches it.

"No sense of touch, no tenderness, no goose bumps, no shivers down the spine. She turned into stone" (Stony Breasts, 40).

She feels no pain when her breasts are about to be removed because of cancer. The author brings in the analogy of cancer, criticizing the men's gaze and obsession with breasts. It's cancer in the minds of society, not in the breast of Sushila. Sushila's cancer can be cured by taking out a breast. But what about societal eyes and minds which are cancerous to the core?

Doctor Hema consoles Sushila when she fears postoperative death.

"No, you don't have to be afraid of anything. We will completely remove cancer from spreading in your breasts, and you will fully recover to good health. There is nothing to be afraid of. You will not die. But full-grown cancer in our society threatens all. What do we do about it? How do we cut it off? It affects all of us indiscriminately. What do we do about it?" (Stony Breasts, 44).

Volga is highly critical of any forms of abuse on a woman and condemns them out rightly. Some of the characters go to the level of beating back their husbands when they cross a line. According to Volga, abuse of the body is also the abuse of the mind and woman's existence.

4.6. Resistance to Religion and Culture

The story of 'Sita's Bread' or hair does not stop there Sita studying in a missionary school, is shocked to see young nuns shave cleanly. If you are not going to be married, then ever going to be windows then why the hell do these women have to shave their heads? A nun looked more beautiful without hair. Though why is hair shaved? What kind of religion demands the devotees, the saints the nuns to shave their heads? The author criticizes two religions in the same paragraph through a maid's head to nuns. The author is questioning the stupid ritual in both Hinduism and Christianity.

In 'A Political Story', the daughter calls for a larger union, just like employees in a factory. If you are together, you can bargain, you can command and you can demand.... It is necessary to unite.

"Why did they become separated as mother, wife, daughters, mother in law, daughter in law and sisters-in-law? Who separated them who is receiving them in the name of family and motherhood who is getting enriched by this fraud" (Political Story, 59).

The author calls the marriage system a fraud, a fraud to divide women labor, a fraud to keep each woman in different roles and make them suppress of themselves. The author is calling for a union that is universally applicable for everyone in a single tone. They have to be seen as women, not as mothers, wives and daughters in-laws. Only if they can do that can they win over patriarchy. If all men behave in the same way, why don't women have a single stance? Why don't they come together to oppose these patriarchal moves?

Mythological References

Like the stories of Sarah Joseph and Vaidehi, Volga's stories too take a portion from mythology and the celebrated women characters like Sita, Shakuntala and Radha are referred. With simple questions on their sexuality and bodies, a mundane question on the objectification of women's beauty, Volga attempts to bring a new politics. For example, the first story in the *Political Stories* a collection of stories published in 2007 as a story titled 'Sita' Braid' it is not the site with the backdrop of a devastated Lanka tour (Sarah Joseph's Seeta) or mothers touching beheaded children on the battlefield. Volga's Seeta is a simple woman, semi-illiterate, married early, mostly from an upper-caste family. She is forced to take up the higher responsibility of taking care of kids as the risk increases with her husband passing away as early as 30. The mother slowly institutionalizes her with ideas instilled strongly in Seeta that a woman's long hair is beautiful. Sita was raised with so much appreciation for her hair, whether she was a school-going girl or a married woman. It was an object of adjective for mentioning women's beauty. She always had pride that there is something that is an integral part of her identity through her long hair.

"Right from a very young age, Sita had understood that her hair was important. The very realization that she was a girl dawned on her because of her hair; her mother used to take very good care of her silky black castle as is true. She would sundry various kinds of leaves, flowers; soak them in hot coconut oil and work the extract and apply directly into Sita hair. When she was a busy be on the days she anointed Sita head" (Sita's Braid, 1)

By doing so, Seeta was made to believe that a woman has respected only long hair and if she grows strong and thick hair.

As a grown-up girl, Seeta can have just one braid instead of two. A girl transformed from childhood to adolescence to adulthood should have a single braid. The single braid becomes the sign of a biologically grown body; that body could be handed over to a man. The single braid is a sign that she is ready to be married off. Sita has a simple question.

"Why does one need hair? Is it the brain under the hair that is important?

You are using your brain just for thinking about your hair and caring for it.

You better forget about your hair and start using your brain for something else" (Sita's Braid, 5).

Despite having such political questions on the existence and notions created around women's hair, teeth still continued to care for our hair just like she always did. That is critical about women's obsession with their beauty which is the men constructed idea on women. The author is very clear about what she is presenting. If women care to study and move up the ladder, it would be more beneficial than having good hair from school.

After she dropped out from the school she is married off. The first three months were of praise and then she started complaining because she spent extra time taking care of her long hair. The author brings many politics questioning the need for the hair itself. If men need not leave long hair, if men can cut their hair short, why is a woman not allowed to do so? If she is allowed to grow hair to please the man, mostly the husband, then what is its use for herself? Demanded to have long hair, thick hair, silky hair only to please her husband may not logically justify the purpose. When the husband is no more, she does not have anybody to please, so it is better she shave off head tonsure.

If Sarah Joseph brings in the analogies of mythology constant and attempts to reinterpret the mythologies, Volga uses the traditional beliefs as material to critically look at women's identity. She denies everything that writers have praised of women's bodies, denies the necessity to grow hair, has studs, or even look beautiful. Volga questions the fundamental appreciation around the woman. Who decides the parameters of beauty? Who should be called beautiful or not so attractive? These are some of the questions Volga is raising through her texts.

In the story, by Vaidehi 'Saugandhi's Swagata/Saugandhi's Soliloquies', a similar stance is expressed to that of Volga. Saugandhi, a working woman, is about to get a new house because she has been transferred to another town. The father of Saugandhi, who looks exquisite respected man, always speaks gentle words reveals the other side of being the typical father. Saugandhi sees a violent monster in the innocent face of her father. The father ensures that she gets a rented house where no man can come home. He finds the landlady, who is a widow and there is no chance of any man walking to her house in the presence of that landlady. He also ensures that a maid is hired to sleep with Saugandhi during nights. It is more than just protecting my daughter. It is to ensure the chastity of Saugandhi. Saugandhi craves for the man's body. It is not just for fulfilling her body needs. She wants to be rebellious. She wants to prove that her father is wrong. She wants to prove her womanhood. She gets attracted to a man, and every knock on the door, whether a woman, a milkman, or a paperboy, assumes a man has come to give all his love and share the love Saugandhi is offering. Unfortunately, toward the end, when she goes with so much anxiousness to open the door. All she can see is that her mother brought her father to stay forever with Saugandhi. She is caged with her father and ready to transfer to another cage when she is married to a strange man. The story echoes with the Volga's

characters, Suseela, Janaki, Subhadra, Padmakka and many others. In the marriage or in an employed situation, a woman always lives with bitterness and can have only the limited liberty given by men, whether its father or a husband.

In many stories of Sarah Joseph, like in 'Jatiguptan and Janakiguptan', 'Vanadurga', 'To the Sea', 'Scooter', a woman is depicted in a limited societal space she is moulded to live as a wife and has to be a mother. She has to be a caretaker of the home. She has to be the backbone and spinal cord of the family. In the whole process, she forgets that she is also a human being. She is also a woman having a sexual organ which she wants to control her happiness and biological needs. She is not satisfied with what it demands. There is always a biological transaction between the men and women as for the wish of men and suitable to the time of men even without knowing the rhythm of sex.

In that relationship, Sarah Joseph, Vaidehi both have written stories in political tones and voiced out their uncomfortableness or displeasure towards the marital system. Volga also says the same thing in her stories. One can see the stories of Volga are more vocal and sound more direct than Vaidehi. Vaidehi draws in the limited space of house, street, village and their challenges to women who live in the society. Sarah Joseph's canvas is much larger. It travels from city to city, town to town, and state to state. However, Volga's stories broadly transition towards pan India, an Indian typical patriarchal value system rooted in us. The women of Volga signify the problems and it appeals to any woman.

4.7. Conclusion

Towards the end of the story, 'What is to be Done?' by Volga, both Shanta and Shobha proceed to a university where Shobha is admitted to continue her studies. It comes symbolically as women being law practitioners and posing resistance to men

constituted world. By knowing the law, a woman could at least deconstruct the authority she is subjected to bend down. The first time being late to home, Shobha is not afraid anymore.

"I am the one who causes trouble. It is late for my life. It is time to start the struggle without further delay. I will fight no matter what happens now. I know what I want and what I should do know" (What is to be done?, 204).

This declaration of Shobha sounds like a call for every woman suffering in an unhappy, regressive marital relationship. In most of the stories of Volga chosen for the current study. Strong criticism of marriage, parental methods, and women's inability to realize their strengths is the solid content of Volga's short stories. As a solution, Volga strongly argues that knowledge of the law, women's education, economic independence, and a space to own and act as they wish are necessary for a woman.

Though Volga's stories are of varied topics, the stories included in the study are highly political. Hence the book is titled *Political Stories*. It is necessary to pioneer in its ways as it brings the style of political essay and creative analysis together. If read in one go, the stories might look like a series of essays put together to educate a woman. The marriage, resistance against violence, self-expression, and need for literacy are the premises of each story in the collection. It is essentially a good text, to begin with, to understand feminism and post-feministic ideologies. However, the language fails to involve a larger audience like Sarah Joseph's stories. In making it more straightforward, the language seems more like plain statements mostly borrowed from post-1980's second wave of feminist movements.

Chapter-V

*Feminism in the Domestic
Space-Vaidehi*

Chapter-V

FEMINISM IN THE DOMESTIC SPACE-VAIDEHI

5.0. Introduction

The characters of Vaidehi share some similarities with Sarah Joseph's characters, and some resemble the continuation of Shivarama Karanth's well-acclaimed novels (Chenni, 2013). Schizophrenia, a hysteric mind set of certain woman characters, is quite similar in both the writer's works. Like Sarah Joseph, Vaidehi too relies on the cultural beliefs, breaking down the mythology to reconstruct an alternative discourse and a sharp criticism on the institution of marriage is prevalent throughout the stories of Vaidehi. If Sarah Joseph relied on a typical Malayali Syrian Christian family setup, Vaidehi's characters would root in the Brahminical upbringing of coastal Karnataka. Though the Brahmin caste is a forward community, the women in those families wouldn't be different from oppressed community members. They are never treated equally, nor are they given control of economic affairs. They are dependent yet satisfy their innermost desires only by sharing them with other women and rarely step out of their respective houses.

Vaidehi's characters don't break out or come out from the family despite everyday oppression. Nor do they attempt to bring in an alternative life. What most of the characters do is learn a coping mechanism. For example, Akku seems lunatic, someone with a mental illness. However, she doesn't hesitate to reveal the secret affairs of men around her despite her being physically tortured to shut her mouth. People are scared to touch her because of her sharp tongue. She seems more like a person who learned a method to sail through everyday disappointments instead of a mentally retard person.

Similarly, Ammacchi, Beena, Puttammatte, her granddaughter are no different than Akku in facing the world around them. This is what Jane Austin attempted in all her novels. She portrayed the middle-class world she was living in in the 19th century English community. Many critics point out that Austin was restricted to represent the women set in family obligations. However, Austin's canvas was bigger than just women attending to family obligations. There is a sense of class struggle evident in Austin's novels, along with relooking at our constructed values.

Similarly, Vaidehi goes beyond just the middle-class Brahmanical assertions. The house, the women in the kitchen, the hysteric characters, and demand for sexual freedom give voice to many voiceless notions of our times. It is a process of both looking inwards while making it universal sailing through Vaidehi's stories.

Vaidehi's stories don't play much with narrative techniques. Instead, they bank on the language and verbal descriptions. While giving words to a tiny incident or naming a vague feeling speaks about many things from equality to anti-patriarchal models. Vaidehi points to women's dependency on men even to buy an insignificant hairpin and the men's belief that they must restrict women and make them follow the rules. There are two arguments on rules presented in Vaidehi's older adults. Women are part of an oppressive patriarchy in punishing the younger women, and other is branding women as prostitutes if they attempt to break the rules set by men. The following sections attempt to offer such distinctions through a close reading of Vaidehi's collection of stories, *Gulabi Talkies and Other Stories* and *An Afternoon with Shakuntala and Other Stories*.

5.1. Problems of Gender Inequality

Every rule and tradition is a weapon in the hands of men to curb women's expressions. The men who propose and impose these rules are the free cows grazing anywhere they wish to. They sleep with innumerable women, turned themselves into a bag of diseases and even have become impotent. Yet, they point at women for their impotence. This is more like the king's new dress. Everyone knows that the king is naked, but no one has the guts to say so. So he walked naked always. The men who imposed and practicing their dominant position are nothing but naked kings. They could do whatever they wanted to. This is the fate of women in Vaidehi's characters who doesn't have an escape. This is also a limitation of Vaidehi's women, unlike Sarah Joseph's Seeta or Radha. Vaidehi's characters suffer more than Sarah's characters but don't find an answer to stop those sufferings. The women of Vaidehi hail from a tiny community of a highly traditional family both in culture and caste identity. They hardly have connections with the larger world or the women outside this restricted gated community (Brahmin origin of Kundapura, Udupi District). Their language, gestures of expressions are thus limited. There is hardly a bridge between the present, and the past is established in Vaidehi's narration. It is both the strength and the weakness of her characterizations.

For a quick read, Vaidehi's characters might resemble an ordinary woman. The Sarasota-Parothi characters in Marali Mannige (by Jnanapeeta Awardee, K. Shivarama Karanth) might seem just like a story of two women always making diverse chips. Those who read between the lines would grasp the essence of Sarosoti or Parothi. Similarly, Vaidehi's characters do have multiple shades in their everyday, ordinary affairs. She attempts to deconstruct the cold violence constructed by patriarchal values. However,

they don't try to form a more significant resistance or find a resolution path. The narrative restricts to expressions and subtle oppositions, rarely an extreme manifestation like Akku's madness.

The characters of Vaidehi possess duality in their manifestations and live in a world of contraries. They live in a caged world that doesn't allow them to fly, makes them always dependents, and experiences a constant humiliation on them. Both the rich who have kilos of gold on them and the poor who can't even meet a two-place meal are equal in this caged world ('To the Notebook of a Sociologist'/'Samajasastrigneya Tippanige'). It's the helplessness of these women characters which makes them vulnerable. The narrator of 'Tree and Trailers' ('Mara Gida Balli') is conscious enough to understand the world, but she can't utter even a single word. It's a feeling of orphan the narrator of 'Tree and Trailers' goes through. She bears the pain of her son, daughter-in-law, and daughter moving away from her, which is not different from other isolated characters of Akku ('Akku'). The only way for the narrator to come out is to be like Akku's madness, and there is no way to liberate being still training in the system. Hence women in Vaidehi's world are less aspired characters. They generally don't desire to have something which is out of their reach. Even if they do, they ought to do in their secrecy, turning it into a puzzle for the readers. Apart from these characters (Rajatte and Shubhanti), the others can only see a mirage. Hence, Sexuality is coming as a secondary subject not being evident like in Sarah Joseph's stories in Vaidehi's stories. Sexuality is discussed in a few stories but not in vocal forms or detail for sensationalizing it.

'Saugandhi's Soliloquies' ('Saugandhi's Swagata') is an excellent example of Vaidehi's clarity on Sexuality. A small portion of the story does speak about Saugandhi's

sexual needs. She sees a man who jumps on her like a tiger, forcefully meets her in her daydreams. Saugandhi indeed needs her innermost desired fulfilled but not like the tiger attack. She needs a man but not a beast. However, Saugandhi is aware that it is impossible to satisfy her thirst in the surveillance of her parents and through the life, she is leading at present. Such helplessness is seen in most women characters who restrain from aspiring or even attempt to gratify their sexual needs.

5.2. Countering Patriarchal Dominations.

Akku's psychic expression is the best example to illustrate Vaidehi's creation of protest against patriarchal ideas. A traditional family attempts to control Akku's sexuality by harming her through violent means. The mistake she makes is revealing the secret affairs of men who beat her and announcing that she satisfied her bodily needs too with other men. She chased her husband, who slept with every possible prostitute. She couldn't bear his touch anymore. She felt it was filthy to get touched by him. Being vocal about her sexuality, choice of men, and other's little affairs, she reveals, Akku is more vulnerable. The whole story, 'Akku' starts with the humor of others describing Akku's mental status; it shocks the readers with her horrific experience. It points out the hideous society which denies her sexual freedom and victimizes her for not bearing children.

To have 'good to fit' value, a woman should live with her husband without criticizing his misdoings and should be at least a mother for his children. Not having these qualities makes a woman an outsider, a laughable character, and a hysteric character if she becomes vocal about herself. Not all characters of Vaidehi always get beaten. They retaliate when pushed to the edge. Vaanimayi (not part of *An Afternoon with*

Shakuntala and *Other Stories* collection) revolts when her simple desire of wearing chapels is shattered. Narasimha destroys her passion and Vaanimayi beats him till he breaks his teeth. A woman who lived like a corpse imbibes devilish energy and teaches a hard lesson to Narasimha. She does so when she is pushed to a corner and has to take a U-turn to prove her existence. Vaanimayi's expression is popularly called ghost spirits by people (an element that Jane Austin criticizes Schizophrenia). For Vaidehi, such psyche is a spin off of the sum of all the atrocities on women.

Generally, one can't see a robbery, tragic climax, brutal rape, or inhuman acts in Vaidehi's stories. With subtle references to all of them, Vaidehi brings in everyday punishment, regular cruelty, and usual denials of women. She attempts to bring in the unnoticed, less discussed, not even considered acts of subordination in her stories. A husband, brother, father, all men are part of this trouble-causing system (e.g., 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies'). The sum of all this violence bypasses the highest atrocities one could cause on women.

The title, 'The Notes of Sociologist', is used in a satirical way. It speaks about the man constructed, notes, sociology and the world of men. The title is used to convey that the woman's world is entirely different from what men believe. It is of work, endless responsibility. On the other hand, men attempt to study society by closely observing and making notes on what they miss out on the contribution and plight of women within their houses. If men are getting into the higher ladder of education, women are pushed to the room of four walls, work, marriage, pregnancy and caring for children. If there is a way forward, it has to be detached from all these strings for women to excel.

Repressed Sexuality and Resistance

One of the common themes in Vaidehi's story is repressed sexuality. Whether it is Nagamma of Enquiry or Bina of Chandaley or Parvathi of Ghost, the repressed sexuality encounters the odd reality. The mere expression of it in a verbal sense is seen in promiscuous gaze. In some stories, it is not even expressed as the characters are not articulative.

In 'Ghost' ('Bhoota'), the author makes the living people a ghost and the ghost a very real character. Meera, a girl growing in the city visits her aunt's house in a rural setup where she is attracted towards Parvathi, the elder daughter of Doddamma, aunt. Parvathi works like a man and supports the family. Her father couldn't have run the house without her hard labour in the fields. At the same time, Parvathi is courageous that she could lift a snake by the tail and throw it away like she is picking a small stick. She teaches swimming to Meera despite her mother's cautions. Such a strong Parvathi has a dark side to her. The fate of Parvathi is no different from her mothers.

Doddamma (Parvathi's mother) was married to a well-off family. The house of Badooru was believed to have seven huge pots of gold coins buried underground (Ghost, 47). It was a legend everyone believed, and the treasure was guarded by seven snakes as well. The members of the house light a lamp on the swing in the house as a sign of respect and devotion. If someone attempts to recover the treasure, they will die instantly. Instead, one should wait till the treasure surface itself. In a way, the word treasure connotes to the guarded married life. A woman is promised to have a better life with a husband. However, it is never a happy case. Like the supposed to be buried treasure, the relationship exists but is never enjoyed in real sense. Believing such stories, Doddamma's father married her off to House of Badooru.

“Doddamma was given away into such a family. Short and fair, yet, she was good-looking. Doddamma, always with a brilliant smile on her face and beautiful like a goddess of bounty, went away from her parent’s house. A girl who had nothing to find fault with at her parent’s house went through misery at their husband’s house. So what if there was a ghost to guard the house? The gold inherited had secretly dissolved and the gold given had vanished into thin air. The huge pots of treasure never surfaced on the ground. The tiled house slipped away and the thatched roof, the mud-floored house slipped away and the thatched-roof, mud-floored house greeted them. However, the riches lost could not take away her smile” (Ghost, 48).

The above paragraph clearly points out what’s wrong with an arranged marriage and the pride of the groom’s family despite losing the treasure puts a woman’s life at stake. She is no more a servant against the legendary belief that the house has richness.

The poverty of the family couldn’t afford to marry off Parvathi to a good groom. When Parvathi is seen sad, resting her head on her knees, Meera asks her for a reason. Parvathi responds,

“That is all. Beggars cannot choose” (Ghost, 49).

Parvathi had lost her self-esteem and she is clearly not happy being dependent on her parents. While Meera visits after a few years, she learns that Parvathi is back from her husband’s house. She was married off to an already married man. But no one knew about it. After giving Parvathi, he had just disappeared.

“He must have gone somewhere to marry again”, (Ghost, 51) Meera’s mother informs her. It is the fault of the man who cheated her and increased the plight of Parvathi by leaving her after two daughters. However, Doddamma (mother of Parvathi) attributes this to Karma instead of making the man the culprit.

“All that is indeed what you have inherited from the previous birth. One has to pay for what has been done before. She got married and left. Fields looked abandoned ever since then. Now it feels like there is a man in the house. Like a son, indeed” (Ghost, 52-53).

Though Parvathi’s mother has accepted the crimes of her son-in-law, she is happy that the house is running because of Parvathi. She is the son of the family now as she takes off the fields. The authors brought in the gender politics here by making the woman equal to a man. Why do we need a son if she can take care of the house, fields, and family affairs? Aren’t they both the same? Why do we have to hurry to marry off a girl and snatch her life or make it worse?

When Parvathi’s husband is back, she shows him off like the goddess of fury, with a broom in her hand screaming,

“Bugger off! Lest you get it good! Brave woman indeed” (Ghost, 53).

What else can one do for those who come only to impregnate her? Who will face the consequences?

The above statement by Vaidehi coincides with Sarah Joseph’s wife’s character in *Conjugal*. Towards the end, the wife utters loudly when her filthy husband tries to touch her. She avoids him and makes him sleep separately. In the same way, Parvathi

also keeps her husband away. In both the stories, women are strong and do all the work they could. Men are lousy, lust-seeking creatures. The only way to keep them within limits is to own their bodies and command them as women wish.

Is Parvathi happy by doing so? Probably not. In her mother's words, the ghost is not guarding the gold treasure. It is Parvathi who has become the ghost of the family.

In most of the stories of Vaidehi, the woman characters yearn and dream a lot about how their life should be. Unfortunately, they never attempt to create one for themselves. Either they curse their life or live through the current suffering attributed to unknown gods and evils. Parvathi of Ghost, 'Saugandhi of Soliloquies', Gauri of 'Enquiry', and many other characters act like mute spectators to others' decisions and subjective reading. Of course, there is pain evident in each of the characters. However, the pain doesn't convert to the path of salvation or a practical solution.

5.3. Sexual Objectification – Body, Gender, Caste, and Religion

Vaidehi's stories are highly critical of tradition, culture and the regulations that come with them. In the name of culture and religion, women are not allowed to participate in any public spheres. Akku, Bina, Rami, 'it' are all victims of these cultural notions. They cannot live the life they want, nor can they lead as others decide on their behalf. In a way, men have made women feel that their bodies themselves are a curse. Vaidehi's stories assert strongly that women can look after themselves, and it's the men who are supposed to repair their systems. She strongly condemns the culture that punishes, beats, and kills women and questions what kind of culture does so?

Malathi of 'A Bird inside the Nest' ('Goodinolage Ondu Hakki') looks like a continuation of Saugandhi. Malathi wants to experience her freedom. With her husband's

consent, she spends half a day alone. She realizes that she can't even enjoy the permitted freedom. Her rented moments just get wasted. Even she becomes naked, and she can't get liberty and suffer a constant fear of someone's peep. What is subtly points is the sexual expression of Malathi. It's always the imaginary world for woman which is not at a reachable distance. According to the author, the world of sexuality is always a subject of ignorance for men. This sounds similar to Sarah Joseph's 'Scooter's' analogy where she opines that men don't understand the fragrance, scent, and rhythm of sex.

Vaidehi presents a kind of sub-text in portraying sexuality. Aunt in 'Pages Deep Within' ('Antarangada Putagalu') is one such example. Aunt doesn't sleep with her husband. The sisters who live in the same house feel that Aunt is a lunatic. Aunt anxiously waits for the sisters to come home and she sleeps with them instead of being with her husband. The sisters leave the house for a few days, leaving behind only aunt and uncle at home together. When the sisters come back, they feel that aunt looks like a tired prostitute. The phrase 'tired prostitute' generates many meanings. The anxiousness of aunt to avoid husband is for the sheer beastliness of her husband. Aunt was never treated as a human being. Vaidehi doesn't give many words to such experiences. Nor she tries to tempt the readers with gory details. Mostly expressed in cryptic forms, a set of few phrases denote many things. The meaning construction process is swiftly shifted to readers' minds than being on text.

In the story, 'Chandaley', a young girl, Beena tells Rami, that she wants to become a prostitute. It's an expression of Bina's promiscuous attitude raised out of her adolescent turmoil. But it is only a wish, not an act of perseverance.

“Do you know what I like? I want to live like a prostitute. What fun that would be!”

Shocked Rami struggles to protect her son and husband from Bina.

Rami attempts to convince Bina, “We don’t live in a jungle. We live amidst people who take note of everything we do. That brings in the sense of responsibility” (Chandaley, 77).

Rami is an extension of the institutionalized domestic setup. She says whatever a typical Indian woman would say with fear and care towards a young girl. Beena responds,

“I don’t understand such big things. I want no responsibility. I shall live the way I want to”.

Though young, Beena is aware of what life she wishes to have. She doesn’t want all the responsibility of a domesticated woman as she has seen in her mother or in Rami. She knows that she wants to satisfy her bodily thirst. She wants to control her life and hence she denies any patriarchal responsibility frame given to a woman.

From this point, every act of Beena looks like she is going to trap her son and husband. Rami becomes obsessed with the possible prostitute behavior of Bina. This makes her memories fresh of what she had seen in Bombay. She had a neighbor who forced her daughter, Chandaley, to prostitution and Rami was aware of every activity taking place in that house. She kind of admired few things like the freedom and fluidity the mother and daughter had. Rami had her secret admiration wards, Chandaley.

“The one and only Chandaley had several male admirers. She was burning with curiosity. No matter what it was, there was laughter, fun and frolic

emanating from that house. Chandaley, always looked queenly. And what did Rami do? The study, study and study. Nothing else at all.... she used to be all the time trying to mug up the essay given by the teacher” (Chandaley, 81).

Rami, an adolescent, may not have understood what prostitution is. However, she knew that there was more life and laughter in Chandaley’s house. She wished to have that joy in her house, too, instead of mugging up always. Now, Rami, mother of a 20-year-old son Sateesha is afraid that Beena is voluptuous and might consume her son and her husband. She starts hearing the stories that Beena was spotted in the hotel, cinema, all with men. She even thinks of talking to Beena’s mother to alert her.

In the process, Rami become one of the prostitutes. It’s all the imagination of Rami on what Bina would do if she becomes a prostitute. The sub-story of ‘Chandaley’ makes it clear that even the prostitute is a victim of the same patriarchy, and it exists only for the men’s gratification. Hence, revealing such hideous faces of men acts like the most vigorous resistance for women. The women who raise their voices and criticize are punished even more. Some become quiet, and some reach an extreme level.

After few years, Beena is married off and Rami visits the hospital to see her infant. She sees a different Beena now.

“...The Chandaley in her had completely disappeared!”

Like any other woman, Beena is now a mother, a responsible wife, not a prostitute like she always imaged.

When Beena smiled, Rami said soliloquy,

“That smile had no Beena in it all” (Chandeley, 85).

The author critically looks at the expression of adolescence and how the society around reads it. If someone says that they would prefer to be a prostitute, it doesn't mean that they would be one. But in the process, others outcast her by assuming threat by them to her son or husband.

Caste and Class-an Added Curse

In the story 'Dependants' ('Avalambitaru'), a young maid becomes part of the narrator. In doing the domestic work, the girl starts caring for the child. The bonding between the child and the maid becomes more vital and it leads the mother, the matriarch of the house, to be angry. She ensures that the girl stays within her limit and starts suspecting her ever since. This is a class and caste struggle the girl goes through. The girl is humiliated in the civilized language, not like with atrocious words. The form and language of punishment might have altered, but its root always stays the same.

Even working all day, Puttammattey can't even fill her and her granddaughter Kalavathi's hunger. The illiterate grandmother works hard as a domestic servant and raises the Kalavathi. Having partially educated, Kalavathi can't get a decent job, nor is she able to marry a suitable groom. She goes out of the house and stitches clothes for a living. Both of them struggle to fulfil their stomach. Even though they detach themselves from the traditional ties of women roles, they are caught by the economic clutches of modern life. It's a conflict between survival instinct and the inability to get what they

deserve. Kalavathi can grasp her needs. However, she can't help due to self-dignity. When someone praises her beauty that any boy would fall for her, she is happy and expresses self-pity together.

When they notice Kalavathi's charming movements in the wedding hall, people enquire about her and they speak of low when they realize that she belongs to a low-income family. Someone would have approached with a marriage proposal if she had money or gold. On top of societal dejection, people hurt her by making fun of her youthfulness. A man who comes with a proposal suddenly vanishes as he is afraid of facing society. What the author does here is weighing people's emotions with status, wealth and social identity. She questions whether such comparisons have any base. Isn't a good heart of a woman being sufficient to marry?

Vaidehi is critical of Brahminical assertion on women. When Saugandhi ('Saugandhi's Soliloquies') starts staying in the new house, the father says,

“Fall in love with someone with care and concern for caste, family and status” (Saugandhi's Soliloquies, 151).

It is clear what an upper-caste father (in general, a father) wishes for caste, good family and social status. It will be okay if the daughter falls in love. But it would be only approved if they pass the above criteria and the first one being the caste.

As the days pass, her repressed sexual desires rise and she yearns for a man's touch. Every time the door knocked, she assumed a man would be calling her. Unfortunately, when she hears the knock towards the end of the story, her father has brought her mother to stay with Saugandhi. She never meets her man of love.

5.4. Societal Injustice and Inequalities

"How fast the days have flown by! Just the other day, I was married to someone from that 'big house. 'Just the other day, Sharada, Sreedhara, and the little one were born. And only a few days ago, I saw my sons' mustaches sprouting. They all left and here I am, in this condition. One son there and one son here! Apart!" (Tree and Trailers, 5-6).

The above statement of paralyzed mother, Mandakka summarizes the life cycle and what is expected from her.

Mandakka of 'Tree and Trailers' ('Mara Gida Balli') questions the necessity of a typical family institution. The family she raised and cared for doesn't exist when she needs to be cared for. All her children are in different directions suitable for their individual economic prosperity and bedridden mother is a burden to each of them. Though paralysed, Mandakka is aware of what is happening around her. With each child coming to see her, she is disillusioned through the adulthood each of them expresses.

Much before she realized that she was grown up, she was married to 'someone'. The word someone used by the author indicates the marriage between Mandakka and a stranger without her consent or even the attempt of asking for her consent. All she knows is that the groom is from a wealthy family (Big House). A big house might also mean that she was married to a joint family of many members. Like any other daughter-in-law, she would have gone through a lot of hardship if so, like any other daughter. Before she realized the real happiness of a marriage, she had three children. Everything is so fresh in her memory that it looks like yesterday she was the young mustache from her son's face. However, with all she had done to raise them, none of them are with her in her old, sick years.

Mandakka suffered labour pain for eight days during Sharada's pregnancy. She was fed whatever she liked and she always loved her mother for whatever she was. Sharada grew so well and married to a well of groom working in Mumbai. Mandakka assumes it's the same daughter who is visiting her. As soon as Sharada reaches home, it doesn't take much time to realize that she has become a very self-centred individual.

Sharada is busy eating and sleeping rather than caring for her mother. Sharada makes plans to meet her friends instead of asking what Mandakka's needs. Mandakka just remembers the past.

When you were a baby, you would sleep the whole day and lie awake the whole night.

“I then lay awake for your sake. And now. For my own,

In between, I could steal a few winks. And only for a brief while” (Tree and Trailers, 9).

The above statements resemble Sarah Joseph's 'The Passion of Mary', the mothers won't sleep. Both Mary and Mandakka never slept to raise children. However, they can't sleep when they are grownups.

Similarly, younger son Surya, a medical practitioner now, comes after 15 days from America. Surya was very attached to their mother and he was teased as "The great thumb master". With Mandakka's savings, he was able to study. Instead of treating her, he talks of ending Mandakka's pain by making her die easier.

While all three children and daughter in law is discussing the next course of action, Surya says,

"It's better she packs up her box. This suffering is utterly unnecessary! If you ask me, what do we do to the horse that is irrevocably lame? No, I mean it seriously. One should just do it. One-shot and all is over. For her and for us, too. That one can't do it is a different issue altogether" (Tree and Trailers, 12).

Sreedhara, the elder one, who is taking care of his mother, tries to pass on the responsibility to a nurse or a hospital by saying that he got a good job in Mumbai. His wife mentions that she can't clean the piss and shit of Mandakka anymore. Hearing all these discussions distantly, Mandakka mutters herself,

"No one need cry over my death. Or mourn. My death is now in the list of non-grievable, un-mournable phenomena" (Tree and Trailers, 13).

Mandakka feels the pain of the old cashew tree which she ordered to cut off when it wasn't yielding anymore, and the Kashi cow, which was given off when it was too old. The cow was reluctant to go out. Mandakka now is not more an unfertile tree or an old cow which is a burden for the house. Sarcastically, she questions,

"Just because I gave birth to them? Just because I brought them up?" (Tree and Trailers, 15).

Should children care because they came out of Mandakka or ought to take care of her if they are still humans?

The final soliloquy indicates the helplessness of Mandakka which is also expressed in anger.

"What can I, who is dying away, say anything at all to those who are living?" (Tree and Trailers, 15).

The title justifies the end where the tree resembles a dying mother and the trailers raised above the ground with the tree's support don't care for the tree anymore. The roots of trailers are stronger than the dying tree. The children don't see any use of Mandakka, the mother, nor do they remember what she sacrificed to raise them. Each child, including the daughter, have a better life and job due to what Mandakka has sacrificed on her part. Even a homeless Mabala, who always eats at Mandakka's place, doesn't see her as a human who is still breathing and can understand everything around. She recognizes each and every one and tries to show her affection even in her paralyzed state. However, her immobility for biological excretion makes her intolerable, especially for her daughter-in-law. No one is ready to care for her like a child as she had done it to all three kids. With proper nutrition and care, Mandakka could come back to life and live longer. But the doctor's son, who is supposed to save lives, comes from America to convince others that she better pack herself. No one kills Mandakka in the end, but she's been shown the door of a private caring center (a kind of nursing home) to wash away their responsibility.

5.5. Society, Culture and Politics

There is a constant wave of resistance in Vaidehi's stories. If Akku (Akku) reveals the crookedness of men, Puttammattey (Puttammattey and her Granddaughter) work like even men feel shy about her strength. Unmarried Saugandhi ('Saugandhi's Soliloquies') liberates herself by screaming on the street that is anyone is ready to rape her. Pronouncing her mind in public is the most significant sign of women' coming out process, liberating from the ancient clutches. Similarly, Shakuntala ('An Afternoon with Shakuntala') communicates to Dushyanta that they should never mate till he feels that

she is an absolute requirement. In saying so, she gives away her Daushaynta child to him. It's a lovely symbol of transferring the child's responsibility to the father. In the 'Scooter' of Sarah Joseph, the woman's order to pick up the child over a broken scooter resembles Shakuntala's dialogues.

In the highly patriarchal society, Akku reminds of men's place by becoming hysteric and revealing the secrets of men. Culturally, a woman who doesn't fall into the norms of an ordinary woman is categorized as hysterical. However, Vaidehi's Akku becomes a bold woman mouthing all the dirty secrets of men. She is pardoned as someone lost her mind. However, Akku never stops revealing their misdoings. The more physical abuse, the more she becomes a rebel. Culturally this is the most vigorous political assertion. Men hesitate to go near her, fearing their misdoings would come out in Akku's mouth. Similarly, Sarah Joseph's conjugality makes men fear going near women.

Spirits and Protection

Like in Sarah Joseph's 'Within in Every Woman Author', Schizophrenic expressions are prevalent in most Vaidehi's stories. Akku, Nagamma ('Enquiry') exhibit spirit procession to gain what they want. Spirits would process Nagamma (mother of Baabi in the story, 'Enquiry') for the simple reason that she was not given betel-areca-lime-tobacco. At the same time, she does so to protect herself from other men. Nagamma being a widow, shaves her head like a Brahmin woman. Her body is still young and it's a subject of other men's comments.

"Lo! There she is, as trim as a bride! Can get her married again!"

(Enquiry, 21).

It is the comment by other servants towards Nagamma. However, such statements make Nagamma very angry, and she would madly have possessed. This madness is a response, a caution and a boundary that men can't cross the border. Nagamma mostly performed it to scare people around.

The narrator opines that such spirit invention was necessary for women. According to her, an illiterate woman could protect herself against all odds in her ways. It's not the spirit-possession drama instead, it's an expression of courage.

"Namma was a gritty woman. She knew how to generate water for herself in a place that was dry and desolate. Lesser ones would run to hide behind their father's shadows!" That Namma had neither the father nor mother to run..." (Enquiry, 21).

A wealthy, upper-caste, educated woman might have other options to explore. At least a space of getting back to roots, parents are always open. However, for an orphan like Namma, all doors of alternatives are sealed, and she is left with herself to protect against all odds. Thus her madness is justified as a more substantial weapon an illiterate, young widow, poor Namma could pull out.

5.6. Domesticity, Sexuality and Post-Feminist Approach.

Though women make their choices independently or are forced to take up a decision, they are looked down on as awkward people. Either they ought to follow the existing path, or they are unfit to be in the system. They become strangers to even to their mothers like in 'Enquiry' ('Ondu Aparadha Tanikhe'). Women putting down other women is a sign of deep-rooted patriarchy.

A woman supposed to be married should be living with her husband despite a lack of identity, even if she finds a concubine. She ought to prove her completeness by bearing children and can never think of living without a husband. If she does so, she is a disgrace to the family and to society.

In the story, 'Enquiry', Baabi, daughter of the narrator's cook, visits unwarrantedly after almost a couple of decades. She has brought her 15-year-old daughter, who is about to be married off. She has come to invite the previous owner. She finds that the narrator has come home sometime back and not returned. Baabi knows that the narrator has not returned to her husband for some time. The family knows the reason, yet Baabi keeps posing an innumerable set of questions. While the narrator is forcefully placed in the confession box, Baabi's pathetic life is juxtaposed parallel. She is having all sorts of problems, from concubine to the lousy husband. Yet, she is living with all of them. It's the only quality Baabi is respectfully seen even by the narrator's mother. A married woman should never return to a maternal home unless her husband is dead. If she does, so, there is something wrong with her, not with the husband. So, he is not answerable, nor he has to answer society's query.

Baabi starts her inquiry in the first interaction itself,

"Is it true you are staying with her now? It seems you have left your husband? But why? You may want to keep a secret, but I found out somehow" (Enquiry, 16).

These words of Baabi are heavily loaded with criticism and unpleasant curiosity of the society around. Without even the narrator opening her mouth, everyone is aware, or they have created enough gossip. When Baabi, a rare visitor, can find out what happened to the narrator's marital life, it is no longer a secret.

A Marriage without Choice

Baabi doesn't even give a chance for a playful 15-year-old child to choose her life. The child is about to be married.

"Whose else? This very one's. We happened to spot a groom for her. If we don't catch hold of him, who knows what sort of a groom she will get later? I may not get one at all. So we decided to marry her off. Better to be done with our responsibility, you see!" (Enquiry, 17).

This is also a kind of narrator's (Kusuma) life. She was married off before she realized her body and soul. According to Baabi, attaining puberty is the greatest eligibility to marry off a girl. What would she know about life and children at that tender age? In a way, Baabi's daughter's life and narrator's life are the same. People decided what they ought to take up. Baabi is happy, joyful, and relieved by transferring her mother's role to a strange man by handing over her daughter.

"A sense of pride? Joy? Age and experience? At least detachment? Nothing at all a bland, dry face, whatever it had been eighteen years ago. Perhaps age merely bypassed her" (Enquiry, 17).

The above words reflect the stubborn mindset of people where time passes but they remain the same both in their thoughts and behavior. Women like Baabi live in a cocoon which they never break to come out with wings.

When questioned about the tender age of the daughter and her unpreparedness to take up marital responsibility, Baabi replies as if she is the creator and director of every element of her daughter's life.

"Then what? This is the right age. You don't know. She may grow fussy later and become choosy. What if she elopes with someone? Or comes back halfway through the game, saying she cannot manage at her husband's house? Daughters should be married off before they grow up. If you ask me, they should have two babies as early as possible. All will be fine" (Enquiry, 17-18).

The above comment from Baabi is not just about her daughter. The narrator's life is subtly criticized and connotes that the narrator's life is a failure and futile at the end. A girl should never have a chance to choose her life, nor can she question (growing fussy). With this mindset, none of the girls ever grow out of their patriarchal frames.

Baabi is happy that she got a concubine who is not troublesome and, in fact, gained her pettiness as she doesn't question Baabi. She even managed to make a pair of gold earrings which is the most significant achievement, according to Baabi. She kind of grew tolerant towards her husband who was previously married, seen many prostitutes, he can't do so anymore as he has no money. When men are not capable of earning their expenses, a woman of the house rules, in Baabi's words.

Baabi and Amma teach Kusuma (the narrator) how to be a good woman. "Don't address him in the singular. After all, she is your husband" (Enquiry, 22). Similarly, Baabi gives many lectures to narrator, whose blood boils and body tremors as she is seen as a culprit rather than a victim.

When Baabi informs Kusuma's father that her daughter is about to be married off, the father shows his appreciation towards Baabi's thoughtfulness. The father is also not happy about Kusuma's decision to leave her husband. Instead, he is appreciative towards his ex-maid marrying off her 15-year-old daughter.

Baabi's Enquiry never stops till the end, even a minute before her bus lands right before Kusuma's house.

“Please tell me, why did you leave your husband? Was he a drunkard, a lecher or a wife-beater?” (Enquiry, 27)

When Kusuma doesn't reply to anything, Baabi's perseverance grows intolerably.

“One last question. Was it you who left him? Was it the husband who left you? Or was it his family who made you leave?” (Enquiry, 27).

The question has much meaning both sociologically and politically. If Kusuma has left her husband, she decides to leave. If she was thrown out of the family, then there must be a mistake from Kusuma's end. Kusuma feels like she is in the courtroom of a packed audience yet silent.

“The courtroom is so silent that even the batting of her eyelid could be heard” (Enquiry, 27)

Unfortunately, everyone she believes would stand with her has become an audience in the courtroom. Mother, father, Nagamma, another married woman, are all eager to hear Kusuma. Why did she leave her husband?

Kusuma couldn't digest that her husband bringing concubine when alive and wanted control of life's steering. Despite the obvious mistakes of the man, she is seen as a culprit and society turns out to be an open courthouse.

Vaidehi believes that a woman's choice is altogether her private matter. Whether she marries someone or breaks the tie is supposed to be a matter between the couple; however, it becomes a general question without much effort. Gauri, Kusuma of

'Enquiry', Marriage of Puttammattey's granddaughter, Gulabi's marital status, prostitutes of 'Chandaley' are all the subject of societal inspection and answerable to every interrogation. It is problematic if a woman is not married or cuts of the marital tie.

Society expects these women to not leave their husband without even knowing the context of their decisions. Their husbands might be cheating, seeing another woman, abusive, care of boy children. However, it doesn't matter unless he is dead. Including the parents, neighbors, friends, maids, or society acts like advocates questioning in open court.

5.7. Anti-Patriarchal Voices

Vaidehi's resistance to patriarchy is probably not evident on the out surface by a mere plain reading of the text. It has to be read cautiously to decode such meanings. For instance, Parvathi's characterization clearly argues for changing gender roles and attempts to construct a powerful alternative to the patriarchal dominance by making it matriarchal in many forms. 'A Bird inside the Nest' ('Goodinolage Ondu Hakki') is a brilliant example of constructing what is wrong with men's world, and it seeks the world a woman wishes.

Malati, granted an afternoon to spend time as she wished. She requests her husband to lock the door from outside so that others can think that there is no one at home. She wanted to spend a few moments for herself, not performing for anyone else. She is bored.

"Just like that. Just bored with the monotony?"

"Bored? One fine day, you may even say that living with the same man is monotony!" (A Bird inside the Nest, 70).

When she shares her desire to stay in solitude, her husband questions that she may get bored with him as well. Probably, she is. A man's world has more variety. He spends a lot of time outside work, travelling. A woman is confined to four walls and obviously, she demands a change in her life.

Malati doesn't want to waste her time gossiping with neighbor, nor she wants to walk carefully on the street, she doesn't want to an actor as others wishes. She wants to be free.

“She was free. Free. She could be whatever she liked. No one could demand to know why” (A Bird inside the Nest, 71).

“One should experience utter uninhibitedness to know what it is like” (A Bird inside the Nest, 72).

Others always curtailed her to behave like a 'woman'. When she just whistled, she was summoned to the principal's office.

“You are a woman, that, too, an Indian woman!”(A Bird inside the Nest, 72).

The principal had sung this tune again and again. She was 'corrected' by the principal for her boyish behavior. It is just a whistle and the sound of it is not aware of the gender. The air went inside the lungs or came out of the mouth don't know that it was supposed to whistle only for boys.

“Perhaps a woman was too weak to whistle? That she needed the support of a man to do even that?” (A Bird inside the Nest, 72)

Now a married woman, Malati thinks she could be free by locking the main door from outside. However, it turns out to be not so. Even she is taking a bath, she is afraid

that others will notice the noise. She tries a cigarette and starts coughing. She is worried that the neighbors would think that there is a fire in her house and break the door. Within a few hours of her borrowed freedom, she starts feeling that she can't live the life of freedom even in the absence of others. She is not alone at all. As a woman, she is always watched and spied. She starts hating the whole world which has made her feel scared in her solitude as well.

“Pacing about, she felt like a lion caught in a cage.”

“The walls looked like those of a cage. A caged lion at least had the freedom to roam at will. She could not even squeak. How could she live without making a sound? How suffocating it was!”(A Bird Inside the Nest, 74).

The author suggests the freedom is possible only before others, not by shutting the doors to the world. Finally, Malati walks free amid the outside world.

“She had to open the door, step out on the street and walk in gay abandon. And in full view of Harina, older woman, college-going boy and all the others. Does freedom imply isolation? Is secretiveness a necessary price to pay for freedom and fun? How self-deceptive and delusional!” (A Bird Inside the Nest, 76)

The author calls for absolute come out of the feministic expression by walking out with courage and a sense of daring. A woman needs to live her life, not others' life is a strong opinion Vaidehi voices out.

Like the title goes, a bird nest is the youngest without solid wings. A female bird generally hops around the nest due to its mating season. Once the broodings are out, the

grown bird will never return to the nest. It's only the young fledglings which still around the nest. They stay until the wings are ready to take flight. Likewise, Malati is a fledging who never fly. She attempts to fly, but she is restricted to the nest. She was never taught how to fly or explore beyond the nest. Despite having a sole space for herself, she is never alone anymore. She has to live in fear of others hearing or to disturb her. Anything she does might be a reason to invite others into her life who doesn't want to. Vaidehi is trying to say; unless a woman comes out of her nest, she can never really have the freedom of her choice.

Language of Domination as Women

There is a sense of resistance ingrained in Vaidehi's characters. They speak out. They speak in such a way that not even a man could do. The language plays a crucial role in constructing the women's resistance. Every aspect of patriarchal resistance is associated with the conversations of women. Either it's a woman-only gathering or a conflict between genders, the language serves as the constant opposing element. For example, simple use of the pronoun, 'It' (See 'Akku' and 'Puttammattey and Granddaughter'). It is not just a thing; it is referring to women, especially old, widows or mental suffering women. Irrespective of man or a woman, they name or address these vulnerable women with the pronoun, 'it'. This is clearly pointed out how a widow or an old age person is not equal to others. They are equated with a material, an animal or even as a burden.

Especially, the hysteric characters point out the blunders and misdoings of men. Akku's madness is the most significant protest a woman could demonstrate. Even while she was beaten, true words from her mouth spike men making them insignificant, selfish,

lustious individuals. The sexual pleasure she was denied by her husband; the pain of infertility makes her behave like mentally ill. Everyone who points her at madness is part of a regressive system. Ajjaiah, who orders to beat Akku, Vaasu, who wins her cruelly, are all extensions of the same old patriarchal expressions. If women do not follow the rules, they would be bent by punishing them. Akku is both a victim of this patriarchy as well a rebellion symbol against the same. Men who punish her for destroying her sexual energy are the meanest lusty crooks. They could do whatever they wanted to. However, Akku or any other woman can't do so. Unfortunately, women who live with them show their humbleness, a carrier of this oppressive system to further generations.

Satirical, cynical arguments are presented through each character, pointing to the oppression of women. Women belonging to lower caste point out the freedom they enjoy which is absent for upper-caste women.

5.8. Politics of Myth

Vaidehi reinterprets the well know the analogy of Shakuntala-Dushyanta in a more feministic way ('An Afternoon with Shakuntala'). Shakuntala is aware that Dushyanta is not entirely devoted to her. When he seems lost, she questions whether he has become Himalaya? A massive mountain-like Himalaya could have as many valleys as possible. But for Shakuntala, an isolated valley, all she could see was just one Himalaya. The Himalayas may not see the valleys, but the valleys always look back at it. Such interpretation connotes the very fundamental problem with the man-woman relationship. A man could practice polygamy; he could sleep with as many women as possible. However, a woman could never level the man as societal norms bound her.

When Dushyanta forgets to call her back, Shakuntala indulges in self-criticism. It is not true that she loved him because she wanted him. It is also a part of her that had to be shared. Vaidehi criticizes the author of this famous story that Dushyanta approached Shakuntala without her knowledge. It is with her complete knowledge that he approached her. It was a mutually accepted affair.

Sage Doorvasa curses Shakuntala for ignoring his presence. It is not a fault of a young girl to daydream about her loved ones. Vaidehi proposes that Doorvasa could have been patient, and the popular narrative could have been redrawn for once.

‘An Afternoon with Shakuntala’ (a story and the title of the book) is a conscious choice of words by Vaidehi. An afternoon is generally a time of meeting someone for lunch. Maybe a good friend we will catch up after a long time. Similarly, Vaidehi has invited Shakuntala for lunch and makes her beliefs reflect Shakuntala’s acts. Shakuntala was not just a dumb naïve girl raised in an ashram. She was aware of what she was getting into. Apart from her wanting to be shared with Dushyanta, she is bold enough to hand over her son when Dushyanta behaves as if he never her. Criticizing the playfulness of Dushyanta, Shakuntala never forgives him for denying her existence. However, she still embraced every moment she had to spend with him.

“Let the soul cling to none. I should be grateful to him for this experience of pure love. I should not keep dwelling on the past. All moments of agony and ecstasy are bound to end..” (An Afternoon with Shakuntala, 225).

The above phrase indicates one should be doing, most importantly, cutting off from the past.

Sexual Politics

Though Saugandhi is a well-educated and employed girl, her parent never listens to her and deny her fundamental human rights. They make Saugandhi's life hell. They are pleased that the landlady of Saugandhi's house doesn't have a husband. They feel a sense of balance that their daughter will not get into a sexual relationship. Saugandhi realizes that women need to be constantly physically tortured or punished. It could be in the form of socially constructed beliefs. Her father, a simple ordinary religious man, is not less than a violent man as both impose dogmas on women and their movements.

Saugandhi had to shift to a new town due to her job transfer. Her father ensures that she finds a house with a landlady who is a widow. He is highly confident that his daughter "wouldn't even let the shadow of a male come close" (Saugandhi's Soliloquies, 148). At the same time, he is afraid to leave her alone in the newly found house.

"You know the responsibility of a parent! Had she stayed with us there, her mother's burden would have been fairly eased..." he continues sharing his taught and demands with the landlady.

"If possible, would you kindly arrange for a woman to sleep here in the night? I shall even pay her".

"Sure, why not? Our cook herself can do that. Don't worry," responds the landlady (Saugandhi's Soliloquies, 148-149).

It's a contradictory world Saugandhi lives. Extremely loving, protective father yet not letting daughter stay for herself. He discusses everything before her, not caring for her as if she is lying there as a piece of wood.

When the landlady says that she will send her cook to sleep with her, Saugandhi resists for the first time, "No, don't. I am not scared. I can sleep alone" (Saugandhi's Soliloquies, 150).

Similarly, Akku is no different from Saugandhi or Kalavathi of Puttammattay. Each character looks like a continuation of one another as they have a common thread. All these women are denied their sexual rights. They don't own their bodies, and others decide to destroy, restrict or use without their consent. If Akku resists her madness, Saugandhi protests by being vocal, screaming on the street and Kalavathi denies the sleazy invitations.

Kalavathi goes through the sea of sleazy conversations and luscious looks. Everyone wants to have her body and passes comments on her physical attraction. For her survival, she had to be a mute spectator for all such statements.

Mandakka of 'Tree and Trailers' ('Mara Gida Balli') realizes that she is useless as she is bedridden. Everybody wanted her when she was healthy and could manage herself. All of a sudden, she has become a stone, a burden that others don't want to carry.

Bina of 'Chandaley' mentions that she wanted to be a prostitute in her youthfulness. Rumi believes each letter of it. After Bina is married, Rumi visits her to see her child. Bina asks, "How's the child? Isn't it exactly like the father" which leaves Rumi shocked. She feels that the Bina she had seen and seen now is two different people. A promiscuous girl Beena would be has morphed into a wholly devoted wife, bearing a child and living in a family setup.

The unconventional, rebellious women Vaidehi brings in are essentially part of the sexual politics of her characters. It is a cleverly woven thread of women's gestures to

voice out a specific political tone. If Sarah Joseph criticizes the imposition of religious beliefs on sexuality (for example, 'Dimwittude'), Vaidehi criticizes the Brahminical upbringing and male chauvinism ingrained from childhood.

In both the writers, the suffering of women is indicative. However, Sarah's characters take an extra mile in finding a middle path. However, Vaidehi's characters don't move an inch in finding a salvation path.

5.9. Conclusion

Human interaction with the materialistic world, wealth, marriage, responsibility, work, poverty, humiliation, death, and such aspects of life are the common themes of Vaidehi's writings. In doing so, Vaidehi's persuades a reader that they are not really significant, and a woman's life could be defined beyond those materialistic constructions. It seems the expressions; gestures are more detailed than the subject of a presentation in Vaidehi's stories.

The author makes her personal observations a universally applicable theory. As a woman, she probably could do it effectively. In doing so, she elaborates on what her cognition could grasp and turns it into a mystery if she can't understand. The questions raised in vocalizing the facts known and the lesser-known world effectively poke at the patriarchal system.

A component of private lives being interrogated by society and the space a woman needs to stretch her wings are thoroughly explored in Vaidehi's stories. For example, Bird in the Nest is such a political story of making a woman realize her institutionalizations; it might lead to continuing the thoughts beyond the story. Malati's

request to spend an afternoon alone comes at the approval of her husband. Despite being alone at home, she could never take a bath peacefully, nor could she smoke a cigarette. She has to be self-reminded at every step that each of her could lead to a scandal and public nuisance. However, a woman is raised not to do such things.

Similarly, women's aversions and dissatisfied marriages are common themes in most her stories. The caste makes the woman marry before they realize the society. However, she is never accepted when she has no place in her husband's house. If the parents empathize with the daughter's plight, things could have been easier for a woman to reconstruct her life. This is the opinion offered in the story 'Enquiry'.

Chapter-VI

Conclusion

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CONCLUSION

In Search of a New Life

In all the three writers, Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi, the resistance to patriarchy is abundantly detailed through innumerable metaphors, real-life experiences and observations. These writers have dealt with rich details of possible alternatives to the struggles women have to endure in their everyday lives. It includes struggles within the marital relationship, breaking formation year's orientation (child development state), social-economic clutches and cultural upbringings. All three writers attempt to remind women about who they are in real. Their stories spread from understanding the value of freedom to decoding their bodies. These prominent feminist writers highly criticize the biological and sociological constructions of women.

In all three writers and their perceptions, search for an alternative coincides with each other sometimes and varies on a few occasions. The canvas chosen by each writer has mainly contributed to what they propagate. Volga has chosen a theme-based canvas to paint her characters. Sarah Joseph pictures it with her peculiar language. However, Vaidehi's canvas is much smaller than the other two and the characters are brought to the limelight by victimizing their lives. Probably, the grooming as an individual also contributes to what they choose as a literary canvas.

Sarah Joseph hailing from the Syrian Christian community deals with similar religious attributions and the plight of Christian-raised women. For example, 'The Masc.

of Virgin', 'Hurk!', 'Dimwittude', 'Vanadurga', 'To the Sea', 'Sweat Marks', 'The Passion of Mary', 'Coffee House' are thickly laced with religious-cultural experiences which could be of the writers or of her observations.

In the story, 'The Masc. of Virgin', an adolescent girl is pregnant, which nobody in the family is aware of, eventually leading to her suicide. Her autopsy report reveals the sexual assault she had gone through. The family members' Christian belief attributes the girl's deteriorating health to the curse of God, lesser belief in worshipping God. The granny in the house always dictates to worship God to all the problems of the house. The kids are not encouraged to share what they are going through. Hence, the girl never shares her sexual abuse and it remains a secret; the abuser escapes by default. Religion has masked the abuser by making the young people not letting exercise their fundamental expressions. The mother somewhat vaguely understands the girl's plight, which indicates that the mother would also have gone through such experiences as a child. Similarly, in 'Dimwittude', the central character oscillates between her Christian beliefs and the prosperous chances life offers. She could be a great scientist if she cuts off from her Christian believes in protecting her virginity. The conflict between science and virginity offers a glimpse of how we orient our girl children.

Sarah and Volga take the readers through gory sexual exploitation, which is less seen in Vaidehi's stories. 'To The Sea', 'Paapathara', and 'Dead Land', shocks the readers through the pain a mother carries and is highly critical of war, boundaries and the man's quest to conquer everything.

In Volga's 'Sita's Braid', 'Eyes', 'Nose Stud', 'Shut Up!', 'Stony Breasts', 'A Political Story', 'Security', and 'Walls', the author sharply criticizes institutionalized

mind sets, search for the meaning of beauty and questions a man's constructions of woman. Whether it is Sita, Janaki, Susheela, Shobha, Shanta, all are subjected to prove their womanhood according to the expectations of a man.

In the same way, in Vaidehi's stories like that of 'Enquiry', 'Visitor', 'Chandaley', 'Dependence', 'Pages Deep Within', 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies', 'To the Notebook (or notes) of a Sociologist', 'Puttammattey and Granddaughter', and 'An Afternoon with Shakuntala' women are subjected to not to see around or see things before them. They are trained only to take orders from the patriarch of the family. There is not much difference in the role of a father or a husband in all three writer's stories. They are men at the end worried about their marriage, wealth, fertility and chastity of women. Unfortunately, mothers-in-law took part in men's vision as they have forgotten what they are. In Vaidehi's stories like that of 'The Auspicious Platter', 'Akku', and 'Ghost', women work more than men in the fields. In Sarah Joseph's story 'Dimwittude', the father says that he feels like losing his right hand while reluctant to send off his daughter to study further.

The questions raised by all three writers ultimately express a quest to find an alternative, a life without dominance, a life where a woman can bloom with all her beauty. The economic and biological freedom these writers demand is the universal demand and each writer contributes to the sociological discourse of what is necessary to be a woman. However, the alternatives these three writers offer vary in their degree of freeing themselves. If Volga demands absolute freedom, Sarah and Vaidehi demand a balanced better life.

Demolition and a Construction

What all three writers deal with consistently is women in marital relationships and denial of their fundamental rights. Among the three writers, the central characters are strong, humane, friendly, determinant and intelligent. However, they are forced to break their studies, be denied public entry and live a life of restrictions. It is more like a bonsai plant which is trimmed according to man's way of making it right, fit for indoors. They are neither allowed to work nor allowed to express themselves. Even if they are allowed to work, the economy is controlled by men. Such hurdles are to be broken and all three writers have a consensus on that.

Between the three, Volga and Sarah Joseph contemplate the available alternatives and both of them are consistent in finding a solution to end the oppression. They offer a solid answer to end the plight of women. Vaidehi seems to lack this clarity and restrain herself from making her stories politically loaded. Her characters go through everyday suffering; sail through what they are in, and rarely attempt to fix the holes in their boats. They are busy pouring out water coming through to the ship and often scream out their frustrations. They neither fix their boats nor get another ship. The writer is sharp enough to pick up the atrocities. But don't try to break away from the system. On the other hand, Volga attempts to demolish the walls constructed around women, and Sarah Joseph's women constantly attempt to break away from the system. They are relentless in seeing an alternative.

Vaidehi's characters, like in 'Stranger', 'Dependents' and 'Rose-Tender Feet' do not question others or themselves. Instead, they are portrayed as victims. The story ends

with the identification of the issue or a problem. It doesn't go to the level of problematizing it or seeking a solution or even a stark comparison of better paths. They are not like Sarah Joseph's questions in 'Within Every Women Writer', 'Paapathara', 'Asoka' and 'Conjuality'. If Vaidehi attempts to find a balance within the existing familial space, Volga denies the current system. Sarah Joseph questions the whole system from prostitution to reservation. Both Volga and Sarah believe that this system will not do any good for women. If Sarah's stories are spread widely on a canvas, Volga's stories are focused on a portion of the same canvas, marriage. Vaidehi canvas is much smaller compared to the other two, mostly restricted to the house or home.

Language

While finding cultural roots and connotations, Vaidehi relies on plain conversations of characters. It depends upon the conversation of women to voice out their issues. The language used by Sarah Joseph is highly metaphorical, often satirical and elements of magic realism are common in most of her stories. One has to read Sarah Joseph multiple times to understand what she is attempting to say. They have many layers, including latent and manifest connotations. There is a dark satire, underlying pain, a pain of being a witness to the atrocities in Sarah Joseph's language. When you read 'Paapathara' and 'Moonlight Knows', you wouldn't be surprised if you relate to your reality; you may feel the blood in your hand while reading them. In some stories like 'Coffee House', and 'Jathiguptan and Janakiguptan', you think the pun in Sarah's language poking at patriarchy and could easily relate to mythological elements though it is referred to indirectly.

The language of Volga is more open, transparent, and direct. Her call for unity sounds like a protester leading a huge demonstration from the front. She screams so loud that every corner of this planet gives feedback. Her stories spread from tiny eyes to a large association of women demanding their rights. Initial stories (from the collection, *Political Stories*) speak about the beauty, how men have constructed the women's eyes as beautiful, praised pomegranate style teeth set, appreciated her flower-shaped long nose, fruit-shaped breasts. The middle stories transfer to questioning complex ideas. Travelling from top-down of the body, the central stories question the need of marriage. Finally, the question shifts towards women's sexual satisfaction, then they speak about the employability of women like in the stories, 'Security', 'Wall', 'What is to be done?', and 'Elections'.

Volga moves from economic independence to a larger call for the association. She demands women to accept other women as human beings not as enemies or as patriarchy predefined the roles for women. She doesn't differentiate women as mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandmother, mother and so on. Each of them may not get along well if they are seen as a separate unit of family or compartments. If they really get along, it is a threat for a man. Volga tries to break these boundaries and bring women together as human beings going through the same patriarchal suffering. The women of Vaidehi Suffer as victims rather than being revolutionaries or activists. Volga almost becomes a continuation of Charvakas's tradition, questioning the system for the sake of socialistic demand.

When it comes to language, Volga and Sarah Joseph do not hesitate to express themselves and be vocal. Women expressing sexual desire are more subtle in Vaidehi's

writings. The ways Sarah Joseph and Volga see the woman's needs slightly differ from that of Vaidehi. Their characters do not take a step back in delivering their aspirations. Vaidehi holds back the quest and searches for expressions. Vaidehi's characters healing from Brahminical social conditioning might be why they are not vocal about their bodies and needs. In the story 'Enquiry', a lower caste woman comes to enquire about the broken marriage of the landlord's daughter. She seems to be happier compared to the upper caste women. They don't think about what has to be done to satisfy them or lead a decent life. Worse is that they sail through all the atrocities daily yet smile. It is pretty challenging to say whether they are pleased as their world is more of a miniature one. The upper caste landlord's daughter is looked down on by her parents for choosing her path to break away from abusive relationships. She had no choice other than return to her roots as her husband chose to bring another woman. If she was economically better and appropriately educated, there was no need to come back to her parent's house and live through all the verbal abuse. Despite her being put down, she tolerates such criticism instead of responding to them. Volga's characters would have taught a lesson to their husband and others for betrayal. Vaidehi's characters decide to become speechless instead of vocal about their troubles. Sarah Joseph's character's aspirations are much wider compared to Vaidehi's. They want to step into everything from a civil service post to a space travel project. They break themselves from tiny shells to prove their identity.

Marriage as a Regressive System

All three writers speak about the marriage system and criticize it in their ways. Volga and Sarah Joseph agree with each other largely and their critical look at the system

is more common. In fact, their attempt to find an alternative to marriage coincides and echoes in the same chord. In the marriage system, the woman becomes subordinate to men and men control the rest. Women give away their authority, the steering to man's hands. Women are supposed to take care of his lust, raise his children and finally sacrifice everything they have.

In the story 'Within Every Woman Writer' by Sara Joseph, the wife wants to get away from her current life. She doesn't even have bus fare to travel. She does not possess a minimum amount of money or enough to buy vegetables and milk for that house. The characters of Sara Joseph go through pain, suffer through everything and attempt to get away from the oppressive marriage. This is more evident in the writings of Volga. In the stories, 'A Political Story', 'Torment', 'Marriage', Volga repeatedly stresses breaking away from the marital knot. Unfortunately, Vaidehi is blind to understanding the necessity of criticizing marriage and getting rid of the marriage system. Women in 'Enquiry', 'Ghost', 'Trees and Trailers', 'A Bird inside the Nest', and 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies' die without satisfying their bodies' demands. A woman not married is the primary concern of Vaidehi. The women struggle to get suitable grooms and spend more description on how women dream of being happy in the presence of marital bindings. In the stories of Volga and Sarah Joseph, women attempt to stop appeasing grooms and avoid marriage bindings. Both Sara Joseph and Volga contemplate on satisfying body needs at least through stepping outside the marital relationship. Live-in together, extramarital relationships are discussed positively and as an alternative compared to Vaidehi's search for an ideal home and a man.

Vaidehi speaks about extramarital relationships in Akku but in hysterical forms. She declares that she slept with other men's dreams when she was beaten badly. Similarly, Saugandhi could only dream of sleeping with other men, but it is not clear whether she really satisfied her needs by going the extra mile. In Sarah Joseph's 'Coffee House', it is evident that the central characters choose live-in relationships instead of marrying their loved ones. Shanta in 'What is to be done?' of Volga does the same. She even breaks her romantic relationship to focus on her studies and career. She is clear about what she needs and how to satisfy them.

The difference between body and mind is a constant question in all three writers. For Volga, body, and mind are not different. For Sarah Joseph, the mind could be dominated, the body could be shattered, but women's spirit always resurfaces. Volga's characters go to the extent of beating back their husbands when assaulted and realize their strengths. They don't hesitate to knock on the door of law, take away the children, start their own company, and become a businesswoman. Vaidehi's characters hardly go out of the house or village and sail through societal constructions they are subjected to without a good viable option of liberation.

Role of Economic Independence in Voicing out Resistance

The post-1990's liberalization period in India may have contributed to women's employment. A job is more of a liberating option for women as she gets time to explore beyond four walls. She was not only exposed to others but also could get her community beyond kith and kin. Economic independence could give some leverage to women in decision-making. All three writers agree that women ought to work. If they work, they

don't need to depend on men. They don't need to rely on men for their financial demands. Volga states that a woman should choose a job over marriage, a man who stops her from employment. In the story, 'What is to be done?', Shanta, the less intelligent, choose a job, and Shobha, the brilliant, marries immediately after studying B.Sc. Shanta becomes a prominent officer involved in research and Shobha, a housewife with a dull life, loses her identity. Shobha's husband humiliates her at home, denies her opinion and restricts her to home. Incidentally, Shobha's husband is now working as an assistant to Shanta. Shobha is domesticated to live a low life, humiliated, tormented, tortured every day.

Sarah Joseph's stories like that of 'Within Every Women Writer', 'Vanadurga', 'Scooter', 'Dimwittude' and 'Sweat Marks' strongly propose that women work and earn their independence. She hates that a woman has to beg a man for silly things and the man gives each penny as if he is doing a favour.

Women taking care of economic needs can be a challenge to a man as it can shake patriarchy. The fundamental foundation of man is strong because he possesses wealth and controls the money flow. He has everything in his name and decisions become an inevitable property of a man. The wealth moves only within the patriarch of the family, having no space for women. The changing times have given more freedom to women. It is necessary that women ought to work. Unfortunately, the man wants the money women to earn. When she denies sharing it, the couple becomes enemies. It is hard to find men who understand the space women need.

Vaidehi's women lack this clarity, and they are worried about societal criticism for leaving the husband, not marrying, remaining single, and not bearing children.

Unfortunately, Vaidehi does not identify the importance of women's employability as a step for women's liberation (There are other stories of Vaidehi beyond the sample chosen for the study, which contradicts these findings and statements). Volga and Sarah have the clarity on this and argue that it is essential for women to have economic liberty. Such liberty could lead to a new life, a new start and a carefree life. It could be a solid force to decide and lead a new life without a husband or parental dependence.

In Search of Alternatives

When it comes to Vaidehi's characters, they bargain for a better position, a space where she could make her own decision, a house where she is not seen as low to other men. Sarah Joseph and Volga demand an absolute alternative, not a mediated one. Sarah Joseph pictures our society and community and a house without men. 'Within Every Women Writer' is an excellent example of that. Volga rejects the existence of men in the liberating path for women like in 'Wall' or 'What is to be done?' Both Volga and Sarah Joseph call for the union of all women and demand absolute rights. In 'Paapathara', Sarah Joseph sought a place (mountain) where women could blossom like lotus without being killed or harassed. It is a world where men have no space.

Sara Joseph and Volga emphasize that education is important towards women's liberation. 'Sweat Marks' and 'What is to be done?' could be two examples from Sarah Joseph and Volga. If women are educated, they have better economic prospects and could move up in the societal hierarchy. Towards the end of the story, 'What is to be done?' by Volga, both Shanta and Shobha proceed to a university where Shobha is admitted to continue her studies. It comes symbolically as women being law practitioners and posing

resistance to men constituted world. She could be a mother of two and in her middle age. However, the education system doesn't reject her. A woman could continue her studies at any age and it is essential to lead a decent life.

Human interaction with the materialistic world, wealth, marriage, responsibility, work, poverty, humiliation, death and such aspects of life are the common themes of Vaidehi's writings. In doing so, Vaidehi persuades a reader that they are not really significant, and a woman's life could be defined beyond those materialistic constructions. It seems the expressions; gestures are more detailed than the subject of a presentation in Vaidehi's stories. In doing so, Vaidehi proposes a middle path of not breaking anyone's heart in the path of salvation.

It is not the middle path both Sarah and Volga are demanding. It is an absolute path both of them are demanding. An element of mystic, magical, and hysteria is pretty common in Sarah Joseph's stories, whereas Volga uses an activist's tone to assert her stance. The marriage system, the relationship between man-woman and the atrocities conducted by men are the recurring themes in both Sarah Joseph and Volga's stories. Feminist and post-feminist arguments are logically offered in their stories. There is criticism and a call for a new search in most of the stories. It strongly voices out that life, and its possibilities without a husband or marital bindings.

Sarah Joseph's stories are thickly composed with multi-layered meanings. They range from a question on sexuality to a set of values that we need to recreate. If some stories speak about the marginalized community's struggle, some make the male gender question their acts. In specific stories, she demands a re-look into mythologies in fixing

what was neglected. In doing so, she critically looks at the marriage system, religion, and the need for woman's inclusion in decision making.

An inevitable question she raises does include the politics of sexuality. According to her, a woman should convert sexual energy into resistance and more significant political effects. In doing so, she does not keep out the other gender as a culprit. It makes the dominant gender mirror their mistakes despite not a single word uttered by women (like in 'Conjugality', where an unhappy marriage reflects the same error in the institution of marriage).

Through 'The Moonlight Knows', Sarah Joseph makes both Unnikrishnan and Rama the culprits of their acts. The ideal man, Rama and the Holy Scripture, Ramayana, needs proper washing for the generations to come. Otherwise, the fate of Seeta keeps repeating. Both Unnikrishnan and Rama are culprits in the same act and have not altered since then and now. Unless the wrong parts of the scripts are torn off and purified, a question of oppression persists.

Specific stories demand an alternative to the marital system, a family of clutches. Can a married woman have a better life? Can the concept of marriage be rejected? Yes, one can, as some of the characters of Sarah Joseph do. 'Scooter' and 'Cloves' have those women who are not happy with what they are, a house, a child, and a husband. Both husband and wife share the irony of the relationship's burden, yet they drag it for another day to save the marriage for society. The women are fed up with husbands who only come to them for their lust.

In the story, by Vaidehi 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies', a similar stance is expressed to that of Volga. Saugandhi, sees a violent monster in the innocent face of her father. It is more than just protecting my daughter. It is to ensure the chastity of Saugandhi. Saugandhi craves for the man's body. It is not just for fulfilling her body needs. She wants to be rebellious. The story echoes with the Volga's characters, Susheela, Janaki, Subhadra, Padmakka and many others. In the marriage or an employed situation, a woman always lives with bitterness and can have only the limited liberty given by men, whether its father or a husband. One can see the stories of Volga are more vocal and sound more direct than Vaidehi. Vaidehi draws in the limited space of house, street, village and their challenges to women who live in the society. Sarah Joseph's canvas is much larger. It travels from city to city, town to town, and state to state. However, Volga's stories broadly transition towards pan India, an Indian typical patriarchal value system rooted in us. The women of Volga signify the problems, and it appeals to any woman.

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**RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHY IN THE SHORT STORIES
BY INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS: A STUDY OF
SARAH JOSEPH, VOLGA AND VAIDEHI**

Thesis submitted to Kuvempu University for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
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Chapter-VI

CONCLUSION

In Search of a New Life

In all the three writers, Sarah Joseph, Volga and Vaidehi, the resistance to patriarchy is abundantly detailed through innumerable metaphors, real-life experiences and observations. These writers have dealt with rich details of possible alternatives to the struggles women have to endure in their everyday lives. It includes struggles within the marital relationship, breaking formation year's orientation (child development state), social-economic clutches and cultural upbringings. All three writers attempt to remind women about who they are in real. Their stories spread from understanding the value of freedom to decoding their bodies. These prominent feminist writers highly criticize the biological and sociological constructions of women.

In all three writers and their perceptions, search for an alternative coincides with each other sometimes and varies on a few occasions. The canvas chosen by each writer has mainly contributed to what they propagate. Volga has chosen a theme-based canvas to paint her characters. Sarah Joseph pictures it with her peculiar language. However, Vaidehi's canvas is much smaller than the other two and the characters are brought to the limelight by victimizing their lives. Probably, the grooming as an individual also contributes to what they choose as a literary canvas.

Sarah Joseph hailing from the Syrian Christian community deals with similar religious attributions and the plight of Christian-raised women. For example, 'The Masc.

of Virgin', 'Hurk!', 'Dimwittude', 'Vanadurga', 'To the Sea', 'Sweat Marks', 'The Passion of Mary', 'Coffee House' are thickly laced with religious-cultural experiences which could be of the writers or of her observations.

In the story, 'The Masc. of Virgin', an adolescent girl is pregnant, which nobody in the family is aware of, eventually leading to her suicide. Her autopsy report reveals the sexual assault she had gone through. The family members' Christian belief attributes the girl's deteriorating health to the curse of God, lesser belief in worshipping God. The granny in the house always dictates to worship God to all the problems of the house. The kids are not encouraged to share what they are going through. Hence, the girl never shares her sexual abuse and it remains a secret; the abuser escapes by default. Religion has masked the abuser by making the young people not letting exercise their fundamental expressions. The mother somewhat vaguely understands the girl's plight, which indicates that the mother would also have gone through such experiences as a child. Similarly, in 'Dimwittude', the central character oscillates between her Christian beliefs and the prosperous chances life offers. She could be a great scientist if she cuts off from her Christian believes in protecting her virginity. The conflict between science and virginity offers a glimpse of how we orient our girl children.

Sarah and Volga take the readers through gory sexual exploitation, which is less seen in Vaidehi's stories. 'To The Sea', 'Paapathara', and 'Dead Land', shocks the readers through the pain a mother carries and is highly critical of war, boundaries and the man's quest to conquer everything.

In Volga's 'Sita's Braid', 'Eyes', 'Nose Stud', 'Shut Up!', 'Stony Breasts', 'A Political Story', 'Security', and 'Walls', the author sharply criticizes institutionalized

mind sets, search for the meaning of beauty and questions a man's constructions of woman. Whether it is Sita, Janaki, Susheela, Shobha, Shanta, all are subjected to prove their womanhood according to the expectations of a man.

In the same way, in Vaidehi's stories like that of 'Enquiry', 'Visitor', 'Chandaley', 'Dependence', 'Pages Deep Within', 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies', 'To the Notebook (or notes) of a Sociologist', 'Puttammattey and Granddaughter', and 'An Afternoon with Shakuntala' women are subjected to not to see around or see things before them. They are trained only to take orders from the patriarch of the family. There is not much difference in the role of a father or a husband in all three writer's stories. They are men at the end worried about their marriage, wealth, fertility and chastity of women. Unfortunately, mothers-in-law took part in men's vision as they have forgotten what they are. In Vaidehi's stories like that of 'The Auspicious Platter', 'Akku', and 'Ghost', women work more than men in the fields. In Sarah Joseph's story 'Dimwittude', the father says that he feels like losing his right hand while reluctant to send off his daughter to study further.

The questions raised by all three writers ultimately express a quest to find an alternative, a life without dominance, a life where a woman can bloom with all her beauty. The economic and biological freedom these writers demand is the universal demand and each writer contributes to the sociological discourse of what is necessary to be a woman. However, the alternatives these three writers offer vary in their degree of freeing themselves. If Volga demands absolute freedom, Sarah and Vaidehi demand a balanced better life.

Demolition and a Construction

What all three writers deal with consistently is women in marital relationships and denial of their fundamental rights. Among the three writers, the central characters are strong, humane, friendly, determinant and intelligent. However, they are forced to break their studies, be denied public entry and live a life of restrictions. It is more like a bonsai plant which is trimmed according to man's way of making it right, fit for indoors. They are neither allowed to work nor allowed to express themselves. Even if they are allowed to work, the economy is controlled by men. Such hurdles are to be broken and all three writers have a consensus on that.

Between the three, Volga and Sarah Joseph contemplate the available alternatives and both of them are consistent in finding a solution to end the oppression. They offer a solid answer to end the plight of women. Vaidehi seems to lack this clarity and restrain herself from making her stories politically loaded. Her characters go through everyday suffering; sail through what they are in, and rarely attempt to fix the holes in their boats. They are busy pouring out water coming through to the ship and often scream out their frustrations. They neither fix their boats nor get another ship. The writer is sharp enough to pick up the atrocities. But don't try to break away from the system. On the other hand, Volga attempts to demolish the walls constructed around women, and Sarah Joseph's women constantly attempt to break away from the system. They are relentless in seeing an alternative.

Vaidehi's characters, like in 'Stranger', 'Dependents' and 'Rose-Tender Feet' do not question others or themselves. Instead, they are portrayed as victims. The story ends

with the identification of the issue or a problem. It doesn't go to the level of problematizing it or seeking a solution or even a stark comparison of better paths. They are not like Sarah Joseph's questions in 'Within Every Women Writer', 'Paapathara', 'Asoka' and 'Conjugalinity'. If Vaidehi attempts to find a balance within the existing familial space, Volga denies the current system. Sarah Joseph questions the whole system from prostitution to reservation. Both Volga and Sarah believe that this system will not do any good for women. If Sarah's stories are spread widely on a canvas, Volga's stories are focused on a portion of the same canvas, marriage. Vaidehi canvas is much smaller compared to the other two, mostly restricted to the house or home.

Language

While finding cultural roots and connotations, Vaidehi relies on plain conversations of characters. It depends upon the conversation of women to voice out their issues. The language used by Sarah Joseph is highly metaphorical, often satirical and elements of magic realism are common in most of her stories. One has to read Sarah Joseph multiple times to understand what she is attempting to say. They have many layers, including latent and manifest connotations. There is a dark satire, underlying pain, a pain of being a witness to the atrocities in Sarah Joseph's language. When you read 'Paapathara' and 'Moonlight Knows', you wouldn't be surprised if you relate to your reality; you may feel the blood in your hand while reading them. In some stories like 'Coffee House', and 'Jathiguptan and Janakiguptan', you think the pun in Sarah's language poking at patriarchy and could easily relate to mythological elements though it is referred to indirectly.

The language of Volga is more open, transparent, and direct. Her call for unity sounds like a protester leading a huge demonstration from the front. She screams so loud that every corner of this planet gives feedback. Her stories spread from tiny eyes to a large association of women demanding their rights. Initial stories (from the collection, *Political Stories*) speak about the beauty, how men have constructed the women's eyes as beautiful, praised pomegranate style teeth set, appreciated her flower-shaped long nose, fruit-shaped breasts. The middle stories transfer to questioning complex ideas. Travelling from top-down of the body, the central stories question the need of marriage. Finally, the question shifts towards women's sexual satisfaction, then they speak about the employability of women like in the stories, 'Security', 'Wall', 'What is to be done?', and 'Elections'.

Volga moves from economic independence to a larger call for the association. She demands women to accept other women as human beings not as enemies or as patriarchy predefined the roles for women. She doesn't differentiate women as mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandmother, mother and so on. Each of them may not get along well if they are seen as a separate unit of family or compartments. If they really get along, it is a threat for a man. Volga tries to break these boundaries and bring women together as human beings going through the same patriarchal suffering. The women of Vaidehi Suffer as victims rather than being revolutionaries or activists. Volga almost becomes a continuation of Charvakas's tradition, questioning the system for the sake of socialistic demand.

When it comes to language, Volga and Sarah Joseph do not hesitate to express themselves and be vocal. Women expressing sexual desire are more subtle in Vaidehi's

writings. The ways Sarah Joseph and Volga see the woman's needs slightly differ from that of Vaidehi. Their characters do not take a step back in delivering their aspirations. Vaidehi holds back the quest and searches for expressions. Vaidehi's characters healing from Brahminical social conditioning might be why they are not vocal about their bodies and needs. In the story 'Enquiry', a lower caste woman comes to enquire about the broken marriage of the landlord's daughter. She seems to be happier compared to the upper caste women. They don't think about what has to be done to satisfy them or lead a decent life. Worse is that they sail through all the atrocities daily yet smile. It is pretty challenging to say whether they are pleased as their world is more of a miniature one. The upper caste landlord's daughter is looked down on by her parents for choosing her path to break away from abusive relationships. She had no choice other than return to her roots as her husband chose to bring another woman. If she was economically better and appropriately educated, there was no need to come back to her parent's house and live through all the verbal abuse. Despite her being put down, she tolerates such criticism instead of responding to them. Volga's characters would have taught a lesson to their husband and others for betrayal. Vaidehi's characters decide to become speechless instead of vocal about their troubles. Sarah Joseph's character's aspirations are much wider compared to Vaidehi's. They want to step into everything from a civil service post to a space travel project. They break themselves from tiny shells to prove their identity.

Marriage as a Regressive System

All three writers speak about the marriage system and criticize it in their ways. Volga and Sarah Joseph agree with each other largely and their critical look at the system

is more common. In fact, their attempt to find an alternative to marriage coincides and echoes in the same chord. In the marriage system, the woman becomes subordinate to men and men control the rest. Women give away their authority, the steering to man's hands. Women are supposed to take care of his lust, raise his children and finally sacrifice everything they have.

In the story 'Within Every Woman Writer' by Sara Joseph, the wife wants to get away from her current life. She doesn't even have bus fare to travel. She does not possess a minimum amount of money or enough to buy vegetables and milk for that house. The characters of Sara Joseph go through pain, suffer through everything and attempt to get away from the oppressive marriage. This is more evident in the writings of Volga. In the stories, 'A Political Story', 'Torment', 'Marriage', Volga repeatedly stresses breaking away from the marital knot. Unfortunately, Vaidehi is blind to understanding the necessity of criticizing marriage and getting rid of the marriage system. Women in 'Enquiry', 'Ghost', 'Trees and Trailers', 'A Bird inside the Nest', and 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies' die without satisfying their bodies' demands. A woman not married is the primary concern of Vaidehi. The women struggle to get suitable grooms and spend more description on how women dream of being happy in the presence of marital bindings. In the stories of Volga and Sarah Joseph, women attempt to stop appeasing grooms and avoid marriage bindings. Both Sara Joseph and Volga contemplate on satisfying body needs at least through stepping outside the marital relationship. Live-in together, extramarital relationships are discussed positively and as an alternative compared to Vaidehi's search for an ideal home and a man.

Vaidehi speaks about extramarital relationships in Akku but in hysterical forms. She declares that she slept with other men's dreams when she was beaten badly. Similarly, Saugandhi could only dream of sleeping with other men, but it is not clear whether she really satisfied her needs by going the extra mile. In Sarah Joseph's 'Coffee House', it is evident that the central characters choose live-in relationships instead of marrying their loved ones. Shanta in 'What is to be done?' of Volga does the same. She even breaks her romantic relationship to focus on her studies and career. She is clear about what she needs and how to satisfy them.

The difference between body and mind is a constant question in all three writers. For Volga, body, and mind are not different. For Sarah Joseph, the mind could be dominated, the body could be shattered, but women's spirit always resurfaces. Volga's characters go to the extent of beating back their husbands when assaulted and realize their strengths. They don't hesitate to knock on the door of law, take away the children, start their own company, and become a businesswoman. Vaidehi's characters hardly go out of the house or village and sail through societal constructions they are subjected to without a good viable option of liberation.

Role of Economic Independence in Voicing out Resistance

The post-1990's liberalization period in India may have contributed to women's employment. A job is more of a liberating option for women as she gets time to explore beyond four walls. She was not only exposed to others but also could get her community beyond kith and kin. Economic independence could give some leverage to women in decision-making. All three writers agree that women ought to work. If they work, they

don't need to depend on men. They don't need to rely on men for their financial demands. Volga states that a woman should choose a job over marriage, a man who stops her from employment. In the story, 'What is to be done?', Shanta, the less intelligent, choose a job, and Shobha, the brilliant, marries immediately after studying B.Sc. Shanta becomes a prominent officer involved in research and Shobha, a housewife with a dull life, loses her identity. Shobha's husband humiliates her at home, denies her opinion and restricts her to home. Incidentally, Shobha's husband is now working as an assistant to Shanta. Shobha is domesticated to live a low life, humiliated, tormented, tortured every day.

Sarah Joseph's stories like that of 'Within Every Women Writer', 'Vanadurga', 'Scooter', 'Dimwittude' and 'Sweat Marks' strongly propose that women work and earn their independence. She hates that a woman has to beg a man for silly things and the man gives each penny as if he is doing a favour.

Women taking care of economic needs can be a challenge to a man as it can shake patriarchy. The fundamental foundation of man is strong because he possesses wealth and controls the money flow. He has everything in his name and decisions become an inevitable property of a man. The wealth moves only within the patriarch of the family, having no space for women. The changing times have given more freedom to women. It is necessary that women ought to work. Unfortunately, the man wants the money women to earn. When she denies sharing it, the couple becomes enemies. It is hard to find men who understand the space women need.

Vaidehi's women lack this clarity, and they are worried about societal criticism for leaving the husband, not marrying, remaining single, and not bearing children.

Unfortunately, Vaidehi does not identify the importance of women's employability as a step for women's liberation (There are other stories of Vaidehi beyond the sample chosen for the study, which contradicts these findings and statements). Volga and Sarah have the clarity on this and argue that it is essential for women to have economic liberty. Such liberty could lead to a new life, a new start and a carefree life. It could be a solid force to decide and lead a new life without a husband or parental dependence.

In Search of Alternatives

When it comes to Vaidehi's characters, they bargain for a better position, a space where she could make her own decision, a house where she is not seen as low to other men. Sarah Joseph and Volga demand an absolute alternative, not a mediated one. Sarah Joseph pictures our society and community and a house without men. 'Within Every Women Writer' is an excellent example of that. Volga rejects the existence of men in the liberating path for women like in 'Wall' or 'What is to be done?' Both Volga and Sarah Joseph call for the union of all women and demand absolute rights. In 'Paapathara', Sarah Joseph sought a place (mountain) where women could blossom like lotus without being killed or harassed. It is a world where men have no space.

Sara Joseph and Volga emphasize that education is important towards women's liberation. 'Sweat Marks' and 'What is to be done?' could be two examples from Sarah Joseph and Volga. If women are educated, they have better economic prospects and could move up in the societal hierarchy. Towards the end of the story, 'What is to be done?' by Volga, both Shanta and Shobha proceed to a university where Shobha is admitted to continue her studies. It comes symbolically as women being law practitioners and posing

resistance to men constituted world. She could be a mother of two and in her middle age. However, the education system doesn't reject her. A woman could continue her studies at any age and it is essential to lead a decent life.

Human interaction with the materialistic world, wealth, marriage, responsibility, work, poverty, humiliation, death and such aspects of life are the common themes of Vaidehi's writings. In doing so, Vaidehi persuades a reader that they are not really significant, and a woman's life could be defined beyond those materialistic constructions. It seems the expressions; gestures are more detailed than the subject of a presentation in Vaidehi's stories. In doing so, Vaidehi proposes a middle path of not breaking anyone's heart in the path of salvation.

It is not the middle path both Sarah and Volga are demanding. It is an absolute path both of them are demanding. An element of mystic, magical, and hysteria is pretty common in Sarah Joseph's stories, whereas Volga uses an activist's tone to assert her stance. The marriage system, the relationship between man-woman and the atrocities conducted by men are the recurring themes in both Sarah Joseph and Volga's stories. Feminist and post-feminist arguments are logically offered in their stories. There is criticism and a call for a new search in most of the stories. It strongly voices out that life, and its possibilities without a husband or marital bindings.

Sarah Joseph's stories are thickly composed with multi-layered meanings. They range from a question on sexuality to a set of values that we need to recreate. If some stories speak about the marginalized community's struggle, some make the male gender question their acts. In specific stories, she demands a re-look into mythologies in fixing

what was neglected. In doing so, she critically looks at the marriage system, religion, and the need for woman's inclusion in decision making.

An inevitable question she raises does include the politics of sexuality. According to her, a woman should convert sexual energy into resistance and more significant political effects. In doing so, she does not keep out the other gender as a culprit. It makes the dominant gender mirror their mistakes despite not a single word uttered by women (like in 'Conjugality', where an unhappy marriage reflects the same error in the institution of marriage).

Through 'The Moonlight Knows', Sarah Joseph makes both Unnikrishnan and Rama the culprits of their acts. The ideal man, Rama and the Holy Scripture, Ramayana, needs proper washing for the generations to come. Otherwise, the fate of Seeta keeps repeating. Both Unnikrishnan and Rama are culprits in the same act and have not altered since then and now. Unless the wrong parts of the scripts are torn off and purified, a question of oppression persists.

Specific stories demand an alternative to the marital system, a family of clutches. Can a married woman have a better life? Can the concept of marriage be rejected? Yes, one can, as some of the characters of Sarah Joseph do. 'Scooter' and 'Cloves' have those women who are not happy with what they are, a house, a child, and a husband. Both husband and wife share the irony of the relationship's burden, yet they drag it for another day to save the marriage for society. The women are fed up with husbands who only come to them for their lust.

In the story, by Vaidehi 'Saugandhi's Soliloquies', a similar stance is expressed to that of Volga. Saugandhi, sees a violent monster in the innocent face of her father. It is more than just protecting my daughter. It is to ensure the chastity of Saugandhi. Saugandhi craves for the man's body. It is not just for fulfilling her body needs. She wants to be rebellious. The story echoes with the Volga's characters, Susheela, Janaki, Subhadra, Padmakka and many others. In the marriage or an employed situation, a woman always lives with bitterness and can have only the limited liberty given by men, whether its father or a husband. One can see the stories of Volga are more vocal and sound more direct than Vaidehi. Vaidehi draws in the limited space of house, street, village and their challenges to women who live in the society. Sarah Joseph's canvas is much larger. It travels from city to city, town to town, and state to state. However, Volga's stories broadly transition towards pan India, an Indian typical patriarchal value system rooted in us. The women of Volga signify the problems, and it appeals to any woman.