

Love, Desire, and the ‘Consciousness-Raising’ in Triveni’s Novels: An Analysis of *Sothu Geddavalu* (She Was Defeated, Had Won)

Sreedevi Reddy*  

Abstract

This study examines how women writers’ novels, particularly Triveni’s, fostered feminist consciousness in India in the 1950s, 1960s, and the decades that followed. Contrary to the scholarly views that this era saw a decline in feminist politics, the author argues that women’s novels provided a platform for women to articulate and discuss shared experiences of patriarchal oppression. This paper analyses Sothu Geddavalu, a novel that portrays the moral double standards surrounding sexuality and desire. While the female protagonist, Bharathi, endures severe social and familial censure for her actions, the male characters face no comparable consequences. The novel concludes with the male protagonist advocating for equality in love, suggesting that both men and women be judged by the same moral yardstick. The author postulates that the informal discussions of Triveni’s novels functioned similarly to consciousness-raising groups, though with significant differences. Like CR groups, these discussions, centred on women’s experiences and shared patterns of oppression and operated without formal leadership. However, unlike CR groups, these discussions were not overtly political, did not aim to inspire collective action, and unfolded within domestic spaces. This ‘proto-feminist’ consciousness-raising was limited but significant.

Keywords: consciousness-raising, desire, women writers, Kannada literature, gender, print, education.

Submitted: 10.07.2026

Revised: 28.08.2026

Accepted: 05.09.2026

Published 30.09.2026

*Dr Sreedevi Reddy, Visiting Research Fellow, Center for Global Cultures and Societies, Kanazawa University, Japan.

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Introduction

Consciousness-raising was a form of political action that motivated discussion of topics such as women's relationships, their roles in marriage, and their feelings (Greenslade). Consciousness-raising involved selecting a topic related to women's experiences, such as relationships with husbands, dating, economic dependence, having children, abortion, or other relevant issues. In addition to creating a sense of sisterhood, Consciousness-Raising (abbreviated as CR) groups allowed women to verbalise feelings they may have dismissed as unimportant. Because discrimination is often so pervasive, several women struggled to identify it accurately. Women may not have recognised or fully understood how the patriarchal, male-dominated society oppressed them. They simply did not understand what the problem was, where it lay, or how to verbalise it. The founding feminists initially intended to use CR to determine their next steps. They did not anticipate that these group discussions would be viewed as radical action that would provoke fear and criticism (Greenslade).

Just as CR groups enabled women to articulate shared experiences, this study shows how novels written by women in India during the 1950s and 1960s, particularly those by Triveni, served a similar purpose. These novels offered valuable insight into literary discussions of gender equality emerging in the years just before and after India's independence. Notably, these women writers expanded the scope of feminist thought and literary expression by depicting female characters who expressed desires for sexual freedom, economic independence, and gender equality comparable to their male counterparts (Tharu and Lalitha 25-57).

The personal experiences of individual women conveyed through these narratives could serve as inspiration to many.) Consciousness-raising is one of the feminist strategies espoused by influential figures such as Shulamith Firestone, Kathie Sarahchild, and the Red Stocking Society in the USA (Hanisch).

The powerful feminist slogan "The Personal is Political" captures a fundamental truth about feminism that still resonates today. Through sharing personal experiences, women realised that many of the issues they faced were not isolated but rather interconnected, necessitating political action for solutions. Napikoski mentions in her web article that though Carol Hanisch is being credited with the slogan frequently, Hanisch has specified in her republication of the essay in 2006 that it was not her original creation. The anthology editors, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, erroneously attributed it to her, which fueled discussions about authorship and the collective nature of feminist thought. By the 1970s, this was a popular slogan among women's rights activists and should not be attributed to any single individual (Napikoski).

Triveni (Kannada: ತ್ರಿವೇಣಿ), the pen name of Anasuya Shankar (1928-1963), was a writer of modern Kannada fiction. Her novels have been women-centric and known for discussing psychological issues in Kannada. The author hypothesises that Triveni's novels served as platforms for discussions among women readers, for their

often-bold statements. While direct archival evidence of such discussions is limited, the novels' popularity (1,000 to 3,000 copies sold in the 1950s), their accessibility through lending libraries, and their focus on shared experiences suggest they functioned as catalysts for these concerns.

Research Gap

Feminist scholarship, particularly Kumar's foundational work, has characterised the 1950s and 1960s as a moment of paucity in women's writing and a decline in feminist politics in India (Kumar 1-6). This narrative rests largely on the decline of organised women's movements and the absence of high-profile feminist activism in English-language national discourse. However, this overlooks regional-language literary production. As Anagol points out, 'many gender and women's studies have been all-India studies, and there is a need to study region-specific studies to understand the position of women and how they resisted various kinds of oppression (9). By examining Kannada women's novels, this study aims to challenge the narrative of decline.

Research Objectives

The first phase of Indian feminism, between the 1850s and the 1910s, took shape in the context of debates surrounding the women's question. The rise of "women's writing" helped fuel this nationalist activism by constructing images of Indian women and expectations for their actions (Kumar 32-52). Moreover, some regions were not directly under colonial control.

This study has three objectives: (1) to demonstrate that Triveni's novels articulated feminist concerns during a period characterised as one of feminist decline; (2) to analyze how *Sothu Gedavalu* exposes patriarchal double standards regarding sexuality; and (3) to argue that informal discussions of these novels functioned akin to consciousness-raising groups. The focus of this study will be on Triveni's novel, *Sothu Geddavalu* (Triveni 1-157)

The Status of Women in Pre- and Post-Independence

Social reform issues such as widow immolation, widow remarriage, child marriage, and women's health and education became key cultural arenas (Allender 24). In the 1820s, the Mission Schools for girls were established across India (Allender 44). Patriarchal societies denied formal education to women and fostered beliefs like the superstition that a literate woman would become a widow. The earliest English-medium school appeared in 1833 in the Mysore Empire. The printing era, heralded by Christian missionaries, brought printing presses and significantly contributed to literacy and education. In 1858, the Department of Education was founded in Mysore, leading to 2,087 English-medium schools by 1881, as well as higher education institutes like Bangalore Central College (1870), Maharaja's College (1879), Maharani's College (1901), and the Mysore University (1916) in Mysore in the Kingdom of Mysore (Rao 352-369). Schools run by Matha or other religious organisations in Southern India played a vital role in teaching basic reading and calculations, religious hymns, and common wisdom for everyday life. The Mysore

Empire encouraged widows to remarry and granted women the right to vote in 1923, with some areas like the Madras Presidency allowing suffrage as early as 1921. Women's suffrage in India was achieved with comparatively less struggle than in other countries.

Print, Price, and Libraries

These novels achieved massive sales due to their availability in inexpensive paperback editions. For example, Kannada writer Tarasu (Taluku Ramaswamayya Subba Rao, 21 April 1920–10 April 1984) published *Thirugubaana* (Boomerang) in paperback, and 10,000 copies were sold in the 1950s. A novel of 200 to 400 pages was sold at the mere price of 1 rupee 50 paise (Ramachandran 9-10). Similarly, women writers' works were sold cheaper. For example, Triveni's novel *Sothu Geddavalu*, its second edition was priced at "Ondu Kaalu Rupaayi" (Rs1.25Paise). These works could be obtained through college libraries, Mahila Samaja (Women's associations), city library networks, and, with a small membership fee, private circulating libraries across cities. These novels were serialised in popular periodicals such as *Sudha* and *Prajamata*, etc., before making their debut as paperback editions. Radhika also mirrors a similar view (86).

This phenomenon is not unique to India alone. It is observed across world literatures. In Japan, for instance, numerous women writers contributed to periodicals before rising to prominence in the literary world. The accessibility and the reach of these works have undeniably shaped the literary cultures (Reddy 1-35). The low-cost book publishing contributed to the visibility of emerging writers, including women novelists such as Triveni, to gain wider readership (Ramachandran 10). Interestingly, 1920s Japan had a similar book boom known as "Yenponboomu", where books were sold for just one yen each. It was especially popular among the masses struggling under the economic depression of that era. Despite the economic hardships, many bought books at low prices, enabling some writers to achieve prosperity (Reddy 25).

Another factor to reflect on is the size of the books, which seems to have influenced sales. The circulation and readership of women's novels increased owing to the size of the books, known as handbooks (*kai hothige*). The rise in sales of these novels in the 1950s can be attributed to the new modes of printing and cheaper 'handbook' style publishing. The handbook was called that because of its size, which could easily fit into one's hand (Premalatha 175-176).

Pre- and Post-Independence Women's Writing in Kannada

The novels of the Kannada woman writer Triveni (Anasuya Shankar, 1928–1963), published in the 1950s and early 1960s, portray female characters who articulate desires for sexual freedom, economic independence, and gender equality comparable to those of their male counterparts. Her works both affirm and challenge traditional norms. She introduced characters who challenged the social and sexual mores of the time, earning her the label "Purushadweshi" (male-hater) due to her perceived favoritism towards female characters (Tharu and Lalitha 286).

Early women novelists in Kannada, such as Nanjanagudu Thirumalamba (1887–1982) and Kalyanamma (1894–1965), explored issues of marriage. Thirumalamba argued for women’s education because it enabled them to run their households more efficiently. Her father encouraged her to study after she became a widow. Her mother tongue was Tamil, but she was fluent in Telugu and Kannada too. Thirumalamba’s writings often addressed themes such as dowry, child marriage, and the problems faced by widows, and she was a staunch supporter of formal education for women. Alongside her literary endeavors, she was an activist who founded *Karnataka Nandini* (Daughter of Karnataka) in 1916, the first known magazine for women in Kannada. Due to a lack of contributors, she often wrote under various pseudonyms to fill the columns. In her novels, widows strive for dignity and seek to serve society but oppose remarriage and renounce worldly pleasures. Thirumalamba assumed education would empower women to become wiser wives and good mothers (Tharu and Lalitha 380-381).

Kalyanamma (1894-1965) was raised and educated in Bangalore. She was married at the age of ten, but just three months later, she became a widow. Despite her family’s opposition, she continued her education and passed her lower secondary exam in 1906. Her mother tongue was Tamil, but she attended a Kannada school, so she wrote in Kannada. Living as a widow with her extended family, Kalyanamma endured long hours of domestic chores. Nevertheless, she made time to read and write, despite being poor and sick. In Bangalore, she started a women’s organisation called Saradha Stree Samaj and served as its secretary until 1926. She also founded an organisation for children. In 1921, she launched a magazine called *Saraswati*, which she edited until 1963, when it ceased publication due to a lack of a publisher and funds. Between 1918 and 1935, she wrote novels that focused on the issues faced by child widows. A strong opponent of the practice of the dowry system, she differed from Thirumalamba by advocating for women’s economic and social advancement. She also encouraged women to play sports for physical well-being by establishing a badminton court for women (Tharu and Lalitha 394-400).

Triveni published 24 novels and 3 short story collections, and her first novel, *Apasvara*, was published in 1953. She had a brief writing career that lasted only a decade, from 1953 to 1963. Tragically, she passed away three weeks after giving birth to her daughter due to pulmonary embolism (Shankar). She hailed from a family of writers. Her uncle was a famous Kannada writer, B.M. Srikantaiah. Her aunt, Vaani, and younger sister, Aryanbha Pattabhi, also became writers. Triveni, a pen name inspired by the confluence of three rivers where Gandhi’s ashes were immersed, earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Maharani’s College in Mysore. Her husband, Shankar, was a professor of English in a college in the same city. Contracting whooping cough at age eight limited her physical activity and social interactions, making her an observant and quiet individual. Despite facing many rejections from periodicals, her family encouraged her to continue writing (Ramachandran 10-16, Shankar).

The ‘psychological novel’ in Kannada literature was pioneered by Triveni,

whose novels focus on a woman protagonist grappling with mental challenges that reflect broader social maladies. Triveni has authored four novels in this style, while the rest of her other works deal with the problems faced by women in society and often critiquing superstitions, traditions, and oppressive patriarchal systems. (Ramachandran 106).

The concept of a housewife, a woman who is restricted to the house, was sort of new for urban middle-class women. After independence, India introduced new legislation to improve women's status and promote gender equality through legal reforms addressing marriage, family planning, and women's education. The women characters in romances were represented as exploring the value of education to represent them in the modernising new nation with confidence and to adapt themselves to modern manners and good dress sense, as wives and mothers (Radhika 90). Radhika, in her study of women writers' novels, says the making/unmaking of an ideal is central to these romances of the 1950s and the 1960s (93).

The portrayal of psychological conflict was a device employed by some of the English novelists, such as Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, who were influenced by Freud's theories, especially his ideas on the unconscious and sexuality that gained prominence during that time. Triveni skillfully used the portrayal of psychological conflicts to narrate women's inner feelings, cleverly utilised in her psychological novels, which often feature female protagonists suffering from hysteria or psychosis. The story of Sharapanjara (A Cage of Arrows), which was posthumously published in 1965, based on Triveni's novel of the same name, was made into a movie in 1971 in the Kannada language and was a colossal hit and left a lasting impression on audiences. Both the book and the movie made women openly discuss various forms of mental agonies and even question the responsibilities of family members when a woman was suffering at home. People who move between reading and watching films, and vice versa, often have insightful discussions about the movies and novels.

In childhood, many of us read children's magazines like Chandamama, Balamitra, and comic books like Amara Chitra Katha, while listening to captivating mythological tales from the Ramayana, Mahabharatha, and Panchatantra from elders at home. As we entered our teenage years and early adulthood, our interests expanded to include weekly magazines like Sudha and Prajaamata, as well as monthly magazines like Kasturi, Mayura, and Taranga in Kannada and Reader's Digest in English. Many of these magazines used to feature serialized novels that attracted readers week after week. Sunday and festival editions of the Kannada newspaper Prajaavaani occasionally featured special story editions. Overall, the reading practices were diverse, encompassing various forms and genres. We must also consider social or community reading when texts were less available and literacy levels were unequal in future studies.

Informal conversations in my neighborhood in Bangalore revealed that Triveni's novels were often read discreetly. The covert reading practice suggests

that the novels addressed desires and concerns that were neither acknowledged nor supported by familial or educational institutions. In addition, not all families approved of reading these novels. I had a friend who used to borrow novels from me in the morning and finish reading the novel by evening. Anecdotes from neighbourhood women exemplify how these narratives fostered interpersonal connections, as discussions frequently revolved around the characters and the themes of these novels juxtaposed with their own life experiences. Conversations often began with the casual inquiry, “Coffee ayithaa?” (Did you have your coffee?), followed by “Yaava kathepustaka odiddiri?” (Which storybook (novel) did you read?), which served as both a greeting and an opening to literary discussion. This signifies how reading and social interaction were influenced by literature in shaping the ability to reflect on and influence the lived experiences of individuals in Bengaluru’s sociocultural fabric. They shared parts of the story that elicited strong reactions to narrative conclusions and alternate endings.

These activities should not be dismissed as frivolous. As Janice Radway demonstrates in *Reading the Romance* (1984), readers actively construct meaning through interpretive communities. While Radway had access to ethnographic data from romance readers, studying Kannada readers from the 1950s poses methodological challenges because few left written records of their reading habits. However, the novels themselves provide insights into implied readers and anticipated responses through their thematic concerns and narrative strategies.

We must approach these conversations around the novels similarly to sessions in the CR groups. In these groups, women’s experiences served as an essential resource for conversation, enabling them to share aspects of their lives they had kept secret or felt too insecure to confront or even acknowledge (Tharu and Lalitha 33). These groups operated without a formal leader, promoting a casual and open dialogue. This format mirrored conversations among neighbors or friends in novels, where individuals would critically examine dominant views and question the interpretations of various dimensions, juxtaposing them with social and personal experiences. Publication of the novel *Sothu Geddavalu* was delayed for a considerable time by several publishers who were reluctant to take on this project (Ramachandran 13).

Synopsis of *Sothu Geddavalu* (She was defeated, had won)

Triveni, in the foreword of *Sothu Geddavalu*, says:

Human beings are intrinsically weak in nature. Sometimes, due to emotional circumstances, they may stumble away from the right path. In this story, I tried to narrate about such a couple who slipped away from the right path, but regained their consciousness and rectified their mistakes. Readers must not think that I am suggesting that a couple who live away from their partners for long will behave like Anand and Bharathi, or justifying their behavior, here in the novel. I only appeal that we must show sympathy and pity rather than anger. (Triveni 4)

In the foreword of the novel, the writer makes a conscious appeal to the readers that she does not condone extramarital relations like the protagonists Anand and Bharathi. Instead, she advocates a compassionate approach to individuals involved in such relationships, as some may not be strong-willed, and urges readers to extend sympathy and forgiveness rather than anger and punishment. She opines that it is natural for human beings to err; therefore, forgiveness is needed. This is the foreword written by Triveni, and her name appears at the end, with her address as 1152, Chamarajapuram, Mysore.

The novel is divided into 23 sections without any subtitles (Triveni 5-157). The narrative mainly unfolds in the cities of Mysuru and Bengaluru in the 1950s, while the bigger cities of Mumbai and London also appear in the story. The story begins with a description of a Brahmin clerk's home, where a marriage proposal comes through a close relative, the maternal uncle. Seetharamayya, a clerk in the university office, and his wife, Sarojamma, raise four children, including their eldest daughter, Bharathi, a college student and the heroine of the novel. They live in a middle-class household. The marriage proposal is from an upper-middle-class family from Bengaluru, in which the male protagonist is an engineer with a public-sector company, soon to be deputed to England for two years of training (Triveni 5-16). After returning to India, he is assured of a higher position and extra perks. The boy's parents want him to marry before his departure to ensure he does not end up marrying a white woman in England and settling there, which is undesirable for their family (Triveni 20-24).

The novel's female protagonist is Bharathi, portrayed as fair-skinned, tall, slim, and attractive, with long, beautiful black hair, and a college education. Thus, it fulfils the criteria of 'marriage suitability' (Triveni 16-20). This is common among many communities and castes in India, where the boy's side approaches the girl's family to seek an alliance. In some communities, it is considered dishonourable for the girl's family to approach or initiate any step for a marriage alliance. However, in the story, we learn that it is normal for the girl's family to approach the boy's family for alliances, among the Brahmin community. Here, in the plot, it's the boy's family approaching the girl's family for a marriage alliance. In fact, the father of the bride has doubts and seeks clarification about the boy's family seeking an alliance contrary to their tradition and even asks if any other reasons exist (Triveni 17-18). The marriage ceremony is arranged, and all the expenses for the marriage are willingly borne by the boy's side due to the bride's beauty. They even present her with a set of diamond earrings, bangles, and a big necklace and do not demand any special treatment or gifts (Triveni 35-42).

The girl is taken to the boy's home, fifteen days after the marriage ceremony, at an auspicious time, from her parental home (Triveni 51-57). The boy's impending trip to England is in six months. Subsequently, newlywed Bharathi learns about her husband's two-year foreign trip only after the marriage. Eventually, she concedes to her husband's departure with a heavy heart (Triveni 61-67). After he was seen off at the Bombay port, they returned to Bengaluru (Triveni 70-75), and the mother-in-

law's unmarried brother Chandu, who was smitten by Bharathi's beauty, visits them for a summer holiday. (Triveni 88). This "villain" is much handsomer than the male protagonist, Anand. He was a painting artist and employed as a teacher at a school in Dharwad.

He is well past the age of marriage, having remained single due to bitter experiences from his childhood and those of his friends. He harbors a strong aversion to women. During his school years, he had a close friend, Gopinath, whose stepmother subjected him to cruelty (Triveni 90). As he listened to the accounts of this cruelty, he developed a strong revulsion towards women. In addition, during his college days, he was approached by a girl, Shantha, to receive coaching in the English language with an eye for a romantic relationship with him, which he politely refused, saying he was a classmate and suggesting that coaching from a faculty member would be appropriate for her. Enraged by his refusal, she falsely implicates him in a misbehavior case, forcing him to apologize for what he has not said; otherwise, it would have resulted in his suspension from college for a week, despite his pleas of innocence to the Principal (Triveni 92-93). All these distressing episodes have transformed him into a woman-hater. Presumably, after seeing the attractive, soft-natured Bharathi, Chandu slowly develops softer feelings towards her and utilizes Anand's absence, and approaches Bharathi with the intention to foster romance (Triveni 93-105). Initially, she strongly resists and rejects his advances, but ultimately yields to his enticements (Triveni 114-120). After the romantic encounters, she is left with feelings of remorse and guilt regarding her love for her husband, Anand (Triveni 120-156).

She acknowledges that even though her body may be tainted by the touch of Chandu, her soul remains pure and belongs solely to her husband, Anand. When her mother-in-law discovers the affair with Chandu, she is furious and informs Bharathi's parents to take her back. (Triveni 125-132). When her father arrives and learns about his daughter's actions, he refuses to take her home, fearing that it will damage the family's purity and good culture (Triveni 135). Meanwhile, the father-in-law and mother-in-law decide to wait for Anand's return and do not inform him about the affair (Triveni 130). During this period, Vedamma subjects Bharathi to mistreatment. Bharathi continues to endure the pain for the sake of her beloved husband, Anand. She shows her repentance by neglecting her appearance and not taking care of herself (Triveni 132-156). When Anand returns from England, he is shocked to see her in such a distressed state (Triveni 143-145). His mother narrates the events that led to her current situation and expects him to take appropriate action, hoping to see her expelled from home. Anand becomes agitated and goes to the first-floor room of Bharathi and slaps her hard (Triveni 145-146). After serious reflection, he decides to embrace her back into his life, recognizing his own extra-marital affair with a British woman during his stay in London (Triveni 150-154). Anand tells his mother that he is also a polluted man (*patita*) as he had an affair in England. But, his mother insists that men and women are treated differently. However, he strongly disagrees with his mother and emphasizes that both men and women should be treated equally for

their mistakes (Triveni 156). Anand believes that there should not be any moral judgment in love, insisting that it is purely love. He seeks forgiveness from his wife, Bharathi, as his body too is polluted (kalushita) due to an affair with a woman in London, and he says both should forgive each other. Therefore, he requests Bharathi to forget the past mistake and continue to love each other more than ever (Triveni 157).

Analysis & Discussion

Triveni meticulously documents women's experiences, presenting them as worthy of literary representation, in contrast to their dismissal as trivial in the novels of male writers. For example, in *Sothu Geddavalu*, the opening pages describe an ordinary day in the household of a clerk, Seetaramayya. The narrative details a marriage proposal initiated by the girl's maternal uncle, Seetaramayya's confirmation of the reasons for the boy's side approaching the girl's side against the Brahmin tradition, preliminary screening by the maternal uncle's friend Sundara Rao, girl-viewing, wedding ceremony, and other domestic events.

She is asked to serve beetle leaves, nuts, and coffee, which provides an opportunity for the prospective couple to exchange glances. A brief accidental conversation occurs in which her "approval (Oppige)" for the marriage is sought, and the bride evaluates the not-so-handsome groom (Triveni 33-34). In reality, during that period and even later, it was common in many communities for the boy not to seek consent or even speak to the girl before marriage. Once the wedding date is fixed, the novel details the various events leading up to the ceremony. It was a common practice to find marriage alliances for eligible grooms or brides at weddings. At the wedding, handsome Chandu attracts the attention of a mother with a marriageable daughter, but he walks out of the venue. The narrative continues with the outing after the wedding, the surprises after the marriage, the life of the newly married couple, and depictions of the in-laws.

The novels commercial success 3000 works sold of comparable works and its circulation through lending libraries suggest significant reader interest. (Ramachandran 9-10). While direct evidence of readers' preferences is limited, the persistence of this narrative mode across multiple women writers implies audience inclinations.

Literary critics, both 'mainstream' male and feminist, have criticized the themes of the novels, which were predominantly marriage and home in the works of 1950s and 1960s women writers. Some literary critics dismissed these detailed descriptions as 'domestic' (Rao 146-147). Contrastingly, some feminist critics like Vijaya Dabbe in Kannada have argued that it was precisely through addressing these issues of marriage and the home that Triveni recreated the woman's world in the novel. (Dabbe 51-60). Scholars have argued that women's experience is a critical resource from which feminist theory and feminist politics draw their strength (Tharu and Lalitha 32).

Triveni uses turbulent weather and accidental disruptions to foreshadow a

climax of forbidden passion. The external chaos reflects the internal, turbulent psychological state of the protagonists. The heavy rains or extreme cold allow the characters to cross moral boundaries. It acts as a catalyst that strips away societal inhibitions. A minor physical injury acts as a structural turning point in the plot. It breaks the routine of everyday life. It signals to the reader that the characters' carefully constructed moral defenses are about to crash. Heavy rains or frosty cold weather in the text suggest that the character's desires are as unstoppable and inevitable as the laws of nature themselves.

Triveni introduces *Tess of the d'Urberville* by Thomas Hardy and Gary Cooper's romantic scenes, along with heavy rain, power outages, darkness, and flickering light in the plot, which act as catalysts. Integrating the physical book *Tess of the d'Urberville* into the hands of the female protagonist serves as a narrative signal to the moral double standards. Chandu, in the guise of sharing his intellectual world, asks her which part of Tess she was reading, to which she snaps "some part" negligently (Triveni 99). It signals to the reader that Bharathi too is about to enter a trap of moral vulnerability and face social consequences.

She tries to resist Chandu, but fails as she slowly surrenders to his temptations, owing to her own desires. She convinces herself that desire is just like food and sleep, which are essential to the human body. She says:

How long should I tolerate? Am I not a human being? Similar to thirst, hunger, and sleep, desire is an innate trait of human nature. Who can resist drinking water when they are thirsty? If quenching thirst with water and satisfying hunger with food are entirely natural, why then must we suppress physical desire? (Triveni 100)

Her conflicting mind even says that she is Anand's wife and must not take a wrong step in life, which may jeopardize her future, and she may regret it. She emphasizes, "I love Anand, and I seek him as my husband for several births. But, these desires. . ." (Triveni 100).

She tries her best to suppress her raging desires in the night, but as the morning opens, she sees Chandu; her desires again become like flames. She could not resist the physical desire (Nisargada Kare) (Triveni 101). 'Nisargada kare' I translate as physical desire and biological/natural urge/instinct, though the literal translation "call of nature" can be misunderstood in the English language, which will not fit the context of Triveni's use of the word in Kannada.

Upon Chandu's request, she poses as a model for his painting session, where he seizes an opportunity to kiss her and gets a hard slap from her (Triveni 106). She tries to escape the eyes of Chandu by requesting her mother-in-law, Vedamma, to permit her to go to her parents' house. But, unfortunately, Vedamma slips in the bathroom and injures her leg, unable to move. So, Bharathi's plan of escape is disrupted (Triveni 106). This physical injury in the novel signals to the reader that the morals of the characters are about to collapse.

Desires for intense romance after watching the romantic scenes in Gary

Cooper's movies are heightened in Bharathi. He was the idealized romantic hero of that era. The same night she comes back from watching the movie, the stage is set for crossing the boundary between fantasy and reality with the help of a flickering lamp light in the background owing to a power outage during the heavy rain and the storm. The natural instinct "Nisargada Kare", of desire is fulfilled in a situation assisted by nature's turmoil. Bharathi declares that she can never love anyone other than her husband, Anand (Triveni 112). Chandu says desire (Kaama) can become a stepping stone for love (Prema), but Bharathi firmly dismisses that it will ever be the case (Triveni 113).

Interestingly, Bharathi says she will never love Chandu, but subsequent lines in the novel describe that she responded to physical desires and surrendered herself to a man she loved (114). The contradiction in the narrative by Triveni confuses the readers. Bharathi further opines that it was immoral to fall for desires. But her conflicting mind says: "Certainly, there is no fault; you fell to nature (desire) and could not have done anything else" (Triveni 114).

When Chandu tries to take her with him, he tries to convince her that she had an affair with him, as she did not love her husband sufficiently, and how can she offer her polluted body (kalankitha deha) to her husband. She confirms that her love for Anand is unwavering, but her body was surrendered to the natural desires of youth (Triveni 117-119). She decides not to go with Chandu and stays back in her husband's home to seek forgiveness and end her life (Triveni 123). Bharathi's has to undergo repentance, mistreatment, abuse, taunts, and abandonment for fulfilling her desire.

Now, the following sections will be used to explore how the male protagonist, Anand, fulfilled his desire (Nisargada kare).

A forgotten (or intentionally left?) the handkerchief by the British woman acts as a catalyst to trigger the events that fulfill his desire. The intoxication of witnessing a young couple's romantic scenes at Hyde Park, combined with the Champagne, acts as the catalyst for him to submit to his desires. Stripped of his moral armor by these influences, he falls into a British woman's trap, leading to the climax in Betty's room. He enters Betty's room because it is chillingly cold, in need of 'warmth'. He ends up visiting Betty, in spite of finding her ugly, regularly.

Anand loves his wife, but is unable to resist the desires of youth. He enjoys Champagne, and under the influence of alcohol, he fulfills his desires with some woman he found in a park. He says he was trapped by Betty. We must note that the male protagonist hadn't deprived himself of eating or neglecting dresses to fulfill his desires when he cheated on his wife to satisfy his desire, in contrast to the female protagonist, Bharathi. He led a normal life. He came back hale and happy.

When he learns about Bharathi and Chandu's affair, he angrily slaps her. A fierce battle ensued between two minds in Anand, "You can do as you want; you are a male. But a woman does as she likes; she becomes an adulteress. She's unfit for pardon. She must be cast away like a pot touched by a dog" (Triveni 154).

Anand's mind even suggests that his wife, Bharathi, be discarded like an earthen pot touched by a dog, as it is considered ritually impure. While another mind of his cautions as follows:

That's not correct. The way you could not control your desires, even Bharathi could not hold back her desires. Didn't you make the same mistake? Did you not fall prey to your own desires? If your action is correct, how can hers be wrong? What kind of justice is it to have one moral code for women and an entirely different one for men for the same deed? If you truly love her, forgive her. She is the Devi (Goddess) of your heart. She feels remorseful for her deed, and her frail body is the witness to it. (Triveni 154)

She became a victim of a man when she was weak-minded. You do not have any right to forgive her. Both of you made the same mistake. Forget what happened in the past. To forgive when a mistake is made is the noble expression of love (Triveni 155).

His conflicting mind that opposes Bharathi's deed says as follows, "But, how can I touch those lips touched by Chandu? . ." (Triveni 155).

His other mind that favours Bharathi questions, "Is your body pure? Aren't your lips still wet from Betty's kiss?" (Triveni 155). His mind is in perpetual turmoil about the final decision he needs to make and inform Bharathi. His inner soul was reflecting on Bharathi, who had already repented and was convinced that her frail body was a testimony (Triveni 156). His mind reflects in disbelief, "What a world of difference between that heavenly beauty and this picture of misery" (Triveni 156).

Vedamma tries to forcefully stop Anand from going to Bharathi's room by reminding him that she is an adulteress (Patite), and Anand mockingly laughs and says that he too committed adultery when he was in England. His mother utters that he is a male. To which Anand says, "Isn't the moral code (Neethi) equal to all, Mother? We both have committed adultery" (Triveni 156).

He removes his hand from her hold, climbs the stairs, and ignores his mother's attempt to stop him (Triveni 156); he notices the light in Bharathi's room is still on, awaiting his decision. As he enters, he leans on the door with a heavy heart, without uttering a word. Bharathi infers it may be bad news, wishes him happiness in life, and announces that she plans to leave tomorrow. Anand cuts her sentence short: "Oh, enough, Bharathi! Even I have stumbled just like you. I polluted (kalushita) my body for physical desires. My body is polluted due to a trap of a woman in London. We should forgive each other. . ." says while his body is trembling with anxiety (Triveni 157). He continued further, "Even then, my love is only yours. Let's both forget what happened in the past. Let there be no question of morality (Neethi) between our love" (Triveni 157). He declares that he will love her more than before, and Bharathi confirms that he has forgiven her.

The scenes of intense romance and the stark differences in how men and women are treated for the same mistake must have left readers bewildered, prompting them to talk and discuss the differences in approach because of gender

and society, and generating intense discussion. Hypothetically, these ordinary discussions through women writers' writings equipped ordinary women to identify, define, and express their thoughts, forming a sort of feminist consciousness in Kannada regions.

In the narrative, the male characters Chandu, perceived as the "villain", and the hero Anand do not face any repercussions; Vedamma never confronts them. After Vedamma discovers the affair, Chandu abruptly exits the story. At one time, she even murmurs that he couldn't find a different woman for the affair than her daughter-in-law. This indicates she had no issue if he had an affair with some other woman, signalling tacit approval of such behaviour of men. This dynamic leaves the male characters unscathed, with no expressions of remorse, while the female character shows visible signs of regret, such as neglecting her appearance and not eating properly. Triveni reflects the societal norms of her time, yet empowers her female protagonist to make a significant statement about these issues. She attempts to reveal the double standards surrounding morality, where both male characters, Anand and Chandu, escape criticism or reprimand from Vedamma or the family. In sharp contrast, the female protagonist, Bharathi, endures abandonment by her father, mistreatment from her partner's mother, and violence from her husband despite his own extramarital affair, but later reunites with her.

Conclusion

Critics had acknowledged that these authors addressed 'women's problems' and the representation of women's perspectives was culturally important. Triveni was praised for her "natural" character representation. She was also acknowledged as a novelist writing about women's problems and was even described as an aggressive feminist, "ugra sthriyaadi" (Ramachandran 104-110).

Some praised Triveni's novels for their deep, realistic portrayal of human minds and lives. Her words mirrored the social and domestic realities of post-1947 Karnataka. Within the dominant criticism in the mid-1950s, Triveni's novels were seen as good, progressive literature both in terms of subject matter and style, along with other women writers' (Mugali 122-126).

Closer examination of Kannada women writers' works reveals that they constitute crucial evidence of the emerging evolution of feminism during this period. There is no doubt that these writers have attempted to represent women's worlds within a patriarchal framework. One can surmise that, despite its limitations, this body of literary works helped raise women's consciousness about the gendered nature of their experiences and created space to articulate their concerns.

This study has shown that Triveni's novels, using *Sothu Geddavalu* as an example, articulated feminist critiques of patriarchal double standards and created spaces for women's discussion. While these discussions may have lacked the formal structure of CR groups, they served similar functions: validating women's experiences, identifying systemic oppression, and fostering solidarity. The paper concludes that Triveni's simple style and realistic portrayals helped women identify

and challenge patriarchal constraints, contributing meaningfully to feminist consciousness in mid-twentieth-century India, particularly in Karnataka.

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