

## Women in S L Bhyrappa's Novel 'Dharmashree'

**Lavanya H.M**

Research Scholar In English,of Campus Research Programme, Dravidian University,Kuppam- 517425. Andra Pradesh, India

### Abstract

S L Bhyrappa is a well-known Kannada writer and novelist. He started writing novels during Navya period, but he stands faraway from Navya. Bhyarappa is not only an intellectual writer but also a conscious thinker. His novels contain rationalism. He has written twenty novels. Each novel contains various themes. Even though he and his novels face criticism in all aspects, he stands as a creative and well known novelist. His various novels deal with the variety of themes and through that he tries to put the complexity of life and its meaning.

All his novels contain woman characters, who represent the status of women in the contemporary society. Every culture characterizes men and women in its own unique fashion. Yet the common images of women as a beloved, mother, wife and daughter appear almost in all literatures in a similar manner universally. But as a conscious thinker, Bhyrappa picturized woman characters not only as wife, mother, sister etc. but also he tries to say something more about woman.

It is customary everywhere to classify the human on the basis of sex into groups of men and women. The biological fact of sex has created much difference between them. The aims and objectives, desires and aspirations, duties and responsibilities, dress styles and behavioral patterns, roles and status of men and women are different.

Today, Indian women are almost assigned an equal status with men. All their political, economic and educational and other disabilities have been removed legally. This does not however mean Indian women are completely free from problems. They do have their own problems, new issues have been raised, but women have been mobilized to voice their feelings and needs.

Even though some women who are living in traditional rural areas are traditional and they accept their situation as it is. They are illiterates who don't have the voice to raise against tradition. But in modern age women who are living in urban areas who are educated try to get out of their exploitation and try to make their life according to their wishes. But the thing is that in their eagerness to fulfill their wishes they should not forget their responsibilities which are important in maintaining the harmony of the family as well as the harmony of the society.

Bhyrappa is a serious literary artist, always concerned with fundamental human conditions and predicaments. In addition to in depth study of Indian philosophical and cultural traditions, some critics called him a traditionalist and criticized his novels for rejecting modernity. They argued that the characters in his novels glorifies tradition and leads modern thinking and attitude to tragedy.

Usually in all the novels Bhyrappa does not give any justification or his personal opinion on particular issues or incidents. The story develops with the dialogues and thoughts of characters. Here almost all the novels of Bhyrappa carry women characters both educated and uneducated, uppercaste and lower caste. These women characters reflect the conditions of women in society as mother, sister, wife, prostitute, widow, beloved, house wife etc. The presentation of these women characters is telling more about women. It just tries to analyze the anxiety of woman with the introduction of modernity. It also reflects the practical life of woman in the society where the changes occur due to modernity. Studying woman characters in his novel "Dharmashree" give full details about how woman status is changing from time to time and attitude of woman is also changing according to the changes. So to make a study of these things picturized in his novels is very interesting.

Dharmashree focusses on the struggle between tradition and rationality. This novel tells the story of a man who has a strong belief in sanathana Dharma. But he converts to Christianity to marry a girl for his true love. The story explains his inner search on true love versus true religion. A woman plays an important role in his life to help him to solve the internal conflicts. He is Satyanarayana, who strongly believes in Hinduism. The novel begins with the Satyanarayan who tells the story and picturizes his mother. Bhyrappa here focuses on the sacrificing nature of woman who always thinks about her family and does everything for the sake of family. Satyanarayan picturizes his mother who is in the traditional attire by wearing sari, vermilion on the forehead, turmeric on the cheeks, flowers in her braid. He gives the description about his mother, who use to feed all who visits their house, no one goes in bare hand. Even her husband blames her for no reason she uses to tolerate everything and smiles. She dies early and Satyanarayan and his sister becomes orphans.

Here we can understand the status and the role of woman in the family as well as in the society. The harmony of the family depends on the women who always lives for her husband or for her children. Here another woman character has been introduced. She is Rachamma whom Satyanarayan meets in the school. She is a Christian girl who is so proud of herself that no one can defeat her in the debate. With the motivation of his school master Satyanarayan confronts Rachamma in a debate competition and defeats her. From then onwards both becomes friends. Satyanarayana with the advice and help of his childhood friend Nanjundaswamy moved from Channarayapattana to Mysore to continue his education. He joined Sharada Vilas High school and there also he becomes famous with his talent and participates in all the debate competitions and enriched the respect and popularity of the school. He meets Shankara who sacrificed his life for the preservation of Hindu Religion and actively involved in the RSS. Shankara and Satya become friends and Satya also meets Shankar's family. Satya developed lot of interest and love for the Hindu Dharma. Both Shankara and Satya always discusses many things regarding the Hinduism.

Once he meets Rachamma, his school friend with her husband. Her husband is Devaprasad Satya's history lecturer. Rachamma, even she is Christian she is not so attached to any of Dharma, Devaprasad also does not believe anything about the religion. Satya visits his house often. One day in the absence of Devaprasad, Rachamma and Satya begin to discuss about the Dharma. Rachamma begins to influence on Satya about the

Christianity but Satya explains very strongly the role of Hindu Dharma which makes woman to be in a respectable position with her dressing sense and traditional attire and compares it with Christian girls who with their attire won't get any respect. In that context Lilly, Devaprasad's sister enters in between their conversation. Lilly wears short dresses with haircut and her thoughts are completely different from Rachamma. Rachamma even she is Christian her thoughts, behavior and attire all are like Hindu woman. But, Bhyrappa opinions that the colleges, convents and Christian missionaries are creating woman not like Rachamma but like Lilly.

Another woman character in the novel is Shakuntamma, Satya's sister. After losing her mother she uses to live with her grandmother but soon after that she loses her grandmother and became all alone begins to live with her mother's brother house. Here Bhyrappa picturizes the unmarried orphan girl who is so innocent and not treated well by her mother's brother and his wife. Satya takes her with him and with the advice of Nanju, his friend and his mother Rangamma he leaves Shakuntala with them and goes to continue his education. He begins to look for the boy to his sister for marriage but soon after few days Rangamma and Nanju expresses their willingness to arrange marriage of Shakuntala with Nanju. He becomes very happy and the marriage happens. Finally, Satya relieved of the responsibility of his sister. Shakuntala also as a traditional Hindu woman begins to lead a happy and peaceful life in Nanju's house. She has not changed with the modernity. When Satya visits their house after baptized during the time after his father's death, she prepares separate food for him but where Rangamma insists her to feed the same food as he is of their family. So, here these woman characters are represented as the traditional Hindu women but not so rigid. They are open to receive the changes but they know their responsibility as woman.

Once there was a conversation between Lilly and Satya about the Dharma, tradition and rituals. Satya in favor of Hindu Dharma and Lilly in favor of Christian Dharma argues with each other. Lilly strongly believed in western culture, her behavior, attitude, dressing sense everything reflects western culture and she does not have any seriousness or commitment for Indian tradition and culture. Lilly takes the help of Satya to read many books about Dharma. He suggests many books related to Dharma which will change her thinking. Because of his hard days he has not visited Rachamma's house for so many days. Devaprasad one day finds Satya and forces him to visit their house as Rachamma thinks more about him. Here we can observe the progressive attitude of both Devaprasad and Rachamma who are Christians even though they give importance to Satya and Rachamma even she is married she has not stopped the friendship with Satya. As Rachamma helps him to get students for the tuitions he shifts to another room which is near to Rachamma's house. He visits their house often but never use to eat there. He just drinks milk and has fruits. After so many days he meets Lilly. He is so shocked to see her because she appears before him in the Sari. She reads Vivekanda's book and The Cultural Heritage of India essay which actually changed her thoughts and created interest in her about Hinduism. When there was a discussion between them about the importance of vermilion for woman in Hindu tradition, she asks him why has a woman with husband only the right to put the vermilion? She argues with him that according to that husband is everything to woman and questions him is there no independent identity for woman according to the Hindu tradition. Satya tries to convince her that in Hindu tradition

marriage is not a business contract. He says her that it may be a man or woman they should not have one face independence which was against to the nature. For the harmony of the family both are equally responsible have freedom. Here the character Lilly who represents modern woman who is so liberal to accept the things and ready to change her attitude.

Bhyrappa here tries to make us understand that in Indian tradition there is no difference between man and woman. Woman cannot be treated as dependent but she has the capability as well as the responsibility to move with the man and maintain the harmony and peace of the family, as well as society. So here woman is not treated as inferior or as second sex but she has been taken equally with the men. But whereas, Lilly tries to focus on the Indian Hindu tradition which grabs the individuality from women and makes her dependent on man.

As with the advice of Satya she reads the essay which changes her thoughts about the status of woman in Indian Hindu tradition. She uses to visit Satya's room regularly and gradually they become close to each other. Lilly takes Satya to Christian girls hostel and introduces her friends who are in western appearance and speaks in English. She makes Satya understand that these institutions influence the girls to accept the western style. When Satya was suffering from fever there is no one to take care of him except a tuition boy then Lily takes care of him and cleans the whole room. He recovers with the care of Lilly. Satya begins to identify the smoothness, obedience and womanliness in Lilly. She also told him to call her as Leela and not as Lilly. They both share their feelings for each other, Satya proposes her for the marriage but she tells that, it is not possible as she is Christian and he is Hindu. They avoid to meet again. They spend many days without meeting each other. But soon both are realized that they cannot be separated and want to be get married. Satya decides to accept Christianity and marry Lilly in spite of resistance from Rachamma.

Satya is baptized and they get married according to the Christian religion. Soon after that Satya gets job as a principal in a Christian school. Satya's peace and happiness has been disturbed and he gradually begins to feel alienated from Hindu religion. He remembers Vivekanda and Hindu religion and shares it with Lilly. Lilly is ready to do anything to make her husband happy and peaceful. She also decorates the room with Hindu tradition photos and begins to put vermilion on her forehead. It made Satya remember the Hindu tradition which treats woman as a Goddess. But on her father insistence and fear of the church she removes the Hindu photos. There was a struggle in the mind of Satya where he could not accept the Christianity and on the other hand he could not go back to his own religion. That makes him suffer lot and his health become worse.

Lilly as a good house wife who understands her husband well invites his friend Shankara whom he treats as a brother to the home. He convinces Satya that they both can come back to Hindu religion with the help of Arya Samaja. It makes Satya happy and his health improves. In spite of church warning both have attended Hindu programme and according to the rituals they returned to Hindu religion which makes both of them happy as well as peaceful.

Here Bhyrappa picturizes the role of woman as a wife who as according to the Hindu dharma brought justification to her role. Here he makes the readers understand the role and the status of woman in Hindu tradition. There is no difference between man and woman, both are equally responsible for the harmony of the family and society. Hinduism has not restricted her, not only made her to sacrifice but allowed her and made her to know the power and the capability that she has in bringing happiness and peace in the family as well as in the society.

**Reference:**

1. Bhyrappa, S.L. Dharmashree. Bengalore: SahityaBhandara. 1961
1. Kulakarni. Madhava and M. Govindarao. Sahaspandana. SahityaBhandaraPrakashana. 1978.
2. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>