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**Listening to Voices from Within:
Negotiating Globalization in Kannada Narratives**

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The onslaught of globalization and liberalization has conveniently restructured and re-oriented the native societies of the third world countries. In an era of post nationalism, the boundaries of the once powerful nation-states are being blurred. India is no exception to this. Shiv Vishvanathan once famously commented that ``All roads now onwards will lead to Coco-Cola!! When he made the statement, he was referring to the power of corporate- sector and the kind of homogenization that it brings in native societies Metropolises across the world have become cosmopolitan, multi-cultural and hybrid. As argued by many thinkers the strategies adopted by globalization for its domination and consolidation of power are more invisible than that of the colonial strategies. The strategies of finance, military and politics are more diffused and wide spread now. Of course, in a plural and hybrid country like India, there are different voices/responses to this violent phenomenon. Dalit thinkers like Mogalli Ganesh and Chandrabhanu Prasad argue that Globalization could have liberating effect on the dalit and other marginalized communities. Poornachandra Tejasvi did not find any difficulty in adjusting to new realities of virtual cyber space or technological innovations. Tejaswi in fact argued that globalization should be understood differently and for him it was more of an opportunity than a hindrance.

I

For expatriate Indian writing in English, Globalization has brought glamour and its reach is truly global now. It is oozing with confidence and energy as never before. But the local narratives tell a different story altogether. In fact the local narratives, foreground the experience of displacement, economical /moral insecurity, unhindered consumerism and a disconnect between man and his/her roots. As one can see, Globalization has produced tremendous crisis in native societies. It's never ending thirst

for consumerism and market expansion is intensely interrogated in these micro narratives.

New Kannada narratives are not blind to all these experiences. Kannada prose narratives and novel form has always negotiated with modernity, colonialism and English education from the later part of nineteenth century itself. From *Marali Mannige* (Shivarama Karantha) to *Suryana Kudure* (U R Ananthamurthy) various writers like Kuvempu, Karantha and U R Ananthamurthy have confronted with the complex phenomena like modernity. There is neither a complete rejection nor a total acceptance of modernity in India. As has been argued by many thinkers, ambivalent attitude marks our negotiation with modernity. The recent Kannada narratives like *Jugari Cross*[Tejaswi], *Ugadi* and *Hampi Express*[Vasudendra] *Huli Savari*[Vivek Shanbhag] *Hakuna Matata*[Nagaraja Vastare] narrate the traumatic multiple experience of globalization at individual, societal and cultural level. These writers are neither chauvinistic nor too emotional.

It must be noted that these writers like Vivek Shanbhag, Vasudendra, Vastare, Ashoka Hegde have come from non-academic background. Unlike *Navya* tradition they are not English teachers as well. They in fact are part of MNCs and know the workings of multinational companies. Therefore listening to these inside voices from within the structure of MNCs is an interesting and unavoidable exercise. The tools of technology, the displacements brought about by new economic order are at the heart of these micro narratives. Without being judgmental and without being completely dissociated from past the stories bring out the cultural displacements of contemporary society. For e.g.; the story *Huli Savari* narrates how the corporate sector establishes, dominates and expands its hegemonic power over the poor third world countries. The whole story takes place in Africa thereby transgressing the boundaries of the nation–state. His other story *Kanthu* has multiple narratives where people trade everything including their homes for the sake of money. Money madness has gripped them. Globalization brings money madness and converts them into lunatics. *Jugari Cross* by Purnachandra Tejaswi in a brilliant manner shows the ugliness and the horror of a world dominated by

international smugglers, traders and middlemen. The *malnad* we find in Kuvempu is transformed into a global *jugari cross*. People go after expensive shining stones and lose their sanity. In an inverted world interconnected by telephone wires sanity and innocence becomes a big casualty. The protagonists Suresha and Gowry are caught in a matrix controlled by faceless, unethical, cut throat people. Though Tejaswi refused to read *Jugari cross* with the backdrop of globalization, the very texture of the novel shows the negative aspects of globalization.

II

Now I would like to analyze two stories of eminent young writer Vasudendra to understand how Kannada Narratives have negotiated with globalization and its impact on society. There are two strains in Vasudendra's short stories. On the one hand, his narratives re-examine the traditional *Madhva brahmin* life worlds of Bellary and its surroundings. These structures are the reminiscences of his childhood memories and such structures are reviewed with passion and sarcasm. On the other hand, his narratives negotiate the neo imperialistic forces of globalization viz MNCs and their monovers. The realities of the corporate sector and its terrifying effect on society and culture are represented. It is not that he dismisses these experiences unilaterally. Rather there is an attempt to narrate new experiences with an impassive voice. He looks at the opportunities that the new experience has brought and also at its inherent violence and destruction. Therefore, many of his stories gain political mileage unobtrusively. The contradictory forces of history and culture enter in to the fabric of his literary representations.

Kempu Gini (Red Parrot) is seemingly an innocuous narrative which narrates the onslaught of mining industry and the resultant destruction. Aijaj Ahmed once remarked that the main feature of globalization is to colonize everything that is natural and restructure it to suit its materialistic needs. The mining industry – a byproduct of post LPG era in India – has acquired wealth and power to redefine the concept of citizenship, ownership, morality and ethical values. It also has bulldozed the harmonious relationship between man and mother earth. The restructuring of the economic order has

given industry an enormous political power. Even the state governments are influenced and controlled by the mining mafia. The seeds of all these issues could be found in the very structure of this story. The story begins on an easy, leisurely pace with a school boy writing a ridiculous essay on his corn field. The boy goes to the extent of describing onions being grown on huge trees!! The poor boy is cutoff from the realities of life. Though the incident verges on farcical it is quite significant. The writer hints at the loss of harmonious relationship between urban man and agricultural values of life. The episode also hints at the difference between intuitive knowledge and superficial information. Even his father who was caught in a complex web of bureaucracy finds himself in a ridicules position. He even fails to find a way to his own land and loses path. The 'text' here raises another question of landless laborers and feudal lords. It is true that the prose narratives in Kannada have negotiated with the question of land less laborers and their relationship with hegemonic feudal lords. Shivarama Karantha's 'Chomana Dudi' [1933] is a fine example. 'Chomana Dudi' is set in a society where changes are slow and it takes place at leisurely pace. However, Vasudendra's 'text' brings forth the altered post LPG society where changes are drastic and incomprehensible. Therefore, these questions are not resolved so easily.

III

From this point the story gains another dimension with the introduction of the theme of mining industry. The whole landscape and the corn field of the narrator are destroyed beyond recognition by mining industry. Everywhere there are JCB engines and they look like hooded serpents!! The whole area looks like war field with no scope for imagination, poetry and human relationship. The magnitude of destruction is beyond the perception of the narrator. The very concept of ownership is redefined. The son of the tenant Kumaraswamy has nowhere to turn to, loses his land and continues as a faceless bonded labor in a mining company. The sons of 'Choma' had at least an escape route by way of conversion to a new religion. But here Kumaraswamy continues his slavery with new barriers. Even the emancipated and economically secured narrator looks helpless and captivated. He suffers from acute loss and

helplessness. The forces of globalization can bulldoze both the rich and the poor. The traditional hierarchies based on caste get redefined and re-examined. The binary oppositions of Brahmin – Shudra are diffused. Both are made helpless by new economic order. However, it must be noted that the higher caste Brahmin articulates his helplessness from the position of economic and social security. Whereas, the Shudra continues his silence and suppression with utter insecurity and the loss of identity. Hence, it is only natural that the narrator in the story fails to recognize him as driver of a huge vehicle. Therefore, the transformation of ‘Green colored Parrot’ into a ‘Red colored Parrot’ because of mining dust is a striking metaphor of the narrative.

His other story ‘*Ugadi*’ narrates the modes of experience of the corporate sector. The new realities and the fast ultramodern life styles have annihilated the traditional values systems. Consumer cultures with global outreach have decidedly made the native value systems “useless” and “out of place”. The ‘text’ is a story of two generations whose values are diametrically opposite to one another. Articulating the generation gap and thereby foregrounding the difference between two generations is not new to Kannada narratives. Masti Venkatesha Aingar’s ‘*Mosarina Mangamma*’ [The Curd Seller] and A.K. Ramanujan’s poem ‘*Appa-Maga*’ [Father-Son] are fine examples. Both ‘*Mosarina Mangamma*’ and ‘*Appa-Maga*’ talk more about the difference in time. The transformation is pretty slow. But, Vasudendra’s articulation on the break between the old order and a new order is direct result of the economic choices that we have made. The corporate sector has constructed altogether a new and an awesome social order. This new setup has created inferiority complex and rendered the other society as “useless” and “helpless”. Therefore, Gopanna Master, the protagonist of the story suffers from inferiority complex, helplessness, lonely less and the further loss of identity. He in fact experiences a sudden break from the past. He could not digest the new way of life of his son. Ashish Nandi constructing a theory of anti modernity remarked that the experience of modernity and colonialism have led to loss of ‘self’ and identity. This is because modernity is seen as an invasion and a principle of domination. He argued that modernity by legitimizing western science and technology under mined the collective memories, the cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge system of the

colonized countries. In this story Gopanna master increasingly becomes frustrated and tries to commit suicide.

IV

To conclude, Kannada prose narratives record the destabilizing effect of globalization on society. The faceless multinational companies are controlling and shaping the policies of our government. The above mentioned stories bring out the cultural displacements of the strange phenomenon.

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