



**TAKING PRIDE BEING BORN A WOMAN – Dr. MALLIKA
S. GHANTI**

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Woman does not have an access to the opportunities enjoyed by man in integrating the social experiences. The experiences that come her way in the network of family are merely familial but not societal. However, there are differences in the nature of family life in the pre and post independence era. The woman of the past reserved hardihood in the position of the family while the feeling of insecurity in modern woman is on the rise. An attempt has been made to explore the causes for the same by means of intellectualism. It is, of course, possible for the modern minds. Although the contemplative mind of educated woman is mulling over the complicated problems of life at ideological level, it has not been possible to overcome the conflicts. The reason for this is we have not understood woman in entirety.

Divided between the rural and urban areas the problems of woman have become complicated and seem just as a reservation hassle. An opinion is being formed that woman empowerment by way of facilitating equal social, economic and political participation and rejecting traditional insights, instincts and urges of rural woman is an illusion. This is not without reasons. It is beyond doubt that all this proves futile until the movements identify the roots of reality and respond earnestly. The issues we have resolved so far are of a higher level. Either fascination for the west or infatuation with the indigenous is not the solution for our problems. Thus, the view that minds do not have form is being strengthened. A situation is created today where woman dwells in man and man in woman. This is just the same opined by Ambigara Chowdayya who said, “The soul that lingers inside is neither man nor woman “. Owing to urbanization and machinery, the situation is likely that everybody is turning ‘bi-sexual’. In this backdrop, a few pro-feminist women are putting forth the demand- “We too want wives”. It is obvious from this that the role of a wife is not merely inevitable but also crops up questions like who should fill the position of wife and when?

Since all these issues form a part of a separate discussion, it is better to break it off here and ponder over the necessity of a new spirit with the mind of a rural woman in the centre in the wake of hardiness of feminist movements. If the mind of a traditional woman works with the intellect of a modern woman, a strong base can be provided for pro-feminist ideology. It cannot be forgotten that such an attempt was made in the twentieth century. The pro-people organizations not only unveiled the cruelty of male dominated system but also brought hope to women. Though the number of women participated was not considerable but it was remarkable. Women stepping out of the kitchen and voicing their views in the streets was really an exciting event in the society. Besides, it was a means of expanding social consciousness. The movement which weighed life and intellect in equal proportions came as a rare hope to the youth. This changed the very basis of literature. Socio-economic deliberations received momentum. The influence exerted by these thoughts on the new generation was extraordinary. We have a massive accumulation of people who benefited from this spark of extraordinary light. Dr. Mallika Ghanti is one among such group of the new wave. This article sheds light on her.

Childhood and Later Life:

Dr. Mallika Ghanti was born as the eldest daughter to the couple Shankrappa Hanumappa Ghanti and Parvathi of Agasabalu village of Basavana Bagewadi Taluk of Bagalkot district. She spent her childhood in Hangarigi of Bagalkot district and completed her education in Bagalkot, Jamkhandi and Dharwad. Identified continually with education, organisation and agitation Dr. Mallika Ghanti was directly introduced to the organizational work during her post- graduation. Being drawn to the leftist ideology of the personalities like Basavaraj Kattimani of progressive movement Dr. Siddanagouda Patil and Sundaresh of communist party was supplementary to her intellectual development. Besides, the literary and cultural atmosphere of Dharwad and the ideological teachings of the intimate ones shaped her social commitment.

Her’s was a conventional family. Though both her father and mother were teachers, there was no scope for her education. Dr. Mallika Ghanti holds that it was in fact an achievement to have kept her love for books alive in the midst of the haters of letters and opines that both love and violence of her family contributed for her growth. The estrangement, hatred and love snatched the joy of her childhood and changed the direction of her life. She exhibits her loyalty to the family by considering everything that came her way in the family as the composit for her hardiness. With her rich rural experience Dr. Mallika Ghanti becomes relevant for many reasons.

Having naturally imbibed the flavour and vigour of rural environment, she can provide a new base for feminism. She, being an amalgamation of the mind of a villager and the intellect of an educated person, can

provide a strong base for feminism. Organization awakens not only a person but the society at large. The social movements that strengthen the relationship between a person and the society become a source of inspiration for the same reason. In this perspective, Dr. Mallika Ghanti is a blatant example for what results into when motherly experiences deprived to a women are draped with the poetry of intellectuality.

A few incidents which shaped Dr. Mallika Ghanti into a local model are as follows:

- ✓ One day a girl of five who was playing in the courtyard of the house went missing. The people of the house searched for her through the village with shock and grief. Finally the girl was found on Guledagudda road in the outskirts of the village with a bread in her hand with a curd-selling woman
- ✓ Notwithstanding the whips of her mother, she went grizzling to jump into the pond of Badami and die. She felt terribly hungry by the time she reached the pond. She woke up and again fell into her mother's lap. She was just ten years old then.
- ✓ She was the eldest daughter of the family. Both her father and mother were teachers. Therefore the responsibility of the family fell on the shoulders of the girl of tender age and she was engaged to her mother's brother for the ease of the family. She felt very happy on being engaged, not because she was getting married but she would be gifted with two saris for the marriage. She was just twelve years of age when she had this innocent desire.

It was not possible for Mallavva to turn into Mallika even if there was a slightest difference in any of these three incidents. Getting ready for the marriage was the most important among them. How could a girl of twelve years imagine that the pleasures of youth were not permanent? After enjoying only a temporary pleasure, the estrangements of the family subjected her to acute agony and instilled an uncompromising tenacity in her. The decision she made when she could not get the love and affection of her husband who was employed far-off military was quite different. As a substitute to the torture of the family and the love of her husband she chose books and decided to continue her education. With the encouragement of her husband she could complete the P.U. Course and graduation. This helped her acquire an immense experience of life.

"It was binding for me to get education by serving in the homes of my relatives. Being continually in the housework, suppressing the hunger natural for my age and wholly dependent on the letters of my husband who lived far-off, I earned my graduation with great difficulty", says Dr. Mallika Ghanti whose desire cannot be seen placing in a straight line. Cattle grazing, working on the fields, selling jowar in the evenings and having accepted them as the lessons of life is now steeped in history. This formed her into a woman of real stuff. The life of her grandmother who maintained the family by selling jowar was a challenge to men folk. "My grandmother Yamanavva, who was a woman of determination, shaped my feminism and was a source of inspiration", says Mallika Ghanti who always had indigenous models for her thoughts and ideology. This is a distinctive quality too. We can naturally imagine the influence exerted by her childhood days when we notice the rural flavour evident in her life, ideology and the language. She has dedicated her dissertation to Yamanavva, a role model to her life and dedicated her 'Tanu Karagadavaralli' (a compilation of her critical writings) to her husband, a model for love and nobility. Though the days she passed were bitter, they turned healthy just as neem." I am loyal to all those days. I deem it my duty to love all those who invigorated my health and mind", says Dr. Mallika Ghanti who is a sum total of ideology and emotions.

Considering her speeches and writings many opine that 'womanhood' in her is dead. Sometimes it seemed true but it was proved false when her husband passed away. Many like me who thought her to be far-removed from emotions and sentimentality were awe-struck by looking at her anxiety and jitter then. On the very day we formed an impression that she cannot survive without ideological and emotional relationship. For a moment it seemed as if an eagle turned into a sparrow. Besides, this incident evidenced again that none is an alien to the characteristic trait of this land. Her recovery was in fact a wonder. This is of utmost importance. It is essential that Dr. Mallika Ghanti should record such profound experiences because Mallika, hailing from a lower class in a rural area, can become a role model for many 'Mallammas'. Such a potentiality as to grow beyond love, torture and attractions of the family and venture into struggle with the society is not that easy for a woman. It is possible only through honesty, morality and love of humanity. As she is a found of these qualities her lifestyle is unique.

Her professional life that began with an indomitable love for life has been a guiding spirit for many of her students. Her nature is so transparent that she respects the relationship between persons while focusing the social framework. Dr. Mallika Ghanti who thinks about women, the depressed and the downtrodden and voices sternly against injustice has been a beacon of light for a number of students. It is her concern that not just her writing but her life too should be subjected to faith and loyalty. Her attitude to lead life without separating it from her writing is incomparable. Having made love and hatred her fundamental qualities, Dr. Mallika Ghanti is accepted and rejected for the reasons stated above!

Literary Achievements:

Involved in continual speaking and literary activities even in the midst of her personal and social commitments, Dr. Mallika Ghanti is a notable writer. Her having published collections of poetry, drama, stories while working as a lecturer in P. U. College of Kerur and the literary work taken up at the university level are

worth recording. With a strong belief that literature is essential not just as a part of profession but also for the solace of life, M. S. Ghanti is an objective and pro-life writer. Her literary creation is unique from the perspective of language, technique and the themes of her writings. Her style of unveiling different dimensions of exploitation, instincts, love and desires by placing woman in the centre is influenced by the leftist ideology. Her manner of questioning the misanthropic system is relevant. Finding humanitarian bases is evident in her poetry, drama and critical works. The way shown by her for the upliftment of women is of struggle in nature. Saying, "I take pride being born a woman", she writes-

"When you are faced with the instances of
Setting your feelings on fire
Don't accede like me that
Living is binding
If you forget my history
How can you create new history?"

Having realised the prevalent cruelty, Dr.Mallika Ghanti provides an ideological framework for her hatred and struggle.

"Came like beggars
Men to the earth
Are these trios or tetrahedron Brahmas!
With begging bowls in hands and
Sharp daggers in their arm pits
Smiled the earth, the sky
Shameless men, she uncovered
Their masks and turned them into babies
Placed in their mouths her womanhood
With the nipples of her breasts,
Poured the nectar with love
The inspirit water was
Seeping compassion looking at men"

(From 'Eshtondu Vesha; Eshtondu Mosa)

The real heroes of Dr. Mallika Ghanti's literature are the women, the labouring masses and the depressed for whom she has a great deal of concern. Her attitude of heeding the changes in the circumstances of a civilized society is conscious. Used to speak directly and forcefully she does not invite a compromising situation in her literary life too. Reacting sharply whenever social justice is in danger, Dr. Mallika Ghanti is not merely a writer but a responsible citizen. To quote her own words, "I have not looked upon writing as a means of earning wages but I deem it a responsibility. I write when the urge for writing is intense in me and I unfold myself to life with a greater intensity than that" ('Rotti Mattu Hudugi'). Mallika becomes relevant for her earnestness in writing. Being notable among the feminists, she needs to write poetry, drama and criticism surpassing her own limited themes. It is essential that she needs to create literature of diverse subject matter and themes. She is conferred with the Infosys's Sudhamurthy Award for her collection of poetry entitled "Rotti Mattu Hudugi"

'Tanu Karagadavaralli' is her recent critical work. The nineteen articles written with a feminist perspective lead the reader to a deeper reflection. Writing on the book K.V. Narayan opines that the intent of the book is to examine woman placing her both in historical order and contemporary times. He further says that the book introduces the way the strata of consciousness functioned in unveiling the gender discrimination.

Besides the anxieties the woman is faced with in the present political scenario, the book contains unique insights into Vachana literature. The articles like 'The Woman of Bhakti Sect and Nudity', 'The Poro-Woman Stance of Siddharama and Lower Class Woman Vachana Writers (Vachanakartiyaru)', 'Women and Cultural Crises' etc. shed new light. It is essential to record the life and literature of women with the perspective of historical development. This helps to construct 'literary history of woman'. It can be hoped that Dr.Mallika Ghanti makes such an attempt. Manikyabai Patil Award, Goruru Award, Kavyananda Award and Matoshree Ratnamma Hegde Award have been bestowed upon her for her work 'Tanu Karagadavaralli'. In toto, ten other works have been published so far. They are as follows:

- ✓ Tuliyaadiri Nanna (Collection of Poems)
- ✓ E Hennugale Heege (Collection of Poems)
- ✓ Rotti Mattu Hudugi (Collection of Poems)
- ✓ Chaja (Play)
- ✓ Ondu Baviya Sutta (Play)
- ✓ Dafan (Play)
- ✓ Ahalyabai Holkar (Biography)
- ✓ Kannadadalli Kathegartiyaru

- ✓ Kannadadalli Mahila Katha Sahitya (Ph.D dissertation)
- ✓ Tanu Karagadavaralli (Critical Work)

Women writing plays is rare to be found. Three of her plays with pro-people themes are notable. The play 'Chaja' is the most important among them. She questions the feudal system, the evil practice of North-Karnataka. 'Chaja system' will be in practice as a symbol of arrogance of Desai. The youth of a lower class rebels against the landlordism which looks upon woman as an object of pleasure. He is Ramya before he rebelled and turns into Ramesh later. A woman's hope that our people will protect us is disillusioned but comes to the conclusion that we should search the things in the place where we lose them. Befitting this, 'Basanna' emerges from the same Dalit community Basanna's words would be to awaken Dalits who had become 'Neo-Brahmins'. "We need not avenge people but we should eradicate all the practices created by the system against our poverty, consciousness and hunger. Don't commit lechery by giving them a new form. If you do so, I will have to raise voice against you rather than Desai". This simply explains the way one needs to understand society. Basanna is more realistic than emotional. Another special feature of the play is that nowhere in the plot do the women characters come into mutual conflict, nor do they exploit but cooperate at least by keeping mute. Thus, Ghanti with her ideological understanding does not approve of the view that "A woman is a woman's enemy".

Her doctoral dissertation entitled 'Kannadadalli Mahila Katha Sahitya' contains valuable views. One of the unique features of her works is not giving up ideological commitment anywhere. The subject-matter presented through progressive thoughts raises the ideological consciousness of the reader. Picking up serious issues and the way of resolving them is remarkable. This has raised the expectations from the lovers of literature. This has a reason too. It is difficult to be active in the midst of people who are not used to the naturalness and innocence of nature and are not loyal. This is not without exceptions or discrepancies. This is the primary attitude exhibited by our society towards novelty. So it is not amazing that that Dr. Mallika Ghanti may seem 'quarrelsome' to a few. Her nature of hating a person not just personally but also by arriving at the social dangers he/ she may cause, makes her seem 'militant'. Having reserved the strength to face the troubles arising out of this 'militant' nature of her, Dr. Mallika Ghanti basically desires for the love of fellow human beings. When she does not get it, it is her attitude to not to keep quiet and ventures into struggle. This is unique and of course difficult.

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