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Texts and Paratexts in a Colonial Context
Krupabai Sathianadhan's English Novels *Saguna* and *Kamala*

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ABSTRACT

The anglophone Indian author Krupabai Saththianadhan (1862-1894) was a second-generation Christian convert and a member of the Christian Tamil family in colonial Madras. Knowledge of English was still a high-caste male privilege when Saththianadhan published reformist articles on female education. Her two novels, the autobiographical *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* (1892 and 1895) and the posthumous *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) included forewords and a “Memoir” written by English ladies in the colony. The forewords were dismissed as ‘colonial missionary patronizing verbiage’ at the postcolonial revival of the author in the 1990s. The main aim of the essay is a paratextual analysis of the forewords according to Gérard Genette’s theories. The authors of the paratexts provide their English readers with a sympathetic portrait of Saththianadhan and her novels are praised for literary style and authenticity, qualities understood as tokens of a successful colonial civilizing mission. Experiences of discrimination and ambivalence concerning the English in *Saguna* are ignored as the novel is read as praise of the Christian conversion in India. Thus, the interpretation in the paratexts and posthumous “Memoir” of the author overshadows Saththianadhan’s narratives. The forewords’ colonialist discourse including white supremacy provide a historical context to Saththianadhan’s novels, but the “Memoir” is also the only biographical source of the writer’s life and writings. The essay investigates the neglect of Saththianadhan’s novels during the Indian struggle for independence and the revival in the feminist postcolonial anthology *Women Writing in India* (1991). In Meenakshi Mukherjee’s indigenous context Saththianadhan is recognized as the first Indian autobiographer and spiritual writer including female aspects of conversion. A dialogical tension is set up in Saththianadhan’s novels between colonial education and traditional wisdom, and between individual agency and the power of community characterize her works. Saththianadhan’s literary self-representation as a “simple Indian girl” is a contrast to her pioneer authorship.

Key words: India; Krupabai Saththianadhan; *Saguna*; *Kamala*; Gérard Genette; Autobiography; Conversion; Colonial literature.

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INTRODUCTION

INDIA'S FIRST LADY NOVELIST

Krupabai Saththianadhan (1862-1894) was a second-generation high-caste Christian convert born in the Bombay Presidency. She received a scholarship for medical studies after missionary school and was admitted to the Medical College in Madras as one of their first female students. She had golden plans for an independent future as a doctor. She was the top of her class after the first year at the college, but she had, however, to give up her studies as she was overworked and depressed and had to reconsider her life values.

In 1881, Krupabai met and married Cambridge-educated Samuel Saththianadhan thereby becoming a member of the Christian Tamil Saththianadhan family in Madras. She was a reformist and recognised the need for female education, began a teaching career and on the side-line published articles and short stories for various magazines under the pen name “An Indian Lady”. Her profession turned out to be to “write from home” as Samuel Saththianadhan was appointed professor of Philosophy at the University of Madras in 1886 and the couple settled in the city. Krupabai Saththianadhan published her autobiographical *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* serialized in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* in 1887-88. The novel was a success and was published as a book in 1892. *Saguna* offered authenticity as compared to writings about Indian women written by English authors. At the time, the reign of Queen Victoria, the education of the “daughters of India” had gained priority and Krupabai Saththianadhan’s anglophone writings were welcomed as a success for the colonial civilising society in Madras. Her narrative style and “painting with words” were considered a token of her assimilation of English poetry.

Sadly, the author suffered from a long-standing illness which would prove fatal. Krupabai Saththianadhan finished her second novel *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* shortly before she ‘fell asleep in Jesus’ on August 3rd, 1894. The first edition of *Kamala* was thus published posthumously in 1894, while *Saguna* appeared in a second edition in 1895. Both novels included introductions written by two English ladies in Madras and the memory of the author was honoured at a meeting in the Government’s House.

Krupabai Saththianadhan’s works were neglected during the struggle for independence but were rediscovered by feminist postcolonial literary scholars in the early 1990s. *Saguna* was recognised as the first autobiography written by an Indian woman writer and furthermore a novel commissioned to the theme of conversion. Yet, the original forewords to Krupabai Saththianadhan’s stories were characterised by the critic Meenakshi Mukherjee as “...patronizing verbiage of the colonial as well as the missionary variety...”, a statement that caught my interest.¹ Reading the original editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala*, I found that Krupabai Saththianadhan’s experiences of racial discrimination as well as her ambivalence concerning the English were ignored in the introductions to her novels. My reading became the starting point for this essay, and for my research question: how the original introductory texts to Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels guide the reader into the author’s narratives and

¹ Meenakshi Mukherjee, “Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Saththianadhan” in *The Perishable Empire. Essays on Indian Writing in English* (Oxford UP New Delhi, 2000), p. 71.

also into the colonial context in which her novels were read by the English authors of the introductions. I choose Gerard Genette's theories for the paratextual analysis of the introductory texts to the original editions of Krupabai Sathianadhan's novels.

AIMS

Providing the background for Krupabai Sathianadhan's authorship and the summaries of her two novels *Saguna* and *Kamala*, my main aim is to analyse the original forewords to the novels as paratexts according to the theories of Gérard Genette, i.e. to investigate how the paratexts introduce the readers to the narratives and elucidate the colonial discourse of the time. A further aim is to discuss the publication history and postcolonial revival of Krupabai Sathianadhan's novels, her biography, autobiographical writings and literary self-representation.

THEORIES AND METHOD

"Any piece of writing is a product of its time", Elleke Boehmer claims in the introduction to her book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*.² Boehmer presents the European influences which disseminated across the world, "wrote the empire" and generated indigenous responses. The term "colonial literature" is used for literature that made imperialism seem part of the order of things, written mostly by colonisers but also by the colonised. Colonialist discourse constituted the systems of cognition with which the Empire founded and guaranteed its colonial authority. "Colonialist literature" is the term for literature specifically concerned with the superiority of European culture according to Boehmer.³ "Postcolonial literature" is defined as that which critically scrutinises the colonial relationship. Boehmer's terminology and literary analysis are pertinent to my reading and discussion of Krupabai Sathianadhan's writings and the introductory paratexts.

The study of English literature was initially advocated in the colonial India in order to elevate the character of its colonised readers and contribute to the loyalty of the Empire. The interpretation of classic works in the old languages Sanskrit and Tamil remained for long the basis of literary criticism in India as mentioned in the postcolonial work by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin *the Empire writes Back*. Their introduction to traditional Indian criticism and the debated language question are useful for the historical context of English literary writing in India.⁴

For the analysis of the introductory texts to Krupabai Sathianadhan's novels, I build on the criteria for paratexts in Gérard Genette's book *Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation*.⁵ Genette's definitions of "paratexts" include a variety of texts within a publication, from titles and intertitles, dedications, forewords and afterwords to notes. A foreword marks a threshold to the narrative, from which the author of the foreword addresses the reader with direct performatives. The author of the paratext may be the author of the narrative text, or an "allographic" preface writer. A preface guides the reader both into the text and out towards the historical and social place and time of the narrative. A writer of a

² Elleke Boehmer, "Introduction" in *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature. Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed. (Oxford UP, 2005).

³ Boehmer, pp. 48-49.

⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (Routledge London-New York, 1986).

⁵ Gérard Genette, *Seuils* [Editions du Seuils, 1987], *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge UP, 1997).

foreword, who has a firmly established position in the literary or social world, may provide support for the book in question.⁶

A paratext can go beyond its function and turn into a disadvantage of the text. Genette points out that posthumous paratexts should be considered from this point of view. Furthermore, a paratext can disappear from new editions of the narrative for different reasons, e.g. by the wear and tear of time, but can also emerge after an intermittence that is linked to a historical process related to the narrative. Thus, Genette makes clear that the “historical awareness of the period that saw the birth of a work is rarely a matter of indifference when reading it”, and humbly adds that “his study does not leave the limits of western culture”.⁷

For aspects of the colonial Christian mission, the Saththianadhan family, caste, conversion and gender I use Eliza Kent’s *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*.⁸ Estelle Jelinek’s explores women’s early autobiographical writing in *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography*, and ascertains a distinctive tradition which differs remarkably from men’s autobiographical texts in narrative style, content and projected self-image.⁹ Meenakshi Mukherjee is the chosen guide for indigenous aspects on Krupabai Saththianadhan’s authorship.¹⁰

MATERIAL

Unfortunately, the first edition of *Saguna a Story of Native Christian Life from 1892*, published to acclaim the serialized version of *Saguna*, is no longer retrievable.¹¹ I have worked with the earliest available editions of the author’s novels, i.e. the 2nd edition of *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) and the first edition of *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* (1894), both published posthumously by “Mrs. Samuel Saththianadhan”.¹² Moreover, I include *Miscellaneous Writings* (1896), a collection of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s articles, short stories and poems edited by Samuel Saththianadhan, published with the author’s full name, Krupabai Saththianadhan, and including two appendices by Samuel. All mentioned works were published by Madras Srinivasa Varadachari & Co. Three paratexts are part of the 1895 2nd edition of *Saguna*: A Dedication, a preface followed by the original preface to the first edition, both written by Mrs. Benson. The edition also includes an

⁶ An example of this kind of supportive allographic prefaces is E. M. Forster’s preface to Mulk Raj Anand’s novel *Untouchable* a few years after its first publication in 1935, meant to introduce the book to English readers.

⁷ Genette, p 7.

⁸ Eliza. F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford University, 2004).

⁹ Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography: From antiquity to the Present*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986).

¹⁰ Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice Born Fiction* (New Delhi, 1971), “Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Saththianadhan” in *The Perishable Empire, Essays on Indian Writing in English* (Oxford India Paperback, New Delhi, 2000), “The Beginnings of the Indian Novel” in *A History of Indian Literature in English*, (ed.) Mehrota, Arvind Krishna (London, 2003).

¹¹ Priya Joshi, *In Another Country . Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*. (Columbia UP, New York, 2002), pp. 174-77. Joshi has the correct information on how Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* and *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* were serialized in the *Madras Christian College Magazine*, *Saguna* in 1887-88, and *Kamala* in 1893-1894. The first edition of *Saguna* as a bound book appeared in 1892.

¹² Apart from the print on the covers of the original editions, the only source stating “Mrs. Samuel Saththianadhan” as the author of *Saguna* is Kent’s *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, p. 272, note 58, [...*Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*” by Mrs. S. Saththianadhan...].

appendix with “Notes from the Memorial Meeting” from 1895. *Kamala* includes a Dedication and Mrs. Grigg’s introductory “Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan”.

Saguna and *Kamala* both appeared in reprints and in separate volumes in 1998, edited by Chandani Lokugé and with new subtitles: *Saguna. The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* and *Kamala. The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife*.¹³ The 1998 editions do not include the original introductory texts to *Saguna* and *Kamala* but new ones and a chronology by the editor. No differences have been found comparing text, spelling or punctuation between the original 1895 *Saguna* and the 1998 edition of *Saguna*.¹⁴ *Kamala* has the editor’s numbered page references inserted in the original narrative text. The original Madras’ editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala* are available only from a few libraries outside the British Library. Therefore, for quotes in this essay, I cite with page numbers from the more accessible 1998 editions.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous research is presented in chronological order. Meenakshi Mukherjee is a key scholar who investigated how the genre of the English novel was established in India while recognising the Anglo-Indian novel as a true representation of diverse Indian cultures in her *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*.¹⁵

The first indication of a postcolonial and feminist valuation of literature concerning the Indo-British encounter is Susie Tharu’s introduction from 1989 to the Bengali poet Toru Dutt (1856-1877).¹⁶ Tharu explored how the imperial presence in India was justified through the ideology of patronising racism relating the Indian experience in accordance with Frantz Fanon’s writings on race and skin colour, on black skin and white masks.¹⁷ Moreover, Tharu and her colleague K. Lalita were involved in a feminist undertaking of publishing an anthology of *Women Writing in India, from 600 B.C. to the early Twentieth Century*.¹⁸ Including anglophone authors and translations into English from 13 writers in the vernacular languages the editors had looked for pieces that “illuminated women’s responses to historical developments.”¹⁹ “Krupa” (the name used without the traditional Maharashtra honorary postfix ‘bai’) Saththianadhan” was included with a biography and an excerpt from *Saguna*.²⁰

¹³ Krupabai Saththianadhan, *Saguna. The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* (in Classic Reissues) and *Kamala. A Story of an Indian Child-Wife*, Chandani Lokugé (ed.), both in Oxford India Paperbacks (1998).

¹⁴ With my supervisor, I have performed a random sample comparison and compared every tenth page of the 1895 edition of *Saguna* with the 1998 edition. No differences were found regarding the author’s text, spelling or punctuation in *Saguna*. *Kamala* has the editor’s numbered page references inserted in the original narrative text.

¹⁵ Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality* (Oxford UP, 1985).

¹⁶ Susie Tharu, “Tracing Savitri’s Pedigree: Victorian Racism and the Image of Women in Indo-Anglian Literature”, in Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid (eds.) (New Delhi, 1989).

<http://savitri.in/library/resources/tale-of-savitri-various-narratives/ballad-of-savitri-toru-dutt>, retrieved 2019-04-10.

¹⁷ Franz Fanon, *Les damnés de la Terre* (1961), in English *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) in English *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967).

¹⁸ Susie Tharu, K. Lalita (eds.) *Women Writing in India, from 600 B.C. to the Early Twentieth Century*, Vol. 1, (Oxford UP, New Delhi, 1991).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Preface, p. xxiv.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Krupa Saththianadhan, introductory text and excerpt from *Saguna*, pp. 275-281.

Imperial feminism in Victorian England was investigated by Antoinette Burton.²¹ Burton explored the appeal to women in Victorian England of taking part in a civilising mission targeting traditions in India. Child marriage, secluded *zenana* quarters for women to enable them to live in *purdah*, lack of education and enforced widowhood were issues for the Indian “woman question”.²² Writings from India were popular in “the mother country”, and published in English magazines, e.g. in *Woman’s Signal* and *Englishwoman’s Review*.²³

The introduction to Krupabai Sathianadhan in *Women Writing in India* from 1991 kindled an interest in Krupabai Sathianadhan’s writings, but her books were difficult to find in libraries and archives. In 1998, *Saguna* and *Kamala* appeared with new titles in the series of Oxford India Paperbacks, *Saguna* in ‘Classic Reissues’, both novels edited by Chandani Lokugé. The volumes include introductions, chronology, biography and explanatory notes by the editor.²⁴

Jackson contributed with the history of the Christian Tamil Sathianadhan family in a lecture on “Caste, Culture and Conversion from the Perspective of an Indian Christian Family based in Madras 1863-1906”.²⁵ Jackson told the story about the influential Sathianadhan family and the reformist Anna Sathianadhan, who was Krupabai’s mother-in-law, and began the lecture with an analysis of Krupabai Sathianadhan’s Hindu novel *Kamala*.

Mukherjee used the 2nd edition of *Saguna* and the first edition of *Kamala* for her essay “Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Sathianadhan” in *The Perishable Empire. Essays on Indian Writing in English*.²⁶ Mukherjee positioned Krupa Sathianadhan’s authorship in three indigenous contexts: an early Indian novelist to be seen in relation to authors writing in other Indian languages, a writer of the first autobiography written for publication in India and also the first author in India who wrote in English about conversion from a woman’s point of view. Mukherjee disliked the “lengthy Forewords, Prefaces and Introductions” (together with excerpts from a number of reviews from journals and magazines) in the early editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala*. As mentioned above, Mukherjee chose to

²¹ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History. British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

²² *Purdah*, female seclusion from the gaze of unseen men and visitors.

²³ *The Woman’s Signal*, feminist English weekly magazine 1894-1899. See also *Englishwoman’s Review*, one of the first feminist periodicals with women editors, published between 1866-1920.

²⁴ Chandani Lokugé, Ass. Professor in Literary Studies at the Monash University in Australia, in the “Acknowledgements” in the 1998 editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala*, expresses her thanks to the supervisor of her doctoral thesis, (the now late) Dr Syd Harrex, who initiated her “interest in the genesis of Indian women’s English writing”. Furthermore, Lokugé thanks the Flinders University of South Australia for a research fellowship for “this project”. Lokugé’s untitled PhD is from Flinders’ University in 1996, according to Lokugé’s webpage at Monash University. (The full name of the PhD thesis has been found in *Ratanbai. A High-Caste Child-Wife* by Shevantibai Nikambe, edited by Lokugé in 1993, p. 106. “Between the Idea and Reality: A Study of Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Indian-English Women’s Fiction”, PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 1993). It would have been useful to have access to Lokugé’s doctoral thesis as a background and sources for the 1998 editions of Krupabai Sathianadhan’s novels. However, no thesis by Chandani Lokugé has been retrievable, despite direct contacts with Chandani Lokugé and through the University Library in Göteborg with the Flinders University, and with Lokugé’s present affiliation at Monash University in Australia.

²⁵ Eleanor Jackson, “Caste, Culture and Conversion from the Perspective of an Indian Christian Family based in Madras 1863-1906”, paper presented the Third Annual Colloquium on the History of Christian Missions in Asia, University of Derby in 1999. <https://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/electronic-books/articles/jackson--caste-culture-conversion.pdf>, retrieved 2019-05-09.

²⁶ Mukherjee, “Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Sathianadhan”, pp. 68-88.

dismiss these texts as patronizing, “colonial and missionary”.²⁷ Fortunately, she provided information on the marital status of the two lady authors of the forewords and thus made it possible to trace them. Mukherjee’s *Elusive Terrain. Culture and Literary Memory* includes a chapter on “Women and Christianity” with Krupabai (not Krupa) Saththianadhan’s accounts on conversion and her spiritual writing as a new “genre” in India.²⁸

The market for the English novel in India is investigated in the first part of Priya Joshi’s *In Another Country. Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel*. Joshi continued with the history of the indigenization of the English novel in India, and how Krupa Saththianadhan with her autobiographical *Saguna* appeared as “The Woman Who Did” write a different story in the colony. Joshi presents the publication years for Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels and points out that most of what is known of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s life comes from the “Memoir” by Elisabeth Grigg in *Kamala*.²⁹ Joshi also broadens the perspective of “women’s writings” and the reforming of the novel in the colonial India and in western countries at the end of the 19th century.

In 2003, the author had become recognised, and was included as Krupabai Saththianadhan in the comprehensive *A History of Indian Literature in English*, edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra.³⁰ Including aspects of conversion in South India with a presentation of the Christian Tamil Saththianadhan family, with the founding father W.T. and mother Anna as promoters of female education and a companionate Christian marriage, Elizabeth Kent provides close readings of *Saguna* based on the 1998 edition and “The Story of a Conversion”, Saththianadhan’s short story concerning her father-in-law.³¹ Literary writings with excerpts by several members of the Saththianadhan family were published by Eunice de Souza in *The Saththianadhan Family Album*.³² Choosing *Saguna* as an introduction of colonial novels to students of literature was successfully performed with Mrs. Benson’s forewords as an exposure of time, place and ideological assumptions as context for the novel, as described in by Swenson in *Teaching a Highly Exceptional text* (2005).³³

For her work *Anglophone Indian Women Writers, 1870-1920*, Ellen Brinks used the 1998 editions of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels with Lokugé’s introduction.³⁴ Brink’s textual analysis of *Kamala. The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* positions the novel in a political perspective of child marriage since it pictures the author as a reformist cross-dressing as a Hindu child-wife.³⁵

Kamala Saththianadhan, Samuel Saththianadhan’s second wife, initiated and edited *The Indian Ladies’ Magazine*, ‘ILM’, the first journal for Indian ladies and printed in both English and Tamil. The

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

²⁸ Ibid., “Women and Christianity” in *Elusive Terrain. Culture and Literary Memory*. (Oxford UP, New Delhi, 2008).

²⁹ Joshi, pp. 176-177.

³⁰ Mukherjee, “The Beginnings of the Indian Novel in English” in *A History of Indian Literature in English*, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (ed.), (Hurst & Company, London, 2003), pp. 92-102. “The book covers the literary ground from Rammohan Ray to Arundhati Roy” according to Mukherjee.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 183, 187-89.

³² Eunice de Souza, *The Saththianadhan Family Album* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2005).

³³ Kristine Swenson, “Teaching a ‘Highly Exceptional’ Text: Krupabai Saththianadhan’s *Saguna* and Narratives of Empire” in *Teaching Women Writers 1750-1900*, Jeanne Moshad & Shannon R. Wooden (eds.), (Peter Lang, New York, 2005), pp. 20-32

³⁴ Ellen Brinks, *Anglophone Indian Women Writers, 1870-1920* (Routledge, 2013).

³⁵ Ibid., “Gendered Spaces and Conjugal Reform in Krupabai Saththianadhan’s *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life*”, in *Anglophone Indian Women Writers*, pp. 60-90.

first publication period covers 1901-1918. Anna Logan presented the contributions to the magazine and organized the topics into an inventory for the 1901-1918 in her book *The Indian Ladies' Magazine. From Raj to Swaraj*.³⁶ “Women’s issues” were most often referred to as “The Woman’s Question”.

STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY

The starting point is the historical Indian and colonial background to Krupabai Saththianadhan’s life and writings as a second generation convert Indian woman, reformist and author. A description of the Madras city and the Christian Tamil Saththianadhan family is followed by outlines of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s authorship with *Miscellaneous Writings* and the novels *Saguna* and *Kamala*. The author’s novels are the required “texts for the paratexts”, generously summarized as they are not widely read today. The paratextual analysis of Mrs. Benson’s and Mrs. Grigg’s introductions to the novels is an investigation into how Saththianadhan’s novels are introduced in the paratexts, elucidating the colonial discourse of the time, and providing biographical information of Krupabai Saththianadhan. The notes from the “Memorial Meeting” in 1995 follows, as well as my own commentaries to the author’s very last years and spiritual writings. The final part of the essay covers the history of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels from success to disappearance and a feminist postcolonial Indian revival, a discussion of publication dates, previous research, the 1998 editions of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels and finally, the author and her writings in the indigenous context.

BACKGROUND

THE EMPIRE, INDIA AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

India has a great number of vernacular languages, and the ability to master several of them has since long been common – otherwise, India would have been a tower of Babel. In 1857, an important year in Indian history, the “First Indian War of Freedom” broke out. The colonised opposed their colonisers, but the revolt was cruelly suppressed by the English. The colonial power was transferred from the British East India Company to the British Crown. This meant increased commercial exploitation and the British merchant marines spanning the globe. The control of the colony was in focus, along with the creation of an infrastructure and the spread of English education, behaviour and values in India. Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1876 and was firmly convinced that the function of the Empire was “to protect the poor natives and advance civilization”.³⁷ Colonialism was justified as a duty of the colonisers, based on theories of racial difference, the superiority of the white race and the ranking of cultures. Language studies and anthropology were favoured parts of scientific studies of the time and imperial and evangelical aims converged when missionaries learnt about Indians to evangelize them effectively so that Christianity would prevail throughout the British Empire.³⁸

Knowledge of English was a benefit for upper-class Indian men. Universities were opened in the metropolises: in Calcutta, the capital of British India, as well as Bombay and Madras. English literature

³⁶ Anna Deborah Logan, *The Indian Ladies' Magazine, 1901-1938. From Raj to Swaraj* (Lehigh UP, 2017).

³⁷ Michael St John Parker, *Queen Victoria*, (Pitkin 1992, rpt. 2016), p. 18.

³⁸ Kent, p. 53.

was included in the curricula, in order to create a class of Indian natives who were English in taste and intellect.³⁹ In the latter half of the 19th century, India became a vital market for the import of English books and novels, including light reading from London, an imperial success investigated by Joshi.⁴⁰

English was not a preferred language for literary recognition in early 19th century India, neither regionally nor nationally. Indian authors wrote in one or several of the many vernaculars, and poetry and short stories were traditional genres. The first novel in English by an Indian author was *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) by the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.⁴¹ It was a realistic presenting view of contemporary Bengali life, serialized but not widely read.⁴² It was a false start, and Chatterjee went back to write in Bengali, and became an influential author and nationalist.

WOMEN'S ISSUES AND EARLY ANGLOPHONE INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

“Women’s issues” became an area of imperial reform mission during the Victorian period when, according to Boehmer, the projection of British authority abroad was particularly powerful and far-reaching.⁴³ The issues addressed were foremost conjugal arrangements, child-marriage, the lack of female education and the treatment of widows, i.e. variations on the colonial theme of Hindu patriarchal oppression of women. The plight and burden of the white colonisers were steeped in racial metaphors based on pseudo-scientific social Darwinism.⁴⁴ Reports from India were covered in Victorian magazines, targeting female readers. The points of contact between British and Indian women were few, and “social intercourse” between Indian and English ladies was seldom an option in the colony.

Strict upper-caste Hindu rules confined women’s lives, and women in general lived under patronising dominance. “The Laws of Manu” written in Sanskrit about 200 BC were the moral code for the integrated domestic, conjugal, social and religious life in high-caste Hindu India.⁴⁵ According to Manu, the wife is the Brahmin husband’s possession, marriage means the wife’s total obedience with the consequence that widow remarriage is not accepted. Girls should be married off in childhood and raised in the family of the husband. Rules concerning household chores, purity and pollution are intertwined with imperative religious rituals. Brahmin-born Indian Christian converts were excommunicated. The “woman question” was a favourite subject for reformist writers in India with focus on child marriage, conjugal and family relations, female education and health issues.

The founding of the National Congress in 1885 was a milestone in the independence movement, beginning with local governments with small elite groups of ‘educated natives’, ‘natives’ meaning ‘indigenous inhabitants’ in a colonised land and a word without a derogative meaning at the time.⁴⁶ The last three decades of the 19th century are considered a period of “literary awakening” and cultural

³⁹ Thomas Macauley, “1835 Minute on English Education”, an infamous policy of education, mentioned by Joshi, p.40.

⁴⁰ Joshi, Part I: “Consuming Fiction” pp. 3-140.

⁴¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894).

⁴² Joshi, pp.147-148.

⁴³ Boehmer, pp. 28-32.

⁴⁴ Burton, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ “The Laws of Manu” were written in Sanskrit about 200 BC by “the first man” Manu, a long and detailed code on caste, moral and Brahmin religious law. Despite its age it has remained paramount in the Hindu caste culture.

⁴⁶ Boehmer, p. 8. Samuel Sathianadhan wrote about himself in his preface to *History of Education in the Madras Presidency* (1894) that “it is the first work of its kind attempted by a native of India”.

nationalism. Krupabai Saththianadhan is one of the first two women writers who pioneered writing in English at the time, both Christians. The other is the Bengal poet Toru Dutt who belonged to the highly cultured Dutt family in Calcutta, a traveller who wrote in both French and English, a novel but mostly poetry, translating ballads in Sanskrit into English and published posthumously. Dutt died of consumption at the age of 21.⁴⁷ Saththianadhan was recognized for her writings during her lifetime, Dutt was known by very few in India when she died. The two writers never met.

THE CITY OF MADRAS AND THE SATTHIANADHAN FAMILY

The Madras Presidency comprised most of south India. The inhabitants of Madras were Hindu, Muslim and Christian, speaking the old Tamil language and several other vernacular languages. When colonised, Madras had grown from the first white settlement by the sea, the building of Fort St. George, developing into a “White Town” and a “Black Town”. The city had a port, a railway station and trams, avenues with impressive colonial Indo-Saracenic architecture with Hindu and Muslim mixed features, selling off European design and comfort. Such buildings included the railway station, the Government House, a university and a library in the “White Town”. The “Black Town” included living quarters, bazaars, bars and brothels, mainly catering to English sailors. A variety of schools were funded, also Anglo-vernacular, and several run by different missionary societies. Colonial documentation and reports on governing and agriculture were produced, along with accounts on severe famines and health issues, not to mention maps, dictionaries and illustrated magazines. Other printed material and new books, also in English, were available. The association with Christianity was age-old, and Madras had numerous churches not only built by colonial powers, as well as various Hindu temples.

The Saththianadhan family held an independent position as a Christian clan in Madras.⁴⁸ William Thomas, or W. T., Saththianadhan was a multilingual convert Tamil Christian. He was a Reverend in the CMS, Church Missionary Society, with two protestant communities and churches in Madras. His wife Anna belonged to a family of Tamil Christians since several generations. Anna was a *zenana* teacher and a reformist Tamil and English writer on child education working for the CEZMS, Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.⁴⁹ The couple spent time in England in the early 1880s, were multilingual and socialized over the gender borders at their home in Madras but refused to change their Indian clothes into European outfits.

Krupabai Khisty moved from the Bombay Presidency to Madras to study medicine when she was 16 and boarded the Christian Tamil Saththianadhan family during her year as a student. She soon met Samuel Saththianadhan, they married in 1891 and lived in Madras from 1896. Samuel was a Cambridge-educated educationalist and writer and was appointed Professor of Logic and Moral Philosophy at the University of Madras in 1886.

KRUPABAI SATTHIANADHAN AND HER WRITINGS

Krupabai Saththianadhan read, wrote and spoke English at a time when knowledge of English in India was a gender benefit for high-caste men. Her ‘first language’ or ‘mother tongue’ is not mentioned by

⁴⁷ ”The Dutt Family Album” in *A History of Indian Literature in English*, pp. 65-9.

⁴⁸ Kent, pp.181-189.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, on Anna Saththianadhan, pp. 145-50.

herself, or by anyone noted in the “previous research” in the essay. She was born in the Maharashtra part of the Bombay Presidency where Marathi was spoken and written, and from her autobiographical *Saguna* it is clear that she understood Marathi and learnt ‘the Indian name of things’ by her mother.⁵⁰ In addition, I assume that she learnt some of the old Tamil language as a member of a Tamil family and by living in the Madras Presidency.

This section includes substantial summaries of Saththianadhan’s novels *Saguna* and *Kamala* which are “texts for the paratexts”. Yet, I begin with the collection *Miscellaneous Writings*, including her sketches, which completes her authorship providing picture of herself, her family life and her view on social issues. She left no diaries or letters.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

Krupabai Saththianadhan began her writing career around 1882, publishing short stories and articles in various magazines under the female pen name “An Indian Lady”. Her husband Samuel edited and published the posthumous collection *Miscellaneous Writings* of Krupabai Saththianadhan in 1886, adding a short preface about the texts indicating where they had been published. For his late wife’s biography, he referred to Mrs. Grigg’s “Memoir” in *Kamala*.⁵¹ The collection includes 11 pages with excerpts from reviews of the author’s “Indian Novels”.⁵²

Miscellaneous Writings include 12 pieces, several articles on women’s issues and education, short stories, personal sketches and a few poems, although not in chronological order. Saththianadhan’s best-known short story, “The Story of a Conversion”, is about the conversion of her late father-in-law W. T. Saththianadhan. It is a picture of Tamil high-caste village life, with the eldest son – the first in his family to learn English – and his way to conversion.⁵³ Another piece of spiritual writing is “A fine Sunset of Life”, a recollection of her mother-in-law’s last days.⁵⁴

“A Visit to the Todas” is one of the last pieces in *Miscellaneous Writings* but was Saththianadhan’s first published piece, a depiction of the tribal Toda people of the Nilgiri mountains.⁵⁵ “Female Education” begins with a positive construction of ancient Hindu history. The point was feminist inspiration for enlightenment through the Vedic scriptures. The article includes the opinion that an educated wife is a true domestic blessing for the enlightened man and husband.⁵⁶ The article was published in the early 1880s in the *British Journal of National Indian Association*, a journal with its first objective the improvement of education for Indian women. The text ends in a warning against books in the vernacular languages, which are considered vulgar and must not be read by the young. (I assume she had read them.) In “Women’s Influence at Home” the author depicts the educated woman as the incarnation of domestic perfection.⁵⁷ Enlightened men should give their wives and daughters a liberal education, not for their independence, but to make them fit for their important duties as wives

⁵⁰ *Saguna* p. 26.

⁵¹ “Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan” by Mrs. Elisabeth Grigg, prefixed to *Kamala* (1894).

⁵² *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 118-129.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, “The Story of a Conversion”, pp. 34-66.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, “A Fine Sunset of Life”, pp. 67-75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, “A Visit to the Todas”, pp. 88-91. Published in *Ootacmund: South of India Observer press*, a periodical that quite possibly had a majority of English readers.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, “Home Training of Children”, pp. 9-16. Published in the *Indian Magazine*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, “Women’s Influence at Home”, pp. 1-8. Published in the *Journal of National Indian Association* later called the *Indian Magazine*.

and mothers. Furthermore, a well-educated mother is the best teacher, as told in “Home Training of Children”. In “Hindu Social Customs” Saththianadhan states that Hindu joint family customs, including infant marriage and enforced widowhood, are the roots of social evils, and consequently she favours reformative legislation in social matters. “Early and liberal education of our women is very essential: and this step when once taken, the up-lifting of our females will gradually follow”.⁵⁸ Krupabai Saththianadhan was a reformist but of the variety that trusted the Empire in matters regarding education. “India is still, as it were, a child and she can by herself accomplish very little and it is our humble opinion that England and India must work together if anything good is to be achieved at all” she finished her article.⁵⁹

Saththianadhan once met the well-known Pandita Ramabai at the Widow’s Home in Poona (Pune) and wrote a short piece on the meeting, “Pandita Ramabai and Her Work”.⁶⁰ She felt sure that Pandita’s initiatives would be part of the emancipation of women in India.

Krupabai suffered from long-term tuberculosis and spent time in the Nilgiris highlands with its healthy air, busy writing her second novel *Kamala*. The sketch “The Nilgiris” is told by a tired lady on a bench, enjoying the scenery of the mountain heads high in “the land of eternal rest”. In my understanding her conversion stories and these two last sketches are important texts in her writings.

SAGUNA. A STORY OF NATIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Krupabai Saththianadhan was encouraged to write more than sketches and articles. She began with memories from her childhood, which developed into the autobiographical *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life*. Her parents’ conversion is an inserted story in the beginning of *Saguna*, written with a change of her parents’ first names.⁶¹

A Simple Indian Girl

Saththianadhan tells her story through her alter ego *Saguna*, “a simple Indian girl”. The narrative begins:

In the following pages, I shall in my own way try to present a faithful picture of the experiences and thoughts of a simple Indian girl, whose life has been highly influenced by a new order of things – an order of things which at the present time is spreading its influence on a greater or lesser extent over the whole of her native land.⁶²

In the introductory paragraph, the first-person narrator *Saguna* distances herself from the subject, and the anglophone narrator becomes “a simple Indian girl”. The narrator thus refers to herself in both the first and third person. Thus, the “simple Indian girl” bridges a cultural gender-gap with her use of

⁵⁸ Ibid., “Hindu Social Customs”, pp. 25-33.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁰ Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, a scholar and Christian convert feminist and reformist. In 1889 Pandita opened her *Sharada Sadan*, or “Home for learning” for widows. She is called “Pandita” by Krupabai Saththianadhan

⁶¹ Krupabai’s parents were the Rev. Haripunt Khisty (1820-1864) and his wife Rhadabai (1826-1892), also called Rhada. The family had 14 children and Krupabai was the next youngest

<https://www.geni.com/people/Reverend-Haripunt-David-khisty/6000000023564451450>, retrieved 2019-12-10.

⁶² *Saguna*, p. 19.

English and the intention to present “a new order of things”, an extraordinary purpose for “a simple Indian girl”.

Saguna’s Christian Brahmin father dies when she is little and leaves her mother Radha with many children. She has a free and happy childhood, her brother Bhasker is her teacher from an early age, making her familiar with English books and poetry. An elder sister tells her siblings “simple Scripture stories she clothed in beautiful imagery of thought and language, so that each scene rose vividly before our infant minds”.⁶³ Summer vacations are spent in a summer house in the mountains of the Deccan plateau, a landscape Saguna and Bhasker explore. “Every grove has its spirit, every stream its nymph or naiad, every dark spot its ghost, and every hill its goddess or ruling deity.”⁶⁴ A certain cave is the home, the legend says, of a young girl-bride who rushed out of her dead husband’s burning funeral pyre with a shriek. Her ghost has lived in the grove for about one hundred years, with the worst calamities ascribed to her evil powers.⁶⁵ To pass the grove is frightening, while to leave it behind and meet the sunbeams of Christianity “dispel the darkness of superstition in a land.”⁶⁶ Bhasker also “told me about great men called poets, who went into raptures over the wonders of nature.”⁶⁷ He quotes passages from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, lines Saguna absorbed but did not quite understand.⁶⁸ In such a morning light, Bhasker turns to Saguna with a serious statement and a question.

He was a Brahmin, he said, a Brahmin to the backbone, and he would show his countrymen what it was to be a real patriot to live and die for one’s land. [...] ‘And you will help me? Won’t you? You will speak boldly to your countrywomen and yet be as your sister was, modest, gentle, and kind, a real woman?’⁶⁹

Saguna promises and takes his words to her heart. She does not quite understand his message but never forgets his words, which are often quoted in texts about *Saguna* but interpreted in two different ways, either as a Christian mission promise or as an expression of nationalism.

The Conversion Story

“Before proceeding further with my story, I think it necessary to give a short sketch of the early history of my parents, with special reference to the spiritual struggles through which they had to pass, before giving up the religion of their ancestors”, Saguna declares when including her parents conversion story in the narrative.⁷⁰ She is no longer the protagonist, she relates what she has been told by her mother Radha and her eldest sister, thus reconstructing the story of her parents’ conversion while intermingling several narrative voices.

The high caste but poor Radhabai, promised for marriage in her cradle, lives since her childhood with her stern mother-in-law in a joint family according to Hindu rule. Her husband-to-be, Harichandra, is an intelligent young man who, according to tradition, has left home to study Hindu philosophy and holy scriptures, the *shastras*. The more he learns about the many varieties of

⁶³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. *Paradise Lost*, the epical poem by John Milton.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 27-69.

Hinduism, the more he thinks it indicates imperfections. When he begins to study the Bible, he experiences a spiritual transformation, a total religious change.⁷¹ Reading about St. Paul's conversion he considers following in his footsteps.

Harichandra has a Christian *padre sahib* and decides to convert to Christianity, which means total disgrace and excommunication from the Brahmin family. He abducts his child-bride Radha to save her from becoming a widow, despised and not allowed to remarry. His family and hometown are in turmoil. The young couple stays in the Christian *sahib padre's* house, a polluted home for Radha who scorns her husband and throws her jewels at his feet to provide him with valuables to let her go. But Harichandra's decision stands firm, and after a compulsory court trial they are excommunicated and leave for a Christian village.⁷² Keeping a few idols Radha tries to hold on to traditions for purity by not letting Harichandra have his food in the house. She gradually, however, succumbs to Christianity, released from shame through the love of God she can feel with the help of her husband. Beginning to talk freely together, a taboo in a Brahmin marriage, husband and wife are happy and make a home for themselves and baptize their children.⁷³

Harichandra is ordained and advocates equal rights for Christians and Hindus. As it is, Christians are denied access to water since they are considered polluted. Contrary to the strict caste rules of water distribution Harichandra manages to provide water for his people from certain wells. For Harichandra, "water was given for all".⁷⁴ Infuriated Brahmins threaten to kill him, but he always manages to get home to Radha and the children. Unfortunately, he dies when Saguna is still a child. But she is told that on his death bed her father pointed to the heavenly home up high saying to Radha: "You shall follow me; I will go and wait for you there."⁷⁵ The ascension and the meeting of the loved ones in heaven for an instant reunion was part of their Christian faith.

This is the conversion story in *Saguna*, a spiritual story about Christian faith, excommunication, and the bravery of Harichandra going against caste rules. But it is also about young Radha, who had no choice but to follow her husband in spite of her fear and protest. "Poor girls" is an outcry in the conversion story that echoes through *Saguna* and develops into the author's future reformist demand for female education and opposition to the joint family system. Yet, Saguna shares her parents', Bhasker's and her sisters' Christian faith. Her childhood belonging to a Christian minority is an important element of the coming-of-age story in *Saguna*.

Native Christian Life and Racial Issues

Poor Hindu converts could gather in Christian villages with a missionary leader and a chapel.⁷⁶ Saguna knows of such a village, she likes the chapel and the church bells and the morning prayer. She knows that native mission agents from the village are given Biblical names as converts, such as Abraham,

⁷¹ Kent, pp.4-5, "Decoding Conversion". In south Indian convert context there was an understanding that the 'interior dimension' was for elite converts and the 'gradual exterior dimension' for low-caste converts.

⁷² High caste converts to Christianity were frequently 'outcasted', ostracized from their natal family and community. The significance of the conjugal relationship that developed between the author's parents is a sign of the depth in their new redeemed family, grounded by love for the Christian god is pointed out by Kent (pp. 180-181).

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

⁷⁶ Grigg's 'total change' description appears unrealistic and Krupabai Saththianadhan had experience of the different living conditions of converts, e.g. from Christian villages and Bible women.

John, and Sarah and that they are expected to “spread the word” in Hindu villages nearby. Such mission agents are the lowliest of church workers and it turns out that they prefer shopping at the market rather than preaching. Saguna once joins them, describing the situation with a sense of humour, understanding their Mahrati quite well. Saguna’s own attempts “to spread the word” was not very successful and her brothers teased her for attempt as a ‘Bible woman’.⁷⁷

In the same Christian village, the lady of the European missionary family treats Saguna and her Brahmin mother with utter nonchalance when they come for a courtesy visit. When Saguna complains to her mother afterwards, her mother replies: “Don’t you see the difference, they are white, and we are black; we ought to be thankful for the little notice they take of us.”⁷⁸ This “black and white” incident in Saguna is the author’s first experience of racial discrimination.

Adolescence, Ambivalence and Ambition

Bhasker dies young, of consumption, and after his death Saguna is severely depressed as her life has been interlinked with that of her brother. Radha arranges for her to enter a Mission boarding school in Bombay, where she wants her daughter to have a room of her own, and the right to come back home whenever she wants.⁷⁹ Saguna learns to dine at a table using knife and fork, but English cooking is exchanged for food more acceptable to her. She is clever and ambitious, and when it becomes known that she knows some Longfellow poems by heart, she begins to teach classes in the school and enjoys it. But she notices discriminating attitudes of the English missionary teachers towards a poor “Bible woman” received in the kitchen, a native Brahmin lady of whom they say she “would be no better than a servant” in England.⁸⁰ Saguna protests, and her thoughts are bitter. “Natives”, I said to myself, “we are natives.”⁸¹ The word sounds barbarian to her, the word “natives” has become a derogatory label for colonised people.⁸² Step by step, Saguna becomes ambivalent about the English influence, she is caste conscious and aware of racial attitudes. She dislikes the mimicking of English habits when young girls call their parents “Ma” and “Pa” and when young men refer to England as “home” after studies there. Yet, her dedication to the English language, literature and education remains, and she continues to read and learn English and American poetry by heart.

Dreams of Future and Independence

As Saguna moves to a new school in Bombay, an American lady doctor and teacher is impressed by her ambition. She becomes Saguna’s first intellectual mentor after Bhasker. Assisting her to a thorough education leading to a recommendation for a scholarship for medical studies in England. Saguna wants to become a doctor and longs for an opportunity to show that a woman is in no way inferior to a man; she questions marriage as the goal of women’s ambition refusing them the joy of intellectual work. What she wants is independence, expressed as her own feminist manifest.⁸³ In this

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. xxiii.

⁷⁸ Ibid., the story is told on pp. 98-100 and the quote from p. 99.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 125-26. These are kind words by the mother but it is the last time she is mentioned in *Saguna*.

⁸⁰ Kent, p. 153. Bible women”, women working in *zenana* missions, were ideally from high-caste communities but more often from marginalized places. In *Saguna*, the author noticed that the poverty aroused ambivalence also in the English Christian community, but Saguna was caste conscious and recognized this woman as a Brahmin lady, not a low caste Sudra.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 115-16.

⁸² Boehmer, pp. 9 -11.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 149.

spirit she creates her personal “new order of things”, speaking out loud and clear. Saguna is 15 years old and has golden plans for her future.

Saguna’s constitution is not, however, robust enough for the hard-medical studies in the damp English climate. The missionary in charge for her education knew about a fine young man who had died by overstudy in England.⁸⁴ Instead, she is accepted to pursue her studies at the Medical College in Madras but warned about coming to a ‘strange place’ all alone. But she was brave and travelled unchaperoned by train and was met by the Reverend W.T. Saththianadhan who guided her “like a father guides his child” through the busy station area where she does not understand a word of the new languages.⁸⁵ He noticed that Saguna was delicate and arranged for her to board with his family. She felt at home and her esteem for her host and his wife Anna ripened into a friendship and mutual confidence.⁸⁶ W.T. told her the story of his conversion, he remained strong in his faith and so was Saguna and they felt like father and daughter.⁸⁷

Saguna was met with kindness at the College, and when the first year is over, she was at the top of her class. Unfortunately, however, since she had studied very hard, she feared a breakdown. Depressed she went to her sister’s home in Poona to recover.⁸⁸

Dark Days but a Happy End

The decision to give up both plans and dreams of studies and independence led to a life crisis and a period of introspection and reconsideration of values and faith. “Was I to lose my hold on Christ” she thought, recalling what she had heard in lectures over the last year: that Christianity is a myth. She remembered the strength of Bhasker’s faith, and that of her father-in-law – what was the secret of their strength, if not Christ’s work? Saguna was sensitive and blamed her own weakness.

At this point, a young man who arrived home from England introduced them all to the latest books and new modes of thought. Saguna was overwhelmed by the new impressions and by the lively young man. She recovered from her depression, read new and “forbidden books” by George Eliot and gave up her negative attitude to marriage.⁸⁹ She trusted her faith and understood that Samuel was also a believer. During a walk together in the mountains, the sunbeams reached them above the rolling mists, as she once experienced God’s presence in the mountains with Bhasker. With Samuel’s arm around her, she felt they were planted on the “Rock of Ages”. Samuel kissed her gloved hand after the walk, “a holy kiss that sealed forever the course of our lives.”⁹⁰ That is the happy end of *Saguna*, when the young woman found her Saththianadhan husband to share life and faith on an equal basis.

Samuel and Krupabai Saththianadhan married in 1881, and Krupabai became a member of the Saththianadhan family in Madras, the family she already knew so well.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Ibid., 150-51.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 152-3.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.154-55.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 155-6.

⁸⁹ George Eliot, pen name for Mary Anne Evans (1890-1880), English poet and novelist, e.g. *Middlemarch* (1871-72).

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.164.

⁹¹ Kent points out that “...companionate marriage, represented the highest achievement of civilization according to the standard shared by high-caste converts and their missionary patrons.”, pp. 187- 189.

BETWEEN SAGUNA AND KAMALA

According to Grigg's "Memoir" Krupabai Sattiandhan most probably began her second novel, *Kamala*, in 1889 but put the writing of it on hold while she spent time with her family when her mother-in-law died in 1890. The story "A fine Sunset of Life" was completed by her mother-in-law's deathbed. W.T. Sattianadhan passed away in 1892 and what he had told about his life took form in "The Story of a Conversion", the story he began to tell Krupabai in Madras according to *Saguna*.⁹² *Kamala* was written during the author's last years, a period when she was in poor health and spent much time in Coonor in the Nilgiris District.

KAMALA. A STORY OF HINDU LIFE

Location of the Novel

The narrative takes place in the mountains, "where Ganga Godavery takes its rise" and there is a sacred city "to which I shall give the name Sivagunga".⁹³ An omniscient narrator recognises the little girl Kamala, standing by the ruined temple on a hillock, looking for her father.⁹⁴ Kamala is the daughter of a high Brahmin, a holy widowed man who has retired into the mountain woods with his daughter. The girl enjoys life with her father and the freedom to play with low-caste children. But at the same time, she is also taught the Hindu ritual habits of taking care of the holy *tulsi* plant, filling the vessels with water for her father each morning and setting out the *plantain* leaves for his meals. She has only vague memories of her mother.

Kamala describes how the girl's parents were allowed to meet before their marriage, how her mother Lakshmi's education was supported by her husband-to-be and how, when married, the couple lived on their own, i.e. not as part of a joint family. Thus, *Kamala* includes allusions to a repeated story about female freedom existing in the Vedic past, a trope of the ancient high status of women.

Brahmin Joint Family Life

Kamala was given away for marriage as a child, and when she is still very young, there are festivities to prepare her for marriage. According to tradition, she is moved to the house of her mother-in-law in a small upper-caste joint family part in an orthodox Hindu village. She lives under slave-like conditions and must carry out heavy household chores under constant disapproval of her mother-in-law. She never complains because she is convinced that what happens is her *fate*, and she finds comfort in the company of four other young wives, who meet when they fetch water in their common backyard. They are also allowed to go to festivals at the nearby temple of a goddess, accompanied by loud temple music on drums and offerings of flowers and *kunkun* in the river.

The story includes an outcry: "Blame not the poor Indian woman for her love of jewellery. The jewels are hers whatever may happen to the other property."⁹⁵ The author comments that such feelings are purely Hindu and are "the outcomes of wrongs committed for generations on the poor unprotected Hindu woman." Thus, the narrator in *Kamala* offers serious criticism of the life in joint families, and the helplessness of economically dependent young wives and women.

⁹² Ibid., p. 153.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

Kamala is based on the knowledge of Brahmin customs according to the laws of Manu, the joint family system and husband worship. There is one exception: Kamala is free to leave her home, a freedom of the outdoor landscape compared to the enclosed space of the home. The author's way of "painting landscape with words" include mountain heights and creepers, mists and sunbeams, but also caves and ghosts, like those referred to in *Saguna*. In *Kamala*, however, nature contains signs of Hindu gods and goddesses, and Kamala knows the places where gods and goddesses belong.

Pativrata dharma, the Worship of the Husband

Kamala's husband's family includes several generations of learned men, *shastris*, with knowledge of Sanskrit. The English language has begun to replace Sanskrit even in the Brahmin family, and the only son, Ganesh, is sent to an English school. When two years after their wedding ceremony he returns home after his studies and meets Kamala, he is taken in by her beauty. According to tradition, the couple is not allowed to talk to each other in the company of others, but when they visit a temple festival together with other couples, Ganesh seeks her out in the evenings. He knew the English ideas of a modern marriage built on companionship and wants to try it. When he learns that Kamala is interested in books, he invites her to study with him, and the couple is happy together for some time. Ganesh's intrusion into the traditional domestic sphere, however, makes his mother and his relatives jealous, and they put an end to it all. Kamala must not be prioritized with reading and Ganesh gives in. Western education has not affected him deeply, and Kamala is back in the kitchen and the silence. She is left to practice the *pativrata dharma*, the Hindu rule for wives to worship their husbands.

Ganesh's English education secures him an appointment under the Government, and he leaves the village for the city to live in a house of his own together with Kamala. Away from the village, Ganesh ignores the ethical values of a Brahmin man and begins to entertain his English-educated Indian mistress, Said, in the new home. She is an adventurous widow and a criminal businesswoman who has gone astray in life. Thus, the two English-educated characters have both lost their moral compass.

Kamala blames herself for her husband's infidelity but is comforted by a friend who tells her about Rohini, the goddess-like protector of the village. Rohini is a star and the Moon God's favorite wife, and the worship of Rohini is an important part of the wedding ritual as Rohini is the protector of marriage.⁹⁶ Kamala learns that Rohini requires men to be clean in thoughts and deeds and to have good hearts to be worthy of the worship of the wife.⁹⁷ She is consoled when she understands that she is not responsible for her husband's behavior.

"Sleep little one, sleep"

Kamala is with child and gives birth in the old home of her mother-in-law. The baby daughter is spoken of as a burden on the family, but she is Kamala's treasure. Kamala is terrified of losing her when she becomes unwell and does not recover. One clear night she observes how her daughter reaches her little arms up towards the bright stars, a gesture that Kamala finds in harmony with the silent heaven.⁹⁸ She wonders if the child is appealing to God and she feels the presence of a loving

⁹⁶ Ibid., Rohini is a star and the moon god's favorite among his 27 wives, possibly South Indian folklore.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

God and knows how to comfort herself and her child. She takes her daughter in her arms and quietly sings the lullaby “sleep, sleep, little one, sleep” and her child passes away peacefully.⁹⁹

Kamala is devastated after the loss of her daughter and comforted by the women in the village. But she reconsiders her life and her faith and becomes convinced that God was not among the priests she had met. For her, God – a wise loving God – must be overall and under whatever name you worship.¹⁰⁰ Yet, she does not want to leave her father’s old religion and would never change it for any other. The authorial voice points out that a reader may find these thoughts unexpected in an ignorant Hindu girl. Kamala, however, was successfully cultured by her Hindu parents with no need for an English light of Christianity or Western culture.¹⁰¹

Good Deeds and *swarga*

Ganesh dies suddenly, and when widowed, Kamala follows the tradition and continues the worship of her husband, now for the protection of him in his afterlife. She continues to abide by the Brahmin family codes and is finally treated with respect. Furthermore, she has a chance to remarry, and her father has a disciple, Ramchandra, who is dear to her. The story has the potential to develop into a romance but does not. After her father’s death Kamala inherits jewels from her mother and becomes economically independent. She comes out of her seclusion and devotes the rest of her life to “good deeds” in a public life of service.

Kamala’s endurance in her *pativrata dharma* and her virtuous deeds qualifies her spirit to go directly to *swarga*, heaven; presided over by the god Indra, a place where virtuous souls reside before reincarnation. So, she has been told. She will never become a demon, the spirit of a person who harms the living, as ghosts in *Kamala*, and in *Saguna*.

The narrator ends in the style of a Victorian novel: “It was thus I heard the story of Kamala narrated as I sat by the riverbanks under a clump of trees. The rude rustic temple of Rohini was at my side. The same old Shivagunga was there [...] Far in front were a shrine and a *chuttram* bearing the name of Kamala, who had now become a saint. Her unseen hands still relieve the poor and protect the unfortunate as she left her fortune for the sole benefit of widows and orphans.”¹⁰²

***Kamala*, the Hindu Novel**

Satthianadhan wrote her novel *Kamala* about a Hindu life unknown to English readers, including *pativrata dharma* according to the laws of Manu and a contrast to the trope of her parents and their marriage. The novel conveys a respect for Kamala’s person, her endurance and Hindu practice with moral codes, but also criticism of Brahmin joint family life, the restricted life of poor girls. Once a free and happy child, she turns into a household slave in a cold-hearted family, with an unreliable husband. The moral deficiency in Ganesh and Said as a consequence of European education is noteworthy. Feeling the presence of a nameless God as a voice within Kamala is true to her duty of husband worship even when widowed. After her death a shrine is built where candles are lit in her honour, close to the fields where she played as a child.

⁹⁹ Ibid., “The Cradle Song”, p. 151-152 in *Kamala*, see Appendix.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 84 and p. 106.

¹⁰¹ Jackson points out that the term ‘God’ is not appropriate to use in a Hindu context, but certain aspects of Tamil spirituality has influenced many to believe in a personal supreme Being to whom they can direct love and devotion (endnote n. 13).

¹⁰² *Kamala*, p. 154.

Kamala includes both prejudice, temple rituals and demons but also a praise of Hindu spiritual life including meditation and meandering in the natural surroundings where the Hindu can change his quarters, a luxury of Hindu life unknown to all others. “Even a savage is known to be impressed by grand inspiring scenes of nature” writes Saththianadhan, the author of *Saguna* whose way of writing about nature was praised and understood as an “assimilation of English poetry” by English readers. In *Kamala* wildlife is filled with traces of Hindu gods and goddesses and the author does not only depict scenery and surroundings, she knows the places where gods and goddesses belong.¹⁰³

In addition, *Kamala* raises a question related to the literary concept of “Indianness”, here discussed only from the angle if Indian words should be explained or not to non-Indian readers, and whether such details are crucial for the understanding of the text. Certain features may spice the text with orientalism but are at the same time manifestations of realism. Explanations (or notes) may slow down the narrative but in this case the author’s footnotes are short and descriptive. The “Indian” words are more frequent in *Kamala* than in *Saguna*, and the narrative text is spiced with the sounds and flavours of everyday household work, street-cries in the village, festivals and temples with festive *pandalas*, *tom-toms*, and wilderness. Certain italicized “Indian” words have been marked with an asterisk or a small cross by the author, referring to footnotes with short explanatory texts at the bottom of the page.¹⁰⁴ The story is told in chronological order.

To continue, *Kamala* includes Hindu female reform issues: child marriage, joint family life with the child-bride slaving for the mother-in-law, separate *zenana* quarters, lack of education, enforced widowhood, issues also on the colonial mission agenda. Brinks argues that Saththianadhan wrote *Kamala* to dispute child marriage, but the novel avoids weighing in directly on reform issues. Consequently, *Kamala* can be interpreted in a variety of ways.

To conclude, *Kamala* is Saththianadhan’s “Hindu novel”, to be compared with her “Christian novel” *Saguna*. There is one clear connection: Krupabai’s mother was abducted as a child-wife by her converted husband but had kept “a notion of Hindu things” as described in *Saguna*. Thus, it has been claimed that Krupabai had her mother’s early life as a starting point for *Kamala*, as well as her concern about young uneducated girls and furthermore, her initiated picturing of Indian village life.

¹⁰³ Jackson points out that the term ‘God’ is not appropriate to use in a Hindu context, but certain aspects of Tamil spirituality has influenced many to believe in a personal supreme Being to whom they can direct love and devotion. (endnote n. 13).

¹⁰⁴ In *Kamala. The Story of a Hindu Child-Wife* Lokugé has inserted her own numbers in the original text of the novel, referring to her explanatory notes at the end of the volume, a total of 154 entries. Collisions occur in the text when Lokugé’s numbered notes add to Saththianadhan’s asterisks and symbols. In this way, the original text has been changed, which was not the case with *Saguna*.

ANALYSIS

Mrs. Benson's two forewords to *Saguna* and Mrs. Grigg's "Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan" in *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* are the introductory paratexts to Saththianadhan's narratives. Mrs. Benson's foreword to the first edition of *Saguna* from 1892 is the only paratext written before Saththianadhan's death on August 3rd, 1894. It was published together with a second foreword by Benson in the posthumous 1895 edition of *Saguna*.

Mrs. Grigg's "Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan" is prefixed to the author's second and posthumous novel, *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life*. Grigg's intention is to complete the author's biography but also to "judge her as an author and a woman". Such a "statement of intent" is fundamental for an allographic posthumous paratext according to Genette, who outlines three types of such paratexts: the first is strictly biographical, the second provides information about the creation of the author's text (*Kamala* in this case), and the third type has a wider scope, specifically to situate the presented text within an exposé and context of the author's entire works.¹⁰⁵ Grigg's statement of intent covers them all, but Grigg does more than so. The "Memoir" is based on her personal knowledge of the late author including their meetings. Genette does not accept this variety as a posthumous allographic paratext and states that a text written a short interval after the death of a friend and which includes the friends' encounters is better called a "funeral oration".¹⁰⁶ Thus, the "Memoir" does not qualify as a proper posthumous paratext but is analysed with that in mind.

MRS. BENSON AND MRS. GRIGG

Mukherjee suggested that the authors of the paratexts, "whoever they be, were possibly the wives of the District Collector and the Director of Public Instructions in the Presidency."¹⁰⁷ Mrs. Benson was actually the wife of the District Collector F. C. Benson, the district's head of administration and one of the high-ranking official administrators of British India. Mrs. Grigg was married to H. B. Grigg, the Director of Public Instructions in the Presidency who knew Samuel Saththianadhan and had in addition been involved in educational reforms within the Presidency since the beginning of the 1880s.¹⁰⁸ He was also the author of a "Manual of the Nilgiris District in the Madras Presidency", a detailed description of the area.¹⁰⁹ I assume that both couples belonged to the inner circle of the colonial community in the Madras Presidency and that the ladies knew Lady Wenlock, the Governor's wife. Most probably, the two English ladies Benson and Grigg had social positions in the colony that could guarantee the quality of the late author Mrs. Krupabai Saththianadhan's novels and the importance of honouring her memory. Thus, the ladies' texts provide colonial context to Krupabai Saththianadhan's writings.

¹⁰⁵ Genette, pp. 265-67.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 270, note 29.

¹⁰⁷ Mukherjee, "Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Saththianadhan", in *The Perishable Empire*, p. 70-71.

¹⁰⁸ Samuel Saththianadhan, *History of the Education in the Madras Presidency*, p. viii.

https://archive.org/details/historyofeducati00sattuoft/page/n3_ retrieved 2019-03-15.

¹⁰⁹ H. B. Grigg, *Manual of the Nilgiri District in the Madras Presidency*, (Madras, 1880).

https://archive.org/details/manualofnlagir00grigrich/page/n6_ retrieved 2019-02-15.

DEDICATIONS

Both *Saguna and Kamala* include dedications by the author, a performative act according to Genette, who points out several aspects of such a text.¹¹⁰ The 1895 posthumous 2nd edition of *Saguna* includes a dedication: “To Mrs. H. B. Grigg, this book is dedicated in grateful acknowledgement of the encouragement given to the author in writing this story, and in appreciation of her active sympathy with everything connected with the welfare of India’s women.” This proclamation of gratitude to Mrs. Grigg was presumably also published in the first edition of *Saguna*. The dedication is a demonstration of a relationship and the shared concern for the welfare of India’s women, and such a common cause is one of the characteristics of a dedication, says Genette.

Kamala is dedicated to Lady Wenlock, the Governor’s wife: “To Her Excellency Lady Wenlock this book is respectfully dedicated, in accordance with the wishes of the authoress, who felt greatly cheered and encouraged, during the writing of it, by the kind interest manifested in her humble literary efforts, by Her Ladyship.” Who registered the wish and assumed responsibility for this “high society” posthumous dedication? Grigg does not tell. It could have been Mrs. Grigg herself but hardly Samuel Sathianadhan, considering his position both as husband and university professor. If Lady Wenlock, as the dedicatee, had agreed to accept the compliment before it was put into print, and to whom, is not known. Infringements on the rule of courtesy occur and may change over time. Lady Wenlock initiated and participated in the Memorial Meeting in the Governor’s House in January 1895, thus a high colonial act of respect for the late Mrs. Samuel Sathianadhan.

MRS. BENSON’S FOREWORDS TO SAGUNA

The two forewords in the 1895 2nd edition of *Saguna* signed by F. C. A. Benson are printed in reverse chronological order and cover three pages. In her “Preface to the First Edition”, Benson addresses her readers using the first plural voice stating that “we are told in English, by a Hindu lady, her tale of Native Christian life.”¹¹¹ Mrs. Benson states that English is almost entirely unknown among native ladies throughout India and tells her readers that “We do not know of any other work of fiction written by a Hindu lady in English.”¹¹² With *Saguna*, English ladies can read about authentic native Christian Hindu life, in prose-fiction, a ‘cherished genre’ that provides essential modes of living, dress and manners of the period.¹¹³ Benson hopes that the story will rouse interest in English women and sympathy with women of India, and “lead those of us whose life is spent in India to a wider interest in, and freer intercourse with, our Indian friends”.¹¹⁴ Mrs. Benson is reliable, and her preface is a recommendation to read the unique *Saguna A Story of Native Christian Life*.

Mrs. Benson’s preface to the 2nd edition of *Saguna* is written after the publication of *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life*. Benson honours the memory of the author who “Fell asleep in Jesus” on August

¹¹⁰ Genette, pp. 126-36.

¹¹¹ Benson, Preface to the First Edition, p.xi.

¹¹² Ibid., p.xi.

¹¹³ Ibid., p xii. “‘Prose fiction’, perceived to be the province of metropolitan women novelists” according to Boehmer, p. 75.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. xii.

3rd, 1894, in her 32nd year”, a true Christian.¹¹⁵ Benson opposes the prejudice that Indian women are unfit for higher education and points out that Saththianadhan’s exquisite use of English is proof of the learning capability of Indian women. Knowledge of English is important for Indian women, for the family life with an enlightened husband and also for communication with English ladies who cannot be expected to learn the vernacular languages. In the future knowledge of the English language would “open the world for Indian women from the north of Himalaya to Cape Comorin, and open for them literature from past and present.”¹¹⁶

Benson’s forewords are statements against the preconception of Indian women’s intellectual weakness and a forecast of a future of successful Indian female anglophone readers and authors. Her preface has the character of foreword introducing a new author, praise and a recommendation to read the book, and she seems well-informed and reliable. Furthermore, Benson’s message is the same as Krupabai Saththianadhan’s in her articles on female education, an enlightened man needs an enlightened and educated wife.

MRS. GRIGG’S “MEMOIR OF KRUPABAI SATTHIANADHAN”

Introduction

The “Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan” is prefixed to *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life*. It is the primary biographical source and first-hand evidence of the author’s life. The text spans 37 pages, and ends with Mrs. Grigg’s signature, Residency Trivandrum, on December 10th, 1894.¹¹⁷ Under what circumstances the “Memoir” was written is not known, and the author does not tell.

According to Genette a posthumous preface written by a friend shortly after the death of the author is not a proper allographic posthumous paratext.¹¹⁸ In spite of the restriction I use the “Memoir” for a paratextual analysis but with caution. The “Memoir” is an important text because Mrs. Grigg is Krupabai Saththianadhan’s only biographer and her purpose is to complete the author’s biography after what Krupabai has told us in *Saguna*. Therefore, it is of interest to investigate how Grigg combines her biographical “Memoir” with the author’s writings, and how she introduces Krupabai Saththianadhans’ novels to her readers. Whether it is a disadvantage to the narratives or not will be discussed. Furthermore, Grigg provides the colonial context which opens for a discussion of the forewords which Meenakshi Mukherjee summarized and dismissed as “patronizing verbiage of the colonial as well as missionary variety”.¹¹⁹

To structure the analysis, I have summarized the biographical information in three parts interspersed with Grigg’s text on other issues and my own comments. Certain issues and the vocabulary in the “Memoir” are “trigger points” for my discussion and include use of texts from other sources. Mrs. Grigg makes use of her friends’ first name, Krupabai, in the “Memoir” except in the beginning and at the end where she uses the author’s full name, Krupabai Saththianadhan.¹²⁰ The first

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. vii.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. ix.

¹¹⁷ Trivandrum, colonial city in the southwest in the Madras Presidency, now in Kerala. Grigg has the same death date for Krupabai as has Benson in her second foreword, “3rd of August last”, p. viii, but also the 8th of August, p. xxxiv.

¹¹⁸ Genette p. 105.

¹¹⁹ Mukherjee, “Ambiguous Discourse”, pp. 70-71.

¹²⁰ Grigg pp. i and xxxvi.

name “Krupabai” adds to the personal character of the “Memoir” and I will use it in this part of the essay. There is also a practical aspect as several members of the Saththianadhan family wrote and published. There were three Mrs. S. Saththianadhan, Anna and two K. Saththianadhan: Krupabai Saththianadhan and Kamala Saththianadhan, Samuel’s first and second wife.¹²¹ Kamala Saththianadhan was a successful writer and editor. Certain sources have not differentiated between the two “K. Saththianadhans”.¹²²

Grigg expects her readers to be English and addresses them in the first-person plural “we”. She calls attention to the colonial praise of *Saguna*, both in the Indian press and in the leading English Journals. Moreover, Grigg emphasizes that Her Majesty the Queen Empress has “recently accepted a copy of *Saguna* and was graciously pleased to request that any other work by the authoress should be sent to her.”¹²³ The royal praise of the late Krupabai Saththianadhan’s first novel is no doubt intended to add prestige to the “Memoir”.

Mrs Grigg’s statement of intention is to complete the author’s biography. She points out that much about the author’s life is known from the autobiographical *Saguna*, but the final chapters of her life remain to be written. Furthermore, Grigg intends to “judge her as an author and a woman”.¹²⁴

Biography. Family Friends

Mrs. Grigg knew Krupabai as they met in 1878, when Krupabai attended the Medical College in Madras and boarded the Saththianadhan family. They were acquainted after Krupabai’s marriage with Samuel Saththianadhan in 1881 as Mr. Grigg knew Samuel. The newlywed Saththianadhans began their life together in Ootacmund (Ooty) in the Nilgiri Hills, where the Grigg family also lived at the time. Samuel was the headmaster at the Breek’s Memorial School, while Krupabai taught and supervised in *zenana* schools and opened a school for Muslim girls.

The families kept close contact, and Grigg underscores that she encouraged Krupabai to write. “A Visit to the Todas”, a tribe in the Nilgiris, was her first story, published in Ootacmund in *South India Observer* under her *nom de plume* “An Indian Lady”.¹²⁵ Samuel advanced in his career, and in 1884, the couple moved to the coastal village town of Rajahmundry, where Krupabai continued her teaching career. Unfortunately, the climate was bad for her and she became seriously ill for months. Her health improved in 1885 when the couple moved to Kumbakonam, an educational centre with dry and wholesome air.¹²⁶ In 1886 Samuel Saththianadhan was appointed Chair of Logic and Philosophy at the Presidency College in Madras. Back in the city, Krupabai began writing from home starting with scenes from her childhood, a beginning that “grew into *Saguna*”.¹²⁷ This novel *Saguna* was to be a success when serialized in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* 1887-1888 and then published as a book in 1892 with a 2nd edition posthumously in 1895.

No Indian woman had published a novel in English before and autobiography was not an established genre in India at the time. Grigg poses the question under what circumstances Krupabai’s

¹²¹ Kamala Saththianadhan had changed her first name to Kamala when she married, according to Hindu tradition.

¹²² Harish Raizada, the author of the *Lotus and the Rose* presents Kamala Saththianadhan as the author of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. i.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. i.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xx. “A Visit to the Todas”, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 88-91.

¹²⁶ Tanjore in Tamil Nadu, the south of the colonial Madras Presidency.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xxi-xxii.

authorship had been possible and provides a background explaining that Krupabai was born when the “true light” had reached India.¹²⁸

The True Light, Ancient Vedic Times

Grigg tells the story about how the “true light” and “movement for education” had come to India early in the nineteenth century but had initially reached only men.¹²⁹ Women were completely uneducated and had lived in a “dim twilight for many hundreds of years” Grigg says.¹³⁰ Only recently had it been recognised that women, half of the Indian population, were left in comparative ignorance. When Krupabai was born the “enlightenment of women” and female education however begun to grow soundly from within, in the “great centres of civilization at least”.¹³¹ Education meant knowledge of English, earlier a privilege for upper-class Indian men. Thus, Grigg argues that Krupabai was born in the right place at the right time to be the first anglophone Indian lady novelist, and she knew the “true light”, as she was a Christian.

Grigg declares that there was a good deal to show that in Vedic times women had lived a free and healthy life. She sweeps back to ancient times to investigate the “tales of glorious female freedom and women who composed hymns and songs” but dismisses the historical truth of the texts.¹³² “The age in which they lived is remote and its history too much mixed up with myth and legend to be trustworthy” she declares.¹³³ Moreover, Grigg questions the remaining influence of the strong goddesses and heroines from the classic Sanskrit epic poems, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.¹³⁴ Dismissing the Indian spiritual and cultural heritage, she claims that there was no “light” in the ancient Indian scriptures, tales and legends.

My question is: why did Grigg go back to the ancient Vedic history of India when presenting the background of her friend Krupabai’s authorship? Was she aware that references to the ancient heritage was an important issue within the movement of Indian nationalism? In that case her intention could be to “blow out the ancient light” because she knew that the Vedic light had begun to shine again opposing the colonial influences. Put in perspective, however, the idealizing of the Vedic past was a trope of the time, an often-repeated story about a freedom existing in the past, a trope that worked for the growing cultural nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. “None of the evils harassing contemporary society had plagued people during the Vedic times”, to quote a postcolonial line from *Women Writing in India*.¹³⁵ Both progressive and conservative Hindu reformers kept referring to a “golden age” based on Vedic models. Krupabai herself begins with a favourable construction of ancient Hindu history as a feminist inspiration in her article “Female Education”.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.i.

¹²⁹ Christian mission reached India much earlier and from the south with the Portuguese mission I southwest India, Kerala.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. ii.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. iv. One should notice that the concept “enlightenment” included “the true light” of Christian faith in Grigg’s colonial context which is not the European understanding of “enlightenment”.

¹³² Ibid., p.ii. The Veda scriptures were written in Sanskrit 1700-1000 BCE, the fundament for Brahmanism culture and the caste system.

¹³³ Ibid., p.ii.

¹³⁴ The Hindu long epic poems *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* include of gods and goddesses and their adventures, texts of great impact in India also in our time and written about 400 and 100 BCE.

¹³⁵ Tharu and Lalita, *Women Writing in India*, vol 1, p. 160.

¹³⁶ *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 16-24.

Moreover, *Kamala*, to which the “Memoir” is prefixed, includes the trope of Kamala’s parents in the shape of a free and educated Hindu couple. Yet, Grigg ignores this subject in Krupabai’s writings. For Grigg, the author was born in the right place at the right time for the movement and for female education, in addition blessed by the “true light” as a second generation convert.

The Movement for Female Education East and West

The “movement for education and enlightenment” came to India from England and exerted an influence on Krupabai’s authorship Grigg points out. But it is complicated to compare “any great movement in countries and races as different as are those of the east and the west.”¹³⁷ The “movement” in England began with lady authors and their literary ideas which were put into action by noble pioneers and missionaries. Certain forerunners and pioneers struggled hard for women’s education in England, initiatives finally blessed by new and broader fields of philanthropic work.¹³⁸ Grigg argues that the movement in India began a century after that in England, and from a much lower and different platform.¹³⁹ But women in India are not incapable of intellectual undertakings, as “ignorant people intend to think”. India too has had female authors, pioneers and martyrs. Yet, in contrast to what had happened to the English reformists, pioneers in India kept their femininity.¹⁴⁰ Krupabai was a reformist but at the same time retained “all that is sweetest in womanhood”.¹⁴¹ Yet, there was an essential difference between “east and west” as rigorous scholarly activities seemed dangerous for young people in India. The reason why is found in Mrs. Chapman’s *Sketches of Some Distinguished Indian Women*, a book Grigg recommends everyone wishing to get to know Indian women better.¹⁴²

Intellectual Efforts. Early Grave

Mrs. Chapman tells the story of two pioneers, the Bengal poet Toru Dutt (1856-1877) and Anandibai Joshi (1865-1877) who has been called the first Indian lady doctor.¹⁴³ Chapman uses the expression “an early grave” in *Sketches*, and the quotation is from her last page on Dutt.

It has been the case in all countries and in all times, but perhaps the modern native educated of India is peculiarly exposed to the danger. The premature development of the mind and body does not seem to be accompanied by that physical health which can alone make great cultivation safe, and in too many cases the bodily frame is worn out in a few years and hopes of future achievements are buried in an early grave. The danger, no doubt, is increased for those who go to England or America, and the damp cold of these countries has cost us more than one life that seemed destined to play a noble part in the work of regenerating Indian society.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. iv.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. iv.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. iv.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. v.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. ix.

¹⁴² E. F. Chapman, *Sketches of some Distinguished Indian Women* (London 1891). Foreword by Lady Dufferin. https://books.google.se/books/about/Sketches_of_Some_Distinguished_Indian_Wo.html?id=KX9qxAEACAAJ&source=kp_book_description&redir_esc=y , retrieved 2018-09-15.

¹⁴³ Ibid., about Anandibai Joshi pp. 48-70 and Toru Dutt pp. 91-117.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

Thus, the constitution and “bodily frame” of native Indian youth does not make “great cultivation safe” and intellectual ‘overwork’ is a risk for “an early grave” especially when going abroad for studies. Anandibai was a child-wife who was taught to read by her husband and was sent to study medicine in the United States, where she suffered in cold weather, bad housing and lack of nutrients for her vegetarian regime. She died shortly after her return to India in spite of the company and support by Pandita Ramabai, a well-known Indian reformist and convert who had travelled, lectured and published in America. Toru Dutt was a poet and both Toru Dutt and Anandibai had died young in consumption, a scourge of the time.

Mrs. Chapman’s book has a recommending foreword written by the distinguished Lady Dufferin, who initiated the “Women's Medical Movement” in India, promoting education of female staff and doctors for the care of female patients, an initiative with long-lasting effects.¹⁴⁵ Grigg accepted the authorial opinion on racial differences.

Krupabai had been exposed for tuberculosis since childhood and her constitution was delicate. That was the reason why her alter ego Saguna could not use her scholarship for medical studies in England as a young man had recently died there, killed by overstudy, “an early grave”¹⁴⁶. The missionary in charge of scholarships arranged for Krupabai to go to the Medical College in Madras instead. W.T. Saththianadhan commented on how “frail and delicate” she appeared when he met her at the busy railway station¹⁴⁷ Krupabai was far from robust but lived to see her the success of *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life*.

Krupabai Saththianadhan and Toru Dutt

Grigg’s first line of the “Memoir” is unconventional for a posthumous text written shortly after death of the person in question : “Unlike Toru Dutt of Bengal, who has been called her prototype, the authoress of *Kamala* lived to see her literary efforts recognised.”¹⁴⁸

I have two commentaries: why does Grigg refer to a “prototype” for Krupabai and furthermore a statement which is highly unlikely. To sort it out, Krupabai Saththianadhan and Toru Dutt are recognized as the first two Christian anglophone female Indian authors, but they lived very different lives and their authorships were also different. No special cultural contacts were kept between the Bengali Calcutta and Madras. Toru Dutt belonged to a highly cultured family in Calcutta, she was multilingual and travelled France and England before she came back home and began to study Sanskrit and Sanskrit translations, wrote poetry and communicated with French and English authors and editors. She died at the age of 21 and passed away in Calcutta when Krupabai was 17 years old. Grigg must have known that the two authors never met. What Dutt published in Bengali magazines in her lifetime must have been hard to locate, and as far as I have been able to find out Krupabai did not know Dutt’s *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*.¹⁴⁹ Krupabai did not travel outside India,

¹⁴⁵ Lady Dufferin was the wife of the Viceroy of India, the head of British administration 1884-1888. She initiated the “Women's Medical Movement” promoting women’s health issues in India, female staff and doctors, initiatives with long-lasting effects starting in 1885.

¹⁴⁶ *Saguna* p. 150.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁸ Grigg, p. i.

¹⁴⁹ Dutt’s collection *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, built on Sanskrit transcriptions, was published posthumously in 1882. Dutt, Toru, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ancient_Ballads_and_Legends_of_Hindustan_\(1882\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ancient_Ballads_and_Legends_of_Hindustan_(1882)), retrieved 2019-02-16.

wrote prose and only tried verse. She may have been inspired by her close relatives' writings, her parents-in-law Anna and W.T. Sathianadhan.¹⁵⁰ Toru Dutt was, however, definitely not Krupabai's "prototype" or her model.

My question is what Toru Dutt could have meant for Mrs. Grigg. A fact is that Grigg knew about Toru Dutt from the book she recommends, Mrs. Chapman's *Sketches of some Distinguished Indian Women*.¹⁵¹ Chapman tells how Toru had learnt stories "at her mother's knee", something the young poet told with tears in a conversation, "myths which had lost their religious significance as she had learnt to rest in a purer faith, but which retained for her always their poetic beauty." Grigg knew from *Saguna* how biblical stories told by Saguna's elder sister "impressed her for life" and how she wanted to sit close to her sister to listen and hold the loose end of her sari.¹⁵² This association may be farfetched but it is a connection I can find for Grigg's comparison of the two authors: two authors' childhood memories of storytelling by a Christian "significant other", to use a modern expression for closeness, storytelling that had made an impact for life on the authors-to-be.

I guess Grigg did not know about Dutt's treasuring the precolonial past for free women in her poetry. If she had read Dutt's collection *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, built on Sanskrit transcriptions and published posthumously in 1882, she could have noticed "the trope". But I guess she did not. Dutt's studies of Sanskrit inspired her to write the long poem about the princess "Savitri", a poem discussed in an early postcolonial essay by Tharu.¹⁵³ The poem's principal aim was to project Savitri as a woman free to explore her surroundings and free to choose her husband. Such a freedom was what Grigg claimed was impossible before the English movement of enlightenment.

Biography. Early Chapters and *Saguna*

Grigg begins with *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* to provide a picture of the young Krupabai and to follow the influences that helped to form her character. The story about Saguna's parent's conversion is recognised with empathy including the social impact it had for the Brahmin born Harichandra Kishty, and his spiritual struggle up to his true religious experience of Christ.¹⁵⁴ He had been prepared to receive "the religion of Christ" after his studies of the Hindu holy scriptures, but without the influence of a higher culture" of Western ideals.

Grigg concludes that Harichandra's conversion from Hinduism to the "pure Christian faith" was a domestic success, manifest in *Saguna*.¹⁵⁵ The girl grows up in a home that is happy and simple and with an enlightened family atmosphere. Harichandra's young wife Radha finally embraces the religion of her husband and finds happiness in life. She never learns to read, but her position in the household is freer and more influential than it could ever have been in a Hindu joint family. The many children are all blessed by their Christian faith and are educated.¹⁵⁶ Bhasker's often quoted question to Saguna if she would speak boldly to her countrywomen and yet be a real woman is interpreted by Grigg as a question of future missionary promotion of the Christian faith.¹⁵⁷ Grigg's opinion is that the

¹⁵⁰ This is an issue that has never been investigated.

¹⁵¹ E. F. Chapman, *Sketches of some Distinguished Indian Women*.

¹⁵² *Saguna*, p. 19.

¹⁵³ Tharu, "Tracing Savitri's Pedigree: Victorian Racism and the Image of Women in Indo-Anglian Literature".

¹⁵⁴ Grigg, pp. ix-xi.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

conversion story and the life of Saguna's Christian family should be read by all who are inclined to question what Christianity has done for India and that would change their minds.¹⁵⁸

But Mrs. Grigg overlooks that Radha's troubled early life story is important in *Saguna*, Radha who would have become an excommunicated widow excluded from all family life if Harichandra had left her behind. "Poor girls" is a phrase that Sathianadhan used to describe the situation for young Hindu girls, a basis for her concern and articles about female education as a first step of female independence. Neither does Grigg mention Harichandra's struggle to provide water for poor people outside the caste system and thus opposing the strict anti-pollution rules which controlled water supplies.¹⁵⁹ Krupabai Sathianadhan describes complexities in "native Christian life", the subtitle of *Saguna*, together with her alter ego's increasingly ambivalent feelings towards the English. Grigg covers them up.

Saguna was sent to mission schools in Bombay after the death of Bhasker, the loss of her always supporting brother. Grigg points out that Saguna came "under the influence of an American lady doctor, a "person of much originality and force of character". It was a mentor relationship and an influence of importance that eventually lead to the girl's choice of profession and to the conviction that "marriage would be the end of all education."¹⁶⁰ Not much is said in the "Memoir" about Saguna's dreams of medical studies and independence, her feminist manifest.

Grigg finds Krupabai's knowledge of English wonderful and points out her achievement since English was a foreign language to her. She praises the authoress' poetic style and her exquisite descriptions of scenery, enhanced by her love of English poetry and the extent and assimilation of her poetry reading.¹⁶¹ Yet, "Wonderful as her grasp on English is it fails her occasionally when she wishes to satirise and make her strokes far heavier than she intends."¹⁶² Grigg refers to Krupabai's depiction of the Christian village when the agents cared more for shopping groceries at the local market than for preaching and were joking and used some bad Marathi language. Krupabai should have known better than to write about them; her English failed her when she tried to write with humour. Grigg opinion is that the converts in the village should be grateful and happy, not sloppy and slandering. She expected conversion to fill all converted with gratitude and expressions of total cultural transformation.¹⁶³ Grigg ignored the acknowledgment in *Saguna* that the congregating of Christians on whom religion "had not taken a deep hold" had not proved successful.¹⁶⁴

Grigg's consistent theme of the blessings of Christianity in *Saguna* is combined with gaps and glossing of the discrimination Saguna experienced. It is a gap when Grigg does not mention the "black and white" incident, Saguna's first childhood experience of racial discrimination when visiting a European missionary house with her mother. It is an important part of *Saguna* where her mother

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. xii.

¹⁵⁹ *Saguna* p.65.

¹⁶⁰ *Saguna* p. 149.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. xxiv. Saguna surprised a teacher in the first missionary school by knowing a poem by Longfellow by heart, and she knew Milton and *Paradise Lost* through Bhasker, appreciated Wordsworth's poems and read Spenser's old poem *The Faerie Queene* in her teens.

¹⁶² Grigg, p.xxxiv.

¹⁶³ Kent in *Converting Women* explores conversion in South India, often from "the lower echelons of the Indian social hierarchy", creating a new existence for e.g. 'polluted leather workers', with new challenges on women and gender relations.

¹⁶⁴ *Saguna*, p. 101.

comments: “Don’t you see the difference, they are white, and we are black; we ought to be thankful for the little notice they take of us.”¹⁶⁵ The English missionary teachers’ disrespect for a poor Brahmin woman and Saguna’s anguish of “becoming a native” in the derogatory sense are glossed.¹⁶⁶ Saguna’s reaction to the injustice is judged by Grigg as an “almost hysterical over-sensitiveness”, and she finds that Saguna’s “mind and body had developed unevenly”. The discipline in the Mission school in Bombay was exactly what Saguna needed, and all went well “after a few misunderstandings”, Grigg concludes.¹⁶⁷

Grigg tells her readers that Krupabai’s *Saguna* is an expression of how the missionary blessing and the conversion to Christianity offered in India is leading to “a higher culture and a purer faith.” Mukherjee’s noticed and commented:

The author’s faith in Christianity may have been firm, but as a novelist she was not averse to expressing her heroine’s doubts and misgivings. The Bible preaches equality for all, but missionaries made a distinction between British and Indians. Intrepid as she was, Saguna spoke up against such anomaly and was duly reprimanded. When Christian missions in India appropriated Sathianadhan’s work, such uncomfortable moments were conveniently glossed over in their lavish praise for the ideal native woman.¹⁶⁸

Mrs. Grigg’s specific missionary and moral idea is the main message in the “Memoir”, guiding her interpretation of Krupabai’s story *Saguna* with its inserted story of her father’s conversion and Saguna’s life as a young girl with an English education and an ambivalence against the English influence in the Indian society she knew. Grigg’s praise is related to her interpretation of Krupabai’s qualities as consequences of her parents’ conversion and her Christian faith and English education and colonial cultural influence, thus a reading overshadowing Krupabai’s autobiographical narrative *Saguna*. To continue, I will discuss Grigg’s racial vocabulary in a historical context and explore racial issues in Krupabai Sathianadhan’s writings.

Racial Vocabulary and Discrimination

I assume that the nineteenth-century Western classifications of race and race positions in the human chain were assimilated by Grigg as common scientific knowledge of an educated person. The imperial presence in India was justified through the ideology of racism. It defined features of the natural world such as the white dominance as the order of things. Boehmer recounts the pseudoscientific evolutionary theory that appeared around the time of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859.¹⁶⁹ The theory stated that cultural traits are bound up with physical characteristics, and that race classification could be used to explain superiority or inferiority of different physical and cultural types. Race was regarded as the principal determinant of attitudes, endowments, capabilities and inherent tendencies among human beings and seemed to determine the course of human history. A great gap based in biology was believed to separate white races from black. These evolutionary principles and representations of people held sway during the Victorian period. Symbols of race, purity and taint

¹⁶⁵ *Saguna*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁶ *Saguna*, pp. 115-16.

¹⁶⁷ Grigg., p. xxiii.

¹⁶⁸ Mukherjee, “Ambiguous Discourse”, pp. 82-83.

¹⁶⁹ Boehmer, pp. 30, 79-85.

were parts of the evolutionary precepts. According to Boehmer, “few nineteenth-century colonial discourses would not have borne the imprint of a race vocabulary and racial ideas”¹⁷⁰

Scientific study and documentation of culture, looking at people as objects, belonged within the colonialist anthropologic undertaking with focus on race. A photo collection of the Indian subcontinent’s different castes and races, *The People of India*, was published in 1862.¹⁷¹ A number of tribes lived in India, groups that together are called e.g. “first nations” in the decolonizing debate of today. Colonial race issues included a ranking of castes in India. Yet, colonial administrators used the words “civilized” and “uncivilized” Hindus instead. Grigg, however, states in her racial vocabulary that Krupabai was of “good Brahman stock”, i.e. incorporated the value of high caste.¹⁷²

Krupabai Sathianadhan and Race Issues

Krupabai was aware of racial attitudes, discrimination and skin colour, and I think it is essential to know how it is shown in her writings but excluded or glossed by Grigg in the “Memoir”.

The “black and white” incident in *Saguna* is the author’s first experience of racial discrimination, a memory from a Christian village with converts and the English missionary’s wife treated Saguna and her mother as “natives” in the derogative sense. Afterwards her mother told her that such behaviour was to be expected as “...they are white, and we are black; we ought to be thankful for the little notice they take of us.”¹⁷³ Grigg excludes this ‘episode’ in the “Memoir”, and overshadows or glosses other examples of discrimination, or explains them with flaws in Krupabai’s use of English. *Women Writing in India* includes a chapter on social reform issues and “Women’s Literature in the Nationalist Movement” including episodes in *Saguna* with the young girl’s exposure of “...the arrogance and stupidity with white racism.”¹⁷⁴ But she had written about ‘race’ in another context before, in her first published article, “A Visit to the Todas”.

The newly wed Sathianadhans spent time together with the Griggs in Ootacmund (Ooty), both teaching. Mrs. Grigg’s husband H.B. Grigg knew the Nilgiris well and wrote a manual with all possible aspects of the area in 1881, including a chapter on different tribes.¹⁷⁵ A detailed anthropological investigation of the Todas tribe in the Nilgiris was published by an English officer in the administration in 1873.¹⁷⁶ I think it is likely that Krupabai became familiar with Mr. Grigg’s knowledge of the area. Mrs. Grigg encouraged Krupabai to write, and I assume that she had told her about the Todas. “A visit to the Todas”, appeared in 1882 or 1883 in *South India Observer* and under a pseudonym.¹⁷⁷ The article is a depiction of the tall Toda people and their special variety of huts. Krupabai was impressed by the tribe and the agriculture and she strongly objected to the exploitation of their land by the “foreigners” and the taxation of the farmers. She wished to spare the tribe from future mixing with Europeans and European schooling for the children. Krupabai’s text is written with

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁷¹ John Forbes Watson, Sir John William Kaye, *The people of India: a series of photographic illustrations, with descriptive letterpress, of the races and tribes of Hindustan* (India Museum, London 1868, 2nd volume), <https://archive.org/details/peopleofindiaser02greauoft/page/n5>, retrieved 2019-04-10

¹⁷² Grigg, p. xxxiv.

¹⁷³ *Saguna*, the story is told on pp. 98-100 and the quote from p. 99.

¹⁷⁴ *Women Writing in India*, “Literature of the Reform and Nationalist Movements”, vol. 1, pp. 145-186.

¹⁷⁵ H. B. Grigg, *Manual of the Nilgiri District in the Madras Presidency*, (Madras, 1881).

¹⁷⁶ Marshall, William E., *A Phrenologist amongst the Todas. A Study of a Primitive Tribe in South India* (London, 1873) <https://archive.org/details/phrenologistamon00mars/page/n6>, retrieved 2019-12-12.

¹⁷⁷ “A Visit to the Todas” in *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 88-91.

a clear description of people and landscape, similar to a travel diary by W. T. Sathianadhan from a long journey he made to Christian communities in Tamil Nadu.

Race and caste are intertwined, and Krupabai does not ‘discuss’ the issue, but exemplifies. In the inserted conversion story in *Saguna*, she proudly describes her father’s physical struggle to provide water for Christians, his life threatened by high Brahmins while he is going against the concepts of pollution in the hierarchal caste system.¹⁷⁸ In *Kamala*, the little girl plays with the Sudra girls.¹⁷⁹

Later in life Krupabai Sathianadhan wrote the rhymed poem “Social Intercourse Between Europeans and Natives”. It depicts a dark-browed Indian girl invited by a swarthy man to an English company fair, where fair European ladies treat her so ungracefully and leave the native girl filled with unease and sadness.¹⁸⁰ It is a bitter text: “While the swift whispers of ‘Bashful’ and ‘Illbred’/From dainty lips now flowed” [...] She sat bedecked a statue bright; /The *sweet* intercourse at last was o’er, /And with it a memorable sight.”¹⁸¹ The poem is included in *Miscellaneous Writings* and with the full text in the Appendix to the essay.

Grigg remembers her friend as “fair”, also a concept related to high caste and beauty: “Those who loved her still see her, through a mist of tears, stepping fearlessly onward in untrodden paths – the slight form enveloped in the graceful costume of her country, its veil drawn Madonna-wise over the well-shaped head framing her fair refined face” thus incorporated the value of fair skin in her description.

Biography. The Last Chapters and *Kamala*

As a biographer, Grigg always write with sympathy for Krupabai (when she has come of age in *Saguna*). She judges her as a sweet and humble woman who also “...became a person who loves to listen and observe, rather silent in society, like many of our own novelists”.¹⁸² But in addition, Krupabai could be lively and fun and was a blessing when invited to meet with English visiting ladies, most probably an asset for colonial hostesses.

Grigg was concerned about her friend when shortly after the last chapter of *Saguna* had appeared in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* in 1988, Krupabai gave birth to a baby girl who lived for just a few months.¹⁸³ “She was never herself again after this great loss”, her husband said, according to Grigg.¹⁸⁴ A visit together with her husband to her old home region of Bombay and Poona was meant to cheer her up. Instead she got tired and unwell, returning home “a complete invalid” to be hospitalised in Madras. She was told that the illness from which she suffered must sooner or later prove fatal and she was actually never again in good health. She would have to spend much time in the Nilgiris highland to rest and be cared for.¹⁸⁵

From the “Memoir”, it is understood that death came to the Sathianadhan family in the one year that followed after the trip to Bombay. That would be in 1889, but the year is not explicitly fixed by

¹⁷⁸ *Saguna* p.65.

¹⁷⁹ *Kamala* p.24.

¹⁸⁰ *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 96-99. The poem is included in the Appendix of the essay.

¹⁸¹ Full text in Appendix.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

¹⁸³ The last chapter of *Saguna* in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* was published in 1887

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xxvii.

¹⁸⁵ Grigg does not mention the diagnosis of tuberculosis, or consumption.

Grigg.¹⁸⁶ According to Grigg, Krupabai lost both her parents-in-law in the same year, first Anna and then W.T. Saththianadhan, to whom she had been attached since she first came to Madras to study. Krupabai published “The Story of a Conversion” in the *Christian College Magazine*, the story told to her by her Tamil father-in-law when she was still a student in Madras.¹⁸⁷ “It was followed by sketches about his wife’s life and her good work in her schools in Madras.”¹⁸⁸ Then, Krupabai began to write *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life*.

The last portion of the Hindu novel *Kamala* was written at Coonor in the Nilgiris, where Krupabai finally stayed in 1894 for health reasons, often in the company of a sister-in-law. She finished *Kamala* in “a feverish fear she might not live to complete it”, and Grigg quotes her friend’s words: “Let me show that even a simple Indian girl can do something useful.”¹⁸⁹ The author dictated some of the last chapters to her husband when she was too weak to hold a pen, and lived to see *Kamala* appear in the *Madras Christian College Magazine*, whose editors had recognised the merit of *Saguna*. *Kamala* was published in book form soon after her death and translated into Tamil.

The three last pages of the “Memoir” are about *Kamala*, Krupabai’s Hindu novel. Grigg finds *Kamala* in many ways an advance upon *Saguna*, because there is a plot, and the author has become a more experienced teller of stories. She finds herself admitted into the secrets of an Indian household, and the suffering of a young wife who works hard as the victim of constant blame in a joint family. The death of Kamala’s child is pathetically told, “reading of the death the pen had been dipped in a mother’s tears”. The “Cradle Song” “sleep, little one, sleep” is regarded as the most finished of her attempts in verse.¹⁹⁰ Even so, Grigg finds the narrative difficult to follow, especially as the sadness in the work obscures the brightness of the story which she considers caused by Krupabai’s long-lasting illness and her many personal losses. “The author has separated herself from her Christian surroundings and ethical reflections, which flowed naturally from her pen in *Saguna*” declares Grigg, but she finds a “key-note” in *Kamala*, a missionary message from the author telling her people: “There is a higher light which you have not yet discovered.”¹⁹¹ Grigg approves and finds that *Kamala* was “drawn by such a loving hand” by its author, that “she needed only to have seen the light to have recognised and absorbed it.”¹⁹²

Grigg writes that Krupabai Saththianadhan passed away in Madras August 3rd in 1894 and was buried beside her child in a cemetery in Madras.¹⁹³ Later in the “Memoir” she states that Krupabai “ended peacefully” on August 8th.¹⁹⁴ Mrs. Benson kept to the 3rd of August and that is in fact the date on the memorial stone or head stone Samuel Saththianadhan had made for his wife.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. xxvii.

¹⁸⁷ “The Story of a Conversion”, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 34-66.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. xxviii.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. xxviii.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. xxvii, the text is included in the Appendix.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. xxxiii.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. xxxii.

¹⁹³ Kent p. 186.

¹⁹⁴ Grigg wrote “on the 3rd of August” on page viii and that Krupabai “ended peacefully” in August 8th on p. xxxiv. Lokugé adopted August 8th for her Chronology in the 1998 editions.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix. Kent has a photo of the Memorial stone, placed at the Zion Church in Chintadripet, Chennai, p. 182, the photo taken by the author.

Grigg ends the “Memoir” praising her friend Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels for their exquisite description of scenery, her “painting with words”, her mastery of our language but also her delineation of character interpreting her countrywomen “to us” as no Indian writer has done before. Saththianadhan had become a great novelist in India. Grigg honours her memory, convinced that Krupabai Saththianadhan shall live on as the first of Indian novelists. Krupabai Saththianadhan’s success will fill all true daughters of India with gratitude inspiring her countrywomen to leave their prejudices behind and “to walk on fearlessly in the path of knowledge and of enlightenment in which she has led the way.”¹⁹⁶

Concluding Comments

Mukherjee dismissed the introductory texts to Krupabai Saththianadhans novels as “patronizing verbiage of both the colonial and missionary variety”. I agree with the characteristics, but I will not dismiss them as only verbiage, neither Mrs. Benson’s forewords nor Mrs. Grigg’s “Memoir”. I will summarize why, with focus on the “Memoir”.

To begin with, Grigg’s “Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan” is the only biographical text about the author and very little would be known about Krupabai’s life without Grigg’s text. It is a sympathetic portrait of the author and Samuel Saththianadhan referred to Mrs. Griggs beautiful “Memoir” for the biography of his late wife in in *Miscellaneous Writings*.¹⁹⁷ Samuel had a Memorial tablet made for his wife, “India’s first Lady Novelist”, but wrote only a few lines about how the “Notes from the Memorial meeting” extend the admiration of the humble pioneer lady who had opened the door “to us” as nobody had done before. No diary or letters are left. Thus, the “Memoir” is an important primary source of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s life, with flaws an all.

Then, Benson’s two forewords and Grigg’s “Memoir” represent one of the cultural worlds Krupabai Saththianadhan belonged to, the *colonial obliges* to which Krupabai responded with dedications and accepted invitations to meet with and entertain English ladies. Yet, she belonged to other worlds and fitted into other cultures as well, ignored by Mrs. Grigg who fulfilled her missionary imperial assignment beginning with questioning the spiritual history of India, simplifying the blessings of conversion in India and finally patronizing or ignoring Saguna’s personal experiences of discrimination in *Saguna* and hoping for a conversion in *Kamala*. Thus, Mrs. Grigg’s text contributes to a present-day reading of Krupabai Saththianadhans novels by providing her late 1900th century ‘colonial western world’ material and thus contributing to the dialogic tension in Krupabai Saththianadhan’s novels between colonial education and traditional wisdom and sensitive issues of conversion, race and caste.

Finally, Mrs. Grigg’s “Memoir” is a colonialist ‘discourse of its time’, i.e. specifically concerned with the superiority of European culture, including pseudo-scientific social Darwinism and the systems of cognition with which the Empire founded and guaranteed its colonial authority. According to Boehmer, “few nineteenth-century colonial discourses would not have borne the imprint of a race vocabulary and racial ideas.”¹⁹⁸ In my opinion, it is useful to have read a colonialist text as “The Memoir” for historical context, as says Genette, but also for an understanding of Krupabai’s writings.

¹⁹⁶ Grigg., pp. xxxiv.

¹⁹⁷ *Miscellaneous Writings*, Preface pp. v-vi

¹⁹⁸ Boehmer, p. 3.

A new edition of *Kamala* was published in 1895 by Madras Mission Society. On the cover two names are printed beside each other: Kamala Saththianadhan and Elisabeth Grigg, an example of questionable appropriation.¹⁹⁹ The edition is a contribution to what Joshi recognizes a genre of ‘late-nineteenth-century feminine social hagiography’ in which British feminists and travellers such as Mrs. E.F. Chapman, Lady of Dufferin and an Ava and others ‘excavated’ the lives of remarkable Indian women and published in the British feminine press.²⁰⁰ The hagiographies about Indian women enhanced the literary prestige and status of the hagiographer. Krupabai Saththianadhan’s *Saguna* had received attention in the British press and Mrs. Grigg referred to Queen Victoria’s appreciation of the novel in the “Memoir”. To publish the “Memoir” together with Krupabai Saththianadhan’s *Kamala* could have been tempting.

Mrs. Grigg finished the “Memoir” on the 10th of December 1894. Together with her husband she was present at the “Memorial Meeting” in Madras in January 1895, an initiative of Lady Wenlock’s to honour the late Mrs. Samuel Saththianadhan, and to consider what steps could be taken to perpetuate the memory of the gifted authoress of *Saguna* and *Kamala*.

NOTES FROM THE MEMORIAL MEETING

The notes from the “Memorial Meeting” were published as an appendix in the 1895 posthumous 2nd edition of *Saguna*. Genette does not write about such an appendix and it is not defined as a paratext, but it contributes to the colonial context of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s life and writings. The late Krupabai Saththianadhan had become a celebrity, and the pride of colonial Madras.

“A largely attended Drawing-Room Meeting was Held at the Government House at 5.30 pm, on Wednesday the 30th January 1895, under the presidency of Her Excellency Lady Wenlock.” Lady Wenlock was present at the meeting as a “guest” of honour.²⁰¹ The 36 participants represented the colonial community and society, including several Indian names and two Rajahs. Mr. and Mrs. Grigg and Mrs. Benson were present.

The notes comprise 24 pages and begin with a speech held by the President of the Municipality, the Hon’ble A. T. Arundel, starting with the reading of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s dedication to Lady Wenlock in *Kamala*. Furthermore, he has been asked by Lady Wenlock to tell the audience about the royal news from London of Queen Victoria’s appreciation of *Saguna*, the highest prize of approval possible.

The Hon’ble Arundel continued with a summary of the life and work of Krupabai Saththianadhan. He had not met the author, nor read her stories, but he used Mrs. Grigg’s Memoir and Mrs. Benson’s forewords; words of approval and acclaim. He also quoted Grigg’s critical words: Krupabai Saththianadhan’s “touches of satire, here and there, are not the straws which show the way the wind blows” said the Hon’ble Arundel.”²⁰²

Many speakers followed and addressed Krupabai Saththianadhan’s persona, as well as issues related to her work. Surgeon Sibbthorp from the Medical College presented himself as the only European who

¹⁹⁹ Saththianadhan, Krupabai, Grigg, Elisabeth I. *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* (Madras Mission Society, 1895). <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=krupabai+saththianadhan+pictures>, retrieved 2019-12-10

²⁰⁰ Joshi p.176.

²⁰¹ *Saguna* (1895), Appendix, pp. 233-247.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. xxxii.

had known Krupabai closely, as he had during her medical studies. He said he had met very few students who had the same powers as she and told the audience about her many first prizes. Furthermore, he had observed her “sweet gentle character” when she worked in the wards and appreciated the kindness with which she carried out her duties. Despite her being the first Indian lady who came to study medicine in India, this had in no way unsexed her. She was just as sweet and nice as if she had “never studied the unpleasant subjects which she had to take up in the earlier stages of the profession”. Krupabai Saththianadhan was praised in terms of being an extraordinary lady as well as a humble woman by the following speakers, who pointed out how the higher education the author had received had never made her uppish. On the contrary, education had “made her a homely, simple and unassuming lady without any conceit or pride.” Colonial administrators cited her life as testifying that education or intellectual achievement did not destroy the modesty or natural character of women. Furthermore, a Dr. Duncan pointed out that Indian women are capable of intellectual efforts, e.g. Toru Dutt and Krupabai Saththianadhan.

Krupabai Saththianadhan’s Indian background was pointed out by the educationalist Mr. Subramanian Iyer, who underlined that Krupabai was not estranged to her country women, something which manifested in her true understanding of the Hindu child-wife in *Kamala*. Her Christian faith had not failed her understanding for and support of Hindu religion. Furthermore, Mrs. Saththianadhan’s opinion on female education were just in line with his own, as were their respective efforts to promote education for Hindu girls. Mr Iyer addressed as a key issue the support needed to promote higher education for Hindu girls, with schools based on the English system of education. The Archbishop followed and spoke of how non-Christians and Christians worked well together, without mentioning any specific congregation or society. Mrs. Grigg’s husband, Mr. H. B. Grigg, payed a tribute to lady Wenlock, “Their highest value consisting in bridging the chasm between the East and the West, between the English and the Indian men and women, they reveal ‘that touch of nature that makes the world kin’.”²⁰³ Finally, decisions were made about two scholarships to honour the memory of Krupabai Saththianadhan: a scholarship for Indian female students in the Madras Medical College and also a Gold Medal for women in connection with the Madras University. Finally, the Archbishop blessed them all.

At the high-level Memorial Meeting in the Governments House, Krupabai Saththianadhan’s combination of being both an extraordinary lady novelist and a homely, simple and unassuming Christian lady and wife were praised. Her life testified that education and intellectual achievement did not destroy the modesty and natural character of a woman. Not even the study of “unpleasant subjects” had unsexed her. Why Samuel Saththianadhan was absent, and neither mentioned nor condoled during the proceedings, I do not know.

THE FINALPART OF KRUPABAI SATTHIANDHAN’S LIFE

Krupabai Saththianadhan’s last years are discussed here in order to expand her biography as an add-on to the “Memoir”, and the start is the boat trip to Bombay, most probably in 1889. The couple travelled

²⁰³A quote from William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses, speaking to Achilles says that "*One Touch of Nature Makes the Whole World Kin*". The line is quoted as exemplifying the sympathy that, once awakened, makes men feel their close relationship to each other, which was not what Ulysses meant but surely what Mr. Grigg meant.

to brighten Krupabai's life after the loss of her baby child, as Grigg tells. Krupabai wrote a 'sketch' about a scary boat trip to Bombay and how the harbour had become a Babylon but nothing about family and friends. The couple had a plan to meet with Pandita Ramabai in Poona, a meeting that would affect her in a way she described afterwards in "Pundita Ramabai and her Work".²⁰⁴

Pundita – a Meeting and a Decision

The meeting took place at the education centre for high-caste widows Pundita had organized after coming back from America. It struck Krupabai to see Pundita not in European clothes but "dressed in white in the Brahmin style, and with a fair open countenance, beaming with intelligence". Pundita's self-possession was described as overwhelming, something Krupabai had never seen in a woman before. Krupabai opened a conversation about a spiritual matter but Pundita was so bold in her statements that Krupabai felt uncomfortable, as being looked through and through, as she describes it in her sketch. Furthermore, she was shown the well-staffed centre and was impressed by the free and lively home that Pundita had created, with about 40 women who looked upon her as a mother.²⁰⁵ Krupabai thought Pundita's undertaking would have national effects as the training and free spirit seemed to prepare women for taking the lead of the emancipation of women in India.²⁰⁶ But Krupabai was very tired and was hospitalized when back in Madras.

Pundita was in her prime and had managed to create a social and public platform for herself in the United States, England and India. Pundita was a scholar, widowed, she raised a daughter, she had converted, did not mimic Western modes, she had published and she "made a difference". Krupabai could see her take part in the feminist independent movement as it grew stronger. I don't know if Krupabai was aware that in the year 1882, Pandita Ramabai gave evidence before a Governmental commission suggesting that more women should be appointed as teachers or trained in the medical field, the same conviction that was expressed in the Dufferin "Women Medical Movement".²⁰⁷

Krupabai was past her peak. Her health had been poor for a long time and she was exhausted. She returned home from Bombay only to be brought directly to hospital and to receive doctor's information that her condition was incurable. She would die if pregnant again.

Maybe she looked back on what she had achieved apart from *Saguna*. She had published articles on female education issues, e.g. "Hindu Social Customs" concluding: "India is still, as it were, a child and she can by herself accomplish very little and it is our humble opinion that England and India must work together if anything good is to be achieved at all."²⁰⁸ But Krupabai's feminist manifest as expressed in *Saguna* belonged to the past. She knew that the converted Indian reformers had to negotiate both indigenous and colonial patriarchal structures when promoting female education.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ "Pundita Ramabai and her Work", *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 92-95.

²⁰⁵ According to the history of Pandita Rambai, she came back to Poona in 1889 and opened the education centre, and I am surprised she already had the education centre housing 40 widows.

²⁰⁶ Brinks has included Krupabai Sathianadhans essay from the meeting with Pundita in the chapter about Pandita Ramabai, "Feminizing Famine, Imperial Critique", in *Anglophone Indian Women Writers 1870-1920*.

²⁰⁷ A summary of lady Dufferin's Fund for Medical Training of Women is available at <http://www.chomi.org/lady-dufferins-fund-and-medical-training-for-women-educated-in-colonial-india-1885-1920/> retrieved 20190503

²⁰⁸ *Miscellaneous Writings*, "Hindu Social Customs", pp. 25-33.

²⁰⁹ *Saguna*, p. 149.

In this unhappy situation, Krupabai made her decision to write the novel about a Hindu girl, Kamala, and began to plan it when still in hospital. She wanted to show that “also a simple Indian girl can do something important.” But her work was to be interrupted by sad family matters in the years to come.

A Heavenly Home and a Happy Day

On the word of Grigg Krupabai lost both her parents-in-law shortly after coming back from Bombay and that would be in 1889.²¹⁰ But according to Jackson’s detailed essay on the Saththianadhan family Anna Saththianadhan passed away in 1890 and her husband followed after in 1892.²¹¹ Ascension, death as the departure from earth to God and the meeting of the loved ones is described in *Saguna*.²¹² She had heard how her father died in a “glorious moment of great faith” convinced they were all to meet again in heaven. The Saththianadhan’s Christian faith was the same conviction of an afterlife with an instant reunion in heaven with those who had gone before. Expressions as “a heavenly home” and “an eternal rest” were familiar for Krupabai. She was present during her mother-in-law Anna’s last days and later wrote about how the family gathered and cared about Anna who died at home. Krupabai described how Anna passed away with the name “Jesus” on her lips.²¹³ Krupabai saw how “She had stepped into glory. It was only a step. I could almost see her pass. [...] ...before our very eyes she seemed to step from the peak into heavenly glory. [...] The sight opened in a flood of light and angels closed round her [...] but a cloud shut the whole scene from my eyes.”²¹⁴

Krupabai wrote “A Fine Sunset of Life” from Anna’s deathbed for the *Christian Patriot* and went on to a first chapter of Anna’s life-story, “The Early Days of Mrs. Anna Saththianadhan”. Both texts are included in *Miscellaneous Writings* with a comment by Samuel: “It was Krupabai’s intention to have completed this Memoir of Anna Saththianadhan, the wife of W.T. Saththianadhan, B.D., but in the meantime she became prostrate with illness and the spare strength she had she devoted to writing her Hindu Story “Kamala.””²¹⁵

W.T.’s death in 1892 was not unexpected and Krupabai finished “A short story of a Conversion” after his death, the story W.T. told her when she was a student. She pictured her father-in-law’s family, his Tamil home village and the schoolteacher who influenced the boy’s Christian faith and conversion. It is a portrait of the young man who, at the compulsory trial that followed his decision to convert, successfully fought for the right to convert but also to remain in contact with his parents. Samuel Saththianadhan contributed with a short biography of his father and husband and wife published their texts together in 1893.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ Grigg, p. xxvii.

²¹¹ Jackson, the essay “Caste, Culture and Conversion”, no page numbers, informs about Anna’s death in 1890 and W.T.’s in 1892.

²¹² *Saguna*, pp. 68-9.

²¹³ “A Fine Sunset of Life: The Closing Days of Mrs. Anna Saththianadhan”, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp.67-75. Samuel Saththianadhan comments that the “pathetic sketch” was written for *Christian Patriot* but not if it was published. The author had intended to publish a sketch covering Anna’s whole life “but could not as she fell ill herself”.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²¹⁵ *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 83.

²¹⁶ Samuel Saththianadhan, *The Rev. W. T. Saththianadhan*, a Biographical Sketch, to which is appended “The Story of a Conversion” by Krupabai Saththianadhan, Madras, printed by Samuel Saththianadhan in 1893.

Krupabai was weak and very tired at the time and from 1893 she spent most of her time in the Nilgiris for the good air in the heights, and later for care. Her sister-in-law Joanna joined her. The sketch “The Nilgiris”, told in the first person, has an autobiographical character. The narrative “I” is a tired lady who rests on a bench enjoying the scenery of the green slopes. The mountain heads are high in “the land of eternal rest”, a rest to long for. But suddenly three little girls appear singing their kindergarten songs and giving her violets, daises and pansies, flowers Krupabai dried and kept remembering a happy day.²¹⁷ The sketch ends with a twist – she managed to get home before the rain. It was a day worth living and the ‘lady’ had some writing to do.

The Closing Months and Samuel Sathianadhan

The final months of Krupabai’s life are described in short by Samuel Sathianadhan in a note to the Appendix in *Miscellaneous Writings* in 1896.²¹⁸ He relied on Grigg’s “beautiful Memorial” for biography. Krupabai and her sister-in-law Joanna Sathianadhan were staying in Coonor in the summer 1894. Joanna was nursing Krupabai who was bedridden. Three weeks after their return to Madras Joanna was taken ill with typhoid and died after two weeks. Three days later, on August 3rd, Krupabai “was called to her rest” as expressed on the memorial stone Samuel had made to her honour, “India’s First Lady Novelist”. On the tablet one can read that his beloved late wife had an “...insight of the Divine significance of things” and a with the end “Oh the earth to me is holy/Oh the other world is bright.”

Samuel Sathianadhan was an experienced writer but never sentimental. For sentiment he included a “Memorial poem” in the appendix to *Miscellaneous Writings*, written by Mr. L.C. Williams, a friend of the family. Williams had spent time in Coonor and knew and remembered the two ‘sisters’ Joanna and Krupabai. Williams pictured a family reunion in the “heavenly home” with their W. T., Anna, Joanna and Krupabai Sathianadhan and Krupabai’s baby child:] Arm in arm once more they stand/Not on Coonoor’s airy heights/But on the golden mount of Heaven/ Encircled by our Saviour’s love/Amid the pure angelic host/With their father and mother gone before/And the little Cherub fair.”

²¹⁹

In November 1894 Samuel published the *History of the Education in the Madras Presidency* and wrote in the foreword that the work that had been “interrupted by serious domestic calamities”, i.e. the period in which he lost his parents, his sister and his wife.²²⁰ In 1889 Samuel Sathianadhan married a young woman with a B.A. from the Madras University who changed her first name to “Kamala” according to a Hindu marriage tradition.

²¹⁷ “Kindergartens”, pre-school educational centres were opened in Germany and the United States in the middle of the 19th century and the German word was used in English. “The Nilgiris”, *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 96-99.

²¹⁸ *Miscellaneous Writings*, Appendix A, p. 112.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-114.

²²⁰ Samuel Sathianadhan, Foreword in *History of the Education in the Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1894), <https://archive.org/details/historyofeducati00sattuoft/page/n3>, retrieved 2019-03-15.

THE HISTORY OF KRUPABAI SATTHIANADHAN'S NOVELS

PUBLICATION CHRONOLOGY

Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life appeared in instalments in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* 1887-88. The first edition of *Saguna* as a book by “Mrs. S. Satthianadhan” was published in 1892 by Madras Srinivasa Varadachari & Co and the volume is, as mentioned before, no longer retrievable. The 2nd edition of *Saguna* appeared posthumously early in 1895, by the same Madras publishing company. *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* was serialized in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* 1883-1894 and *Kamala* was published posthumously in 1894 by “Mrs. S. Satthianadhan, the author of *Saguna*” by Madras Srinivasa Varadachari & Co. Appendix B in *Miscellaneous Writings* include excerpts of dated reviews on the books.²²¹

Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life (1894) has sometimes been understood as Krupabai Satthianadhan's first novel and the 2nd edition of *Saguna* (1895) thus as her second. This misunderstanding occurs in texts by Jackson (1999), Kent (2004), de Souza (2005) and Brinks (2013), most possibly due to use of Lokugé's chronology in the 1998 editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala* with 1894 the publication year for *Kamala* and 1895 for *Saguna*.²²² The first edition of *Saguna* is not mentioned. Joshi is clear: “Of the two novels she wrote *Saguna* appeared first”.²²³ A reliable chronology and a correction of the unfortunate misunderstanding that *Kamala* was Krupabai Satthianadhan's first novel, an error if the 2nd edition of *Saguna* (1895) is introduced as the first one and in addition placed after *Kamala* (1894) in a chronology. Flaws and inconsistencies are expected in a historical material, but in this case, it is essential to know that Krupabai Satthianadhan wrote her Christian autobiographical novel *Saguna* as her first novel, praised as a “colonial civilisation success”, and that her Hindu novel *Kamala. A Story of Hindu Life* was published posthumously.

Saguna and *Kamala* were printed twice the usual print runs of other fiction titles of the period and were translated into the old Tamil language and other Indian vernaculars and European languages.²²⁴ Yet, Satthianadhan's novels were soon forgotten. A period of oblivion and neglect followed the colonial success of the novels, but a postcolonial revival occurred in the 1990s and I continue this essay with comments on this process.²²⁵

SUCCESS, NEGLECT AND REVIVAL

Krupabai Satthianadhan was a successful author. Her autobiographical *Saguna* was praised for authenticity in reviews in the British-Indian press as it was written by an Indian woman and not by a

²²¹ *Miscellaneous Writings*, Appendix B.

²²² Lokugé, the 1998 Oxford India Paperback editions and reprints of *Saguna* and *Kamala*, with new titles: *Saguna. The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* and *Kamala. The History of a Hindu Child-Bride*.

²²³ Joshi, p. 177.

²²⁴ Joshi, p. 199.

²²⁵ Several editions of Krupabai Satthianadhan's novels exist today, accessible over the internet, see <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=krupabai+satthianadhan+pictures>, retrieved 2019-05-06.

foreigner.²²⁶ In addition, *Saguna* was considered a validation of English ladies' successful cultural and reformist influence in the colony and her memory was honoured at the Memorial Meeting arranged by the Governor's wife, lady Wenlock. Ladies from the colony wrote forewords and a "Memorial" to her honour. Krupabai Satthianadhan's genuine knowledge of Hindu life was acknowledged when her Hindu novel *Kamala* appeared in 1894 and the Madras daily, *The Hindu*, emphasized that her Christian faith had not darkened her understanding of Hindu religion. In spite of this, a colonial success and an Indian anglophone lady novelist did not belong within the movement for nationalism. *The Indian National Congress Party* was founded in 1895, and after the turn of the century the political movement for independence intensified making "the woman question" secondary during the struggle for home-rule. Hence, novels in English by Indian authors were considered supporting imperial rule. In contrast, a novel in the vernacular tongue could be considered as a vehicle of anti-colonial political opposition.²²⁷

In retrospect, the historian Partha Chatterjee argued that women's reform issues were neglected during the struggle for independence.²²⁸ A "new" woman, written without capitals, may acquire some education but this must not jeopardise her place at home, a place that should be untouched by imperial power and legislation. She would have no need of knowing English, a language not spoken at home. Within the nationalist ideology gender was regarded as a dichotomy with two species of culture, dividing the home and the world into two separate entities. The profane world was the domain of the male, while the home should stay unaffected by profane activities, with the woman as its representative. No aspect of colonisation should be allowed to enter this inner sanctum.

In this context, there was no place for a Christian author from Madras such as Krupabai Satthianadhan. Her writings were neglected for several reasons: it was in the language of the coloniser, in support of female education in English, she was of Christian faith opposing the Hindu joint family system. The author's opinion "that England and India must work together if anything good is to be achieved at all", as she put it in the article "Hindu Social Custom", was outdated quite early in the movement for independence. Even so, there were exceptions. According to *Women Writing in India*, women who wrote in the vernacular languages "broke out of the programmatic moulds" at times.²²⁹ A few strong anglophone Indian women writers were also heard before and after Independence, e.g. the convert and reformist Pandita Ramabai and others.²³⁰

The Indian English Novel and the Postcolonial Revival

Traditional Indian literary scholarship focused on the investigation and interpretation of the impressive Sanskrit heritage and Tamil scriptures.²³¹ With the import of English novels and the colonial interest to indigenize this Western genre, novel writing was established in the Indian vernacular languages from the end of the 19th century. When in the 1930s and 1940s the English

²²⁶ Joshi, p. 177.

²²⁷ Mukherjee, "Beginnings of the Indian Novel" in *A History of Indian Literature in English*, 2003.

²²⁸ Chatterjee, p. 249. Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question" in *Recasting Women. Essays in Colonial History* (Kali for Women, New Delhi 1989, eds. Kumkum Sangari & Sudesh Vaid), pp. 233-253.

²²⁹ E.g. Lakshmi Bai Tilak, *Women Writing in India*, vol. 1, pp. 309-322.

²³⁰ Brinks, , *Anglophone Indian Women Writers, 1870-1920*.

²³¹ Ashcroft et al., pp. 116-22.

language became a unifying force in the struggle for independence of India and the acceptance of English was propagated. Authors were encouraged to use English to support Gandhi's non-violent movement for home-rule, Swaraj. Three anglophone authors published in the 1930s: R.K. Narayan wrote about 'ordinary people' in the fictional town Malgudi, and Mulk Raj Anand wrote *Untouchable* about the sweeper Bakha and his sister, Raja Rao, actually francophone, published *Kanthapura* picturing how a village step by step participated in the movement for Gandhi, loosing lives while staying true to the devotion of their local goddess. Works of great value, classics today, were first printed in England.²³² After Independence in 1947, the Indian constitution was accepted in 1950, and Hindi was declared to be the official language of the union. English remained an official language, initially meant for a period of transition but English is still a language for official use in India. "The language question" – for authors to write in a vernacular or in English – was a hot topic for a long time also after Independence. The subject included both choice of language for literature, and how the characteristics of epic Indian literature and traditional narrative structure could be expressed in English.

The term 'postcolonial' is used to cover "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" according to the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*.²³³ The term is understood in the same way by Boehmer who defines "postcolonial literature" as "criticism which critically scrutinises the colonial relationship."²³⁴ Since the 1980s the study of and criticism of Anglo-Indian literature is regarded "as one of the most fascinating bodies of work to have been produced out of the colonial encounter" according to Ashcroft and colleagues.²³⁵ Boehmer completes by introducing feminist concepts to literary studies, concepts which have strong parallels with postcolonial theory.²³⁶ *The Empire Writes Back* quotes from an interview with Rushdie on language and the narrative structure of *Midnight's Children* published in 1985.²³⁷ Rushdie reminded the interviewer of "the shape of the oral narrative, which goes in great swoops, in spirals or in loops, and it does not go from the beginning to the middle and to the end." Ashcroft continues with examples of "building tale within tale and circling back and through" with examples of Indian oral story telling in English.

From the 1970s Indo-Anglian literature was investigated by Mukherjee and other Indian scholars. Tharu's writings on imperialism and the colonised native Indian woman mark the beginnings of feminist postcolonial Indian criticism.²³⁸ Lalita's and Tharu's editing of the anthology *Women Writing in India* in 1991 was a postcolonial construction of a national literary history of women's writings in India. Krupabai Sathianadhan is represented by a piece from *Saguna*, with an argument about discrimination the girl had with her English teachers, a piece that kindled the interest for her novels.²³⁹ Thus, with feminist postcolonial criticism, the time had come for the revival of Krupabai

²³² R.K. Narayan *Swami and friends* (1935), Mulk Raj Anand *Untouchable* (1935) Raja Rao *Kanthapura* (1938).

²³³ Ashcroft et al., p.3.

²³⁴ Boehmer, p.3.

²³⁵ Ashcroft et al., p. 123.

²³⁶ Boehmer, pp. 216-18.

²³⁷ Ashcroft et al., 181-2.

²³⁸ Tharu, Susie Tharu, "Tracing Savitri's Pedigree: Victorian Racism and the Image of Women in Indo-Anglian Literature", 1989.

²³⁹ *Women Writing in India*, vol. 1, pp. 275-81.

Satthianadhan's novels and to position Krupabai Satthianadhan in the discussion of genre.²⁴⁰ Mukherjee and others paved the way for literary criticism on the Indian novel in English, looking back in time investigating the very beginning of anglophone Indian writing, Mukherjee with special regard to the early anglophone Indian women writers.²⁴¹ Unfortunately, Krupabai Satthianadhan's novels were not more on sale and some copies were lost in damp and dust in libraries.

The 1998 editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala*

In 1998 Krupabai Satthianadhan's novels became available in the series Oxford India Paperbacks. The editor Chandani Lokugé had changed and gendered the titles into *Saguna. The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman* (published as a "Classic Reissue") and *Kamala. The History of a Hindu Child-Bride*. The editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala* are reliable reprints and thanks to the 1998 editions one can find and read Krupabai Satthianadhan's novels today.²⁴² The new editions do not include the original introductions or other appendages but Lokugé's own introductions, chronology, references in footnotes, explanatory endnotes and a short bibliography.

It is out of the scope of this essay to analyse Lokugé's introductions to Krupabai Satthianadhan's novels. I question, however, Lokugé's genre depiction "New Woman writing" in her introduction to *Saguna*, "a genre that valued women as educated and self-reliant individuals and active participants in domestic and public life".²⁴³ A "New Woman" genre in India in place by the 1880s would be an emergence of the concept a decade before the popularization of the term in Britain, a contrast to Chatterjee's historical understanding of women's reform issues at the time. To investigate the question of opinions regarding womanliness, I have explored Logan's review of *The Indian Ladies' Magazine* for articles and fiction during 1901-1918. ILM welcomed contemporary women's writing, both creative and non-fictional journalism.²⁴⁴ Logan's chapter, "ILM and the Indian Woman Question" includes aspects on the "Indian Women Question". Opinions varied from a timely synthesis of an Indian Angel-in-the-House domestic ideology to social responsibility, but always with the woman as 'wife and widow' in focus. No "New Woman" genre or figure existed or was established in ILM during the first two decades after Krupabai Satthianadhan's death.²⁴⁵ In addition, the collection *Women Writing in India*, which is on Lokugé's list of related literature, does not include the concept "New Woman" in the outline of "Literature of the Reform and Nationalist Movement."²⁴⁶ Joshi takes the issue further, however, with a discussion of "New Woman" writing in Britain, Norway and Canada, but returns to Krupabai Satthianadhan and her articulated description of her conditions in *Saguna*. Joshi questions about how Krupabai Satthianadhan responded to the British colonial writings of Indian issues and 'colonial oblige' in India.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ *Genres and Their Problems. Theoretical and Historical Perspectives*, (eds.) Beata Agrell, Ingela Nilsson, Margareta Petersson, "The Novel from an Intercultural Perspective" (Abstract), (Daidalos, Göteborg, 2003) p.128.

²⁴¹ Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality. The Novel and Society in India*. (Oxford, 1985).

²⁴² See note 14.

²⁴³ Lokugé's "Introduction" to *Saguna*, p. 1, note 1, source the historian Geraldine Forbes' *Women in modern India* (Cambridge UP, 1996) pp. 28-30, 64-5, unmentioned in the Bibliography.

²⁴⁴ Logan, "ILM and the Indian Woman Question", chapter six in *The Ladies' Magazine, From Raj to Swaraj*. pp. 152-74.

²⁴⁵ Logan p. xvii.

²⁴⁶ "Literature of the Reform and Nationalist Movement", *Women Writing in India*, vol. 1, pp. 145-186.

²⁴⁷ Joshi *In Another Country*, pp. 172-200.

Certain flaws in the 1998 editions have been mentioned before and belong to Grigg's "Memoir": 3.g. the author's death date on August 8th and not 3rd. *Saguna* appears in the chronology in 1895 thus after *Kamala* from 1894. Lokugé also states that the Saththianadhan family belonged to an 'almost negligible part of the society' and was distanced from their own community and that the author did not write in the "Vedic tradition".²⁴⁸ Unfortunately, and as brought up before, a thesis by Lokugé mentioned in the acknowledgements to the 1998 editions of Krupabai Saththianadhan's novels has not been retrievable.²⁴⁹ If the author's thesis had been found that could have contributed to a discussion of a more reliable introduction to Krupabai Saththianadhan's life and authorship.

Literary Research and Discussion After the 1998 Editions

The academic discussion about Krupabai Saththianadhan's writings after the revival in *Women Writing in India* was continued by Priya Joshi and Meenakshi Mukherjee and included readings of the original editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala*. Joshi provided photocopies and both scholars disliked the editions as the novels were 'sandwiched' between long introductions in the beginning and pages with eulogistic excerpts from reviews quoted at the end.²⁵⁰ Mukherjee meant the editions were like "reading instructions" combined with "correct opinions". Thus, she dismissed them while introducing Krupabai Saththianadhan as an indigenous Indian writer.²⁵¹ Joshi *In Another Country* provides information about the history of how the English novel was exported to India and became popular, and a biography of Krupabai Saththianadhan recognizing Mrs. Grigg as the main biographer of the author. She underlines that Saththianadhan was repeatedly introduced as 'being the first lady' to write a novel in English but in spite of that, her novels had not been analysed and discussed in context. The authors of the old hagiographies but also recent feminist historians as e.g. Burton have ignored the response of Indian women's writing to the colonial civilising mission.²⁵² In her analysis of *Saguna* Joshi points out how Saththianadhan both reveals and obliquely critiques her larger social world including both caste rules and Christian and missionary social practices. Joshi also writes about and presents the positive response to Saththianadhan's novels in both English-educated Indian and British newspapers and magazines.²⁵³ Joshi's analysis of Saththianadhan's novels are 'must-reading' and the bibliography is first-rate. Furthermore, I want to emphasize Joshi's information about the first edition of *Saguna* as a book from 1892.²⁵⁴

Jackson, a senior lecturer in religious studies, uses *Kamala* as an introduction to a lecture on the Christian Tamil Saththianadhan family, Christian mission, caste and culture in south India. Jackson describes how Krupabai Saththianadhan in her first novel *Kamala, A Story of Hindu Life* (1894) "depicts her heroine, the only child of a Brahman sannayasi and recluse and a runaway Brahman heiress."²⁵⁵ Jackson points out that *Kamala* includes aspects and scenes from the author's life: "Krupabai, telling a story in which the heroine shares some traits with her own mother, a Marathi

²⁴⁸ Lokugé's Introduction to *Saguna*, p. 12.

²⁴⁹ See note 24.

²⁵⁰ Joshi, p. 177.

²⁵¹ Mukherjee, "Ambiguous Discourse", *A Perishable Empire*, pp. 70-71.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

²⁵⁴ Joshi, p.177.

²⁵⁵ Jackson, Eleanor, "Caste, Culture and Conversion from the Perspective of an Indian Christian Family based in Madras 1863-1906" (1999).

Brahman convert, and when losing her child, relives Krupabai's own anguish, nevertheless does not resolve the characters' dilemmas by conversion." Jackson provides a sympathetic understanding of Krupabai Saththianadhan's experience of Hindu life, and detailed information about the influential Tamil Christian Saththianadhan family.

Kent investigates Krupabai Saththianadhan's subject conversion including "The Story of a Conversion" about W.T. Saththianadhan, the inserted conversion story about her parents in *Saguna* and young Saguna's own life as a second generation convert.²⁵⁶ She provides detailed knowledge on the complex subject of Christian conversion in India and how 'God's light and presence' and prayer are considered together with gender and caste issues in *Saguna*. Both Jackson and Kent have expertise in Christian mission in India and provide context for Krupabai Saththianadhan's writings about conversion.

Brinks uses the 1998 edition of *Kamala* but with the original title of the novel, *Kamala. A Story of a Hindu Life*, which is considered the author's first fictional novel.²⁵⁷ Brinks considers *Kamala* as Saththianadhan's potential part of a public debate about the Age of Consent Law from 1891, in which the age was raised from 10 to 12 years. Intercourse with an unmarried or married girl under 12 was considered rape and punishable with imprisonment.²⁵⁸ *Kamala* appeared three years after the passage of the act and Brinks interprets the story of the child-wife *Kamala* and the extended family system as the author's contribution to the debate about the law and as a statement of non-acceptance of the child-marriage institution.²⁵⁹ Brinks argues that Saththianadhan's article "Female Education", published in *Indian Magazine*, was presumably published as part of the debate about the law. The article, however, begins with a Vedic female model and continues to focus on female education and the educated wife domestic ideal. In Samuel Saththianadhan's "Preface" to *Miscellaneous Writings* there is no notion of specific reform activities related to legislation. Furthermore, the author's last years were devoted to family matters and writing *Kamala* in spite of her serious illness, but the context and impact of her articles on the "female education" has not been investigated.

Krupabai Saththianadhan's Novels in the Indigenous Context

Meenakshi Mukherjee relates in the essay "Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Saththianadhan" how the author's name first appeared in R.K. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indo-Anglian Literature* 1st edition in 1943 and how his biographical entries were carried over from one literary history to another without any scholarly attempts to analyse Saththianadhan's novels.²⁶⁰ The "witty and ironic" piece from *Saguna* in *Women Writing in India* "brought the author's writing alive" for herself. When Mukherjee received the photocopies of the 19th century editions of *Saguna* and the *Kamala* from Priya Joshi at Berkeley she disliked the physical set-up of the two novels with Mrs. Benson and Mrs. Grigg in the beginning and the excerpts of eulogistic reviews at the end.²⁶¹ That Queen Victoria should have read *Saguna* and liked it so well that she wanted to read more by the author was seen as

²⁵⁶ Kent, pp. 180-90.

²⁵⁷ Brinks, "Gendered Spaces and Conjugal Reform in Krupabai Saththianadhan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life*, pp. 66-72. Brinks has adopted Lokugé's presentation of the Saththianadhan family's 'uneasy' situation in Madras.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁶⁰ Mukherjee "Ambiguous Discourse: The Novels of Krupa Saththianadhan", in *The Perishable Empire. Essays on Indian Writing in English*, p. 70.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

the highest possible plaudit for the young Indian woman writer and was a statement that was repeated in the reviews. When Mukherjee had 'cut through' the two novels' "patronizing verbiage of the colonial as well as the missionary variety" she decided against reading the novels in the standard manner of praising the authentic glimpses into 'native' life. That is why she dismissed the introductory texts and choose to read Sathianadhan as one among other early Indian writers and thus introducing her novels into an indigenous context in the essay "Ambiguous Discourse. The Novels of Krupa Sathianadhan". Mukherjee began, however, summarizing *Saguna* and *Kamala* as "given the century of inaccessibility, familiarity of the texts cannot be presupposed."²⁶² She used some information in Grigg's "Memoir" about the 'where and when' of Krupabai Sathianadhan's life and writings.

Mukherjee observed that despite the difference in social milieu in the Christian novel *Saguna* and the Hindu, largely brahman *Kamala* there is a common theme: "the growing into motherhood of two girls who feel trapped in the standard mould of domesticity", both girls who loved books.²⁶³ Mukherjee found no overt extolling of the liberatory potential of Christianity, nor condemnation of the traditional Hindu way of life, in spite of the author's awareness of gender and caste iniquity. She read the 1998 editions of *Saguna* and *Kamala* while preparing her manuscript and comments on Lokugé's reading of the novels as "one propagating Christianity and the western model of individualism for women in India, the other exposing the gender exploitation intrinsic to Hindu society".²⁶⁴ Mukherjee did not find an overt liberatory potential of Christianity in *Saguna* nor a condemnation of the Hindu traditional way of life in *Kamala* and finds Lokugé's point of view 'schematic':

This simple schematic elides the dialogic tension set up in both the novels between colonial education and traditional wisdom, and between individual agency and the power of community which can be alternatively nurturing or claustrophobic. The rites and rituals, myths and legends that permeate rural life in Hindu communities, instead of being rejected as superstitious, are described in a language evocative enough to contain anticipatory echoes of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*.²⁶⁵

Mukherjee finds paradoxes and contradictions in the novels, e.g. Bhasker's words in *Saguna* with claim to brahmanhood by a devout Christian and the blue-print of an ideal womanhood he envisages for his sister, investing Indianness with Christian qualities.²⁶⁶ *Saguna* is also a nationalist blaming young people reading English novels and who use "ma" and "pa" for their parents while she herself devours English poetry and prose and dislikes books in the vernaculars. *Saguna* changed her teen-age feminist opinion against marriage while the widowed *Kamala* abstained from remarriage and remained with her family as a widow. *Kamala* invites to multiple interpretations. p. 87 Mukherjee describes the tension in Krupabai Sathianadhans two novels and finds a connecting link in passages of village life and country and nature in both novels, with legends and sagas, understood as "scenery painted with words" by English readers.²⁶⁷ She reads Sathianadhan's texts against the grain and finds that the

²⁶² Ibid., p. 71.

²⁶³ Ibid., pp. 71-73.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p.73.

²⁶⁵ Ibid p. 73.

²⁶⁶ Bhaskar, p. 84.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-5.

novels can generate multiple interpretations, different ways of reading which may not be contained in the “simple binary grids through which nineteenth-century India has generally been studied.”²⁶⁸

Mukherjee placed Krupabai Sathianadhan in three indigenous contexts: as an early Indian novelist to be seen in relation to writers in other Indian languages; as a woman writer of what may well be the first autobiography written in India and as the first Indian woman to write an autobiography for publication. Autobiography was not a genre in the traditional literary repertoire in 19th century India. In addition, a spiritual autobiography was a subgenre virtually unknown in Hindu literary practice, especially as compared with the genealogy of spiritual autobiography in the Western tradition. The inserted story about Saguna’s parents’ conversion in *Saguna* is a rare document in India, as young Radha is part of the story. Thus, Mukherjee considers *Saguna. A Story of Native Christian Life* a ‘spiritual autobiography’ and the first Indian conversion story including the story of a child-wife.²⁶⁹

Few women in India during the 19th century had experience of assuming a place in anglophone public life when Krupabai Sathianadhan published *Saguna*. Mukherjee mentions two Indian women writing about their lives but without intention to publish, both included in *Women Writing in India*. Rassundari Devi (1810-?) was a high caste Bengali Hindu child-wife and mother of eleven who learnt to read in secrecy and later to write. She jotted down the story of her restricted life in bits and pieces on the dark kitchen wall and later *Amar Joban* in retrospection. The autobiography was published in 1876 and translated into English as *My Life* in 1999.²⁷⁰ Lakshmi Tilak (1868-1936) wrote about her life in Marathi, a story of the tumult in her married family life with the poet Tilak, his conversion and later also her own conversion to Christianity, and finally how she managed a new life when widowed. Lakshmi Tilak’s book is thus a first-person female account of conversion. Her autobiography *Smruti Chitre* was published in 1876, serialized in a Marathi weekly in the 1930s and published in a truncated English version in the 1930s, entitled *I Follow After*.²⁷¹ Mukherjee’s essay “Women and Christianity” includes a comparative analysis of female conversion and marriage in *Saguna* and *I Follow After*.²⁷² A postscript to the chapter includes Pandita Ramabai Saraswati and her unusual life and her conversion story *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* published in 1907, a text Mukherjee regarded made readers aware of “...how the practice of Christianity in India during the British rule was fraught with subtle and unresolved tensions relating to gender, race, and colonial hierarchy.” Finally, Mukherjee depicts *Saguna* as the first bildungsroman by an Indian author, a history of coming-of-age, including the story of the protagonist’s Christian faith and doubts leading to a final spiritual crisis and its solution followed by a happy end.

Narrative Structure and Authorial Self-representation

The narrative structure in *Saguna* is not organised according to a coherent chronological timeline and the story about Saguna’s parents’ conversion is inserted in Krupabai Sathianadhan’s autobiographical writing. The story is told in bits and pieces, with intermingling voices and a first-person narrator who “in my own way” distances herself from the subject, “the simple Indian girl”. Lokugé found that the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁶⁹ Mukherjee, “Women and Christianity”, in *Elusive Terrain*, pp. 107-126.

²⁷⁰ Rassundari Devi(1810-?) in *Women Writing in India*, vol 1, pp. 190-202.

²⁷¹ Tilak, Lakshmi Bai. *I follow after: An Autobiography*. Delhi: OUP, <http://www.ctla.llc.ed.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Summary-of-LakshmiBais-autobiography.pdf> retrieved 2019-12-02.

1998. The author is included in *Women Writing in India*, vol 1, pp. 309-322.

²⁷² Mukherjee, “Women and Christianity”, pp. 124.

narrative was a “literary masterpiece of its time” with a “confluence of the ancient Indian cyclic narrative and the recently acquired linear western tradition. The story ‘spirals and loops’, framing “tale within tale” as in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. Joshi also found the text put together with “a variety of genres in both western and eastern literary traditions.”²⁷³

The narrative structure is also similar to Estelle Jelinek’s description of European women’s early autobiographies. Common features are narratives with smaller units and fragments, without a linear chronology, as well as indirect storytelling and mixed narrative voices.²⁷⁴ Women’s early autobiographical writing in India in the late nineteenth century is certainly not included in the text by Jelinek but Sathianadhan’s *Saguna* fits into Jelinek’s descriptions of “female” narrative structure. She also wrote from the private sphere of close relations, fundamental in early female autobiographical writing.

Sathianadhan’s textual self-representation in *Saguna* includes the contradiction between her humble projected textual self-image – a simple Indian girl – and the mere fact that she is not at all simple but an exceptional person. The narrator refers to herself in both the first and third person and the “simple Indian girl” bridges a cultural gender-gap with her use of English and the intention to present “a new order of things which at the present time is spreading its influence to a greater and lesser extent all over her native land”.²⁷⁵ It is an extraordinary undertaking by a young woman writer.

In the notes from the “Memorial Meeting”, Krupabai Sathianadhan was ambiguously respected. She was praised as a literary pioneer, but described as a homely, simple and unassuming lady without any conceit and pride. Her life testified that neither education and intellectual achievement nor the success of *Saguna* and *Kamala* destroyed the modesty or natural character of women, Christian or Hindu. She was also an ideal Christian wife, maybe with greater impact when writing from home than she would have had as a physician. Krupabai Sathianadhan, the pioneer lady author who “opened a door” to Indian women with *Saguna* and *Kamala* was appreciated as a humble Christian woman.

CONCLUSION

Meenakshi Mukherjee dismissed the forewords to the original editions of Krupabai Sathianadhan’s novels *Saguna* and *Kamala* as ‘patronizing verbiage in both the colonial and missionary variety’. Based on the available original editions of *Saguna* (2nd ed., 1895) and *Kamala* (1st ed., 1894), both posthumous, this essay set out to investigate how the dismissed introductions can be read as ‘paratexts’ according to Gérard Genette’s theories. The essay explores how the authors of the paratexts addressed and introduced the readers to the narratives and how they provided historical context. The authors of the forewords, Mrs. Benson and Mrs. Grigg, were ladies with authority in the colony, and they praised the late Sathianadhan as the first Indian lady novelist, the beauty of her use of the English language and the authenticity of her novels as compared to writings about Indian women written by English authors.

²⁷³ Lokugé, “Introduction”, *Saguna, The First Autobiographical Novel in English by an Indian Woman*, 1998, p. 1, note 2.

²⁷⁴ Estelle Jelinek, *Women’s Autography*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986).

²⁷⁵ *Saguna*, p. 19.

In the “Memoir of Krupabai Saththianadhan” Grigg addresses her readers as “us”. She writes a sympathetic portrait and a biography of her friend Krupabai, including their encounters. Her reading of readings of *Saguna* and *Kamala*, however, overshadowed the narratives by Grigg’s consistent missionary message to her readers. Her comments to *Saguna* exclude or gloss over sensitive issues in the narrative such as caste, racism and *Saguna*’s scepticism towards the English. Grigg’s racial vocabulary and her interpretation of Saththianadhan’s narratives were ‘trigger points’ this essay set out to investigate through rereading Saththianadhan’s novels for issues Grigg ignored or simplified. To conclude, the “Memoir” is a colonialist ‘discourse of its time’, i.e. a discourse specifically concerned with the superiority of European Christian culture, including pseudo-scientific social Darwinism and the imprint of a race vocabulary and racial ideas. Thus, the “Memoir” provides historical context to Saththianadhan’s novels, but is also the primary source of Saththianadhan’s biography, and little would be known about the author’s life and writings without the “Memoir”. The essay provides an ad-on reconstruction of Saththianadhan’s last years and work.

Krupabai Saththianadhan was a success for the colonial Christian society in Madras, and her novels were translated into Tamil and other vernaculars but were soon forgotten during the struggle for independence in India when the woman’s question was put on hold. Her novels were rediscovered by feminist postcolonial scholars and an excerpt published in *Women Writing in India* in 1991 inspired Mukherjee to introduce the author in the indigenous context and with special regard to her conversion stories. The 1998 reprints of *Saguna* and *Kamala*, edited by Chandani Lokugé, made the novels available again, with new subtitles and introductions. This essay intends to remedy a few flaws in Saththianadhan’s biography and the unfortunate misunderstanding that *Kamala* was Krupabai Saththianadhan’s first novel, an error if the 2nd edition of *Saguna* (1895) is introduced as the first one and in addition placed after *Kamala* (1894) in a chronology.

In the indigenous perspective outlined by Mukherjee in her introductions to Saththianadhan’s novels a dialogical tension is set up between the author’s colonial education and gender, race and caste issues and her familiarity with Hindu traditions, myths and legends. This essay will argue that issues which were ignored or glossed over in Grigg’s “Memoir” belong to the essence quality in the two novels as recognized by Mukherjee but that Grigg and Benson provide historical context to the colonial time and surroundings of Krupabai Saththianadhan’s pioneer authorship.

POSTSCRIPT

Krupabai Saththianadhan died young, an Indian Christian woman with hopes of an instant reunion with her loved ones in heaven. She wrote a proud feminist manifest in her early teens but changed her plans and married Samuel Saththianadhan in a companionate Christian marriage but remained a pioneer. Her novels, short stories and sketches provide textual pleasure, and the two poems in the Appendix belong to the issues discussed in the essay.

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APPENDIX

The poem “Social Intercourse Between Europeans and Natives”

Cradle Song in *Kamala*

The Memorial Stone

Social Intercourse Between Europeans and Natives

108

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS.

Angels their wings fold,
 Their eager breaths hold,
 As they view the peace untold,
 The hushed calm of earth and sky.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE BETWEEN
 EUROPEANS AND NATIVES.

It was an English company fair

That sat o'er the green,
 In the balmy evening air,
 Enjoying the tropic scene.

A dark-browed Indian girl was brought,
 Here by a swarthy lad,
 Modest her mien and wonder-fraught,
 Her downcast eyes so sad.

Alarm'd then the ladies grew,
 And their skirts around them drew,
 Asking each of other what it means.
 "Social intercourse! I ween,"

A fair one promptly replied.

And 'Oh!' was exclaimed all around;

And each with indifference vied

To show her proper ground.

Then bewildered a seat she takes,

The last that she can find;

With inward tremblings the hand she shakes
 Of her hostess kind.

Then ominous whispers ran,

Which faintly around were heard;

SYMPATHY WITH THE SORROWING. 109

And many a comment behind the fan,
 In each other's ear was poured.

One, bolder, the girl now questioned straight

As to her family and name;

The august assemblage her answer wait,

But answer none did she frame.

To move her lips so sore afraid,

Sat the damsel awed:

Whiletheswiftwhispers of 'Bashful' and 'Illbred'^{of}
 From dainty lips now flowed.

Some a slight sneer surprised

And seemed unconcerned;

And some by the farce resistless oppressed,

Their heads in haste they turned.

Thus for a weary hour and more,

She sat bedecked a statue bright;

The *sweet* intercourse at last was o'er,

And with it a memorable sight.

SYMPATHY WITH THE SORROWING.

LoRD, dry the bereft orphans' tears!

Breathe Thy peace and allay their fears!

To Thee alone they look on high,

In their sore grief do Thou draw nigh!

Low in the dust they have consigned

The dearest of parents, and resigned,

With tearful eyes and folded hands,

Before Thy merciful throne they stand.

Cradle Song in *Kamala*

111

THE CRADLE SONG IN "KAMALA."

With their wings they shade thee,
Gently fan thy face,
Sleep, little one, sleep.

Light upon thine eyelids,
Falls their kiss divine,
Lip to lip they mingle
Spirit, sweet, with thine,
Sleep, little one, sleep.

Never yet so lovely,
Luscious on the bough,
Cluster of wild berry,
As my babe art thou,
Sleep, little one, sleep.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS.

110

Nearer heaven, nearer death,
With a veil parting, a mere breath
Rending the seen and the unseen life—
The spirits' home, the end of strife.

The dream of eternity spreads wide!
Sorrowing and alone, in Thy bosom hide
Aching hearts and weeping eye—
Soothe, O Lord, and hear their cry.

Grant them calm, undisturb'd peace;
From cares and troubles, sweet release;
So resting and trusting in Thee they find
Balm for suffering of every kind.

THE CRADLE SONG IN "KAMALA."

Golden is thy cradle,
Wide thy father's sway,
Gently slumber sweet one,
Harm is far away.
Sleep, little one, sleep.

Bending o'er thy cradle,
All to thee unknown,
Kindly spirits hover,
Seen by Heaven alone.
Sleep, little one, sleep,

Guardians of thy slumber
Of no earthly race,

The Memorial Stone

