



A LITERARY REVIEW: SUDHA MURTHY'S NOVELS EMPOWERING WOMEN

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Abstract:

Many Indian novelists tried to expose the real picture of Indian Society and the true condition of women. We have experienced that Indian novels depicted each and every aspect of human life. We know how some of these novels revealed the struggle of Indian women to create their own identity, position and status in their house as well as in the society. There are several English novels that reveal the real condition of women, her sufferings and struggle. The purpose of this paper is to study Sudha Murthy's novels as how it helps to empower women. Sudha Murthy has tried through her novels to empower women and motivate them to be courageous in adverse situation. It is interesting to go through her novels for she has woven her own experiences while working in Infosys, travelling, and dealing with the people. A systematic review of research literature and novels was undertaken. 'Gently Falls the Bakula' 'House of Cards' and 'Mahashweta', these novels have been critically analyzed

Key words: Struggle of Indian women, adverse situation, empower women, identity.

Introduction:

Sudha Murthy, as Indian social worker and philanthropist, is considered to be one of the prominent women writers in Indian writings in English. Mrs. Murthy has written many short stories which deal with the social problems. Her style is so provocative depicting a realistic picture of all social issues, women empowerment, identity crises and the need for ethical values. As a president of Infosys Foundation, she has helped many needy and helpless people. Her writings reflect Indian culture and incidents and characters are drawn from day-to-day lives, events and experiences. These incidents tell us that women are unable to do or speak out on what they richly deserve. Protagonists from these novels taken for the study like Shrimati, Mridula and Mahashweta become victim under their own circumstances and situation. In the half of the novel these heroines are meek, weak, submissive and dedicated. At latter part of the novel they are shown strong and determined, they realized their potential and rebound. It is not necessary to a woman to bind herself with limitations, fixed ideas and get suffered to please and entertain society rather she has to transcend beyond, look forward and awaken herself to several other possibilities and opportunities to realize her own aspiration. She has to start her new journey. These thoughts have great influence in the portrayal of the woman characters depicted by Sudha Murthy

Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumble, between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator.

Simone De Beauvoir, The Second Sex,

Through her writing, Mrs. Murthy has tried to say that woman has to break the roadblocks of psychological captivity in her mind. Suppressed lives, domestic restrictions and exploited female subjectivity form the base of these novels.

Women the epitome of God's creation, needs a shield, a rapport wherein she echoes, the exquisite feminine qualities in her not to be trodden upon by male self-seeking traits, but to reveal her shades of a multitasking force getting to know one's self.

We have examples of strong-minded, dominant and opinioned women, who have fashioned their attitude and behavior and showed their might by fighting for themselves and rebelled against society's stereotype.

(Rimah Saleh Alyahya, research paper, *The Social and Ethical Values in the Select Novels of Sudha Murthy* pg. no. 2)

Above quote reminds us many historical characters such as Rani Laxmibai to be brave in the death of misfortune and self-respect. This blazing queen proved herself without doubt and set an example that women cannot be confined but can ahead a brave task. The mother for girl's education, Savitribai Fule had a brave heart who broke the stereotype mentality and became the first lady to admit in the school in Maharashtra. Emmeline Pankhurst was the founding member of a women group who fought bravely to get women to vote in the United Kingdom.

Women like Queen Victoria, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa have shown the way to lead life independently and respectfully. These great and notable women made great headways to redefine the stereotype feminine image. This is very true with the characters of Sudha Murthy's novels.

There is no force equal to women determined to rise. (William Edward Burghardt Dubois- An American sociologist, historian, writer and editor)

Thus woman is the main figure in the society. Sudha Murthy's novels are focusing the challenges faced by woman and how a woman can overcome these challenges by adopting means and ways suggested by Mrs. Murthy through her novels. The main purpose of the paper is to bring into notice how Murthy's novels are helpful to empower women.

Gently Falls the Bakula:

This is the first novel written in 2008 by Sudha Murthy. The story is simple, revolves around, Shrimati and Shrikant, the two main characters. Both are neighbors and their homes are surrounded by the Bakula Tree. They fall in love and get married in spite of their family disagreement. Shrimati a talented and smart woman sacrifices her dream for her husband, Shrikant who is greedy for power and success. At last she decides to leave him to follow her vision.

The novel starts with school result, the day of excitement portraying the lives of Shrikant and Shrimati. In this book Murthy has boldly depicted the agony of work ethics and modern lifestyle. Shrikant and Shrimati, school companions have been attracted towards each other and fall in love and get married. Shrikant, as ambitious and career oriented man joins IT company after marriage. He entirely focusses on being successful in career. He climbs corporate ladder and becomes successful while Shrimati relinquishes her own aspirations and stays back at home supporting her husband, caring his family. Shrimati performs her duties as an obedient wife as well as a personal secretary for Shrikant all through her prime days. But hungry for power and success, Shrikant does not have sense to realize it. He does not realize the support of his wife in his success. He ignores her. As Shrimati gradually gets acquainted with her husband's nature, she feels emptiness in her life. She becomes the decorated doll without emotion. Whatever he gives her, money, jewelry, luxury is futile, he does not give her what she wants. At last she decides firmly to be out of the house to search her own identity.

I cannot live in this kind of an atmosphere with these artificial values. I require to breathe fresh air. I do not want to live as your shadow. I want to find my own happiness. Shri, if I had not been sensitive and bright, I wouldn't have had to suffer such loneliness. I could have enjoyed your wealth. When I was thinking about my life so far, what my goal has been, I have realized what I want.
(Gently Falls the Bakula. Pg. no. 161)

The House of Cards:

Mridula, hails from a village, Karnataka is a young and enthusiastic woman. She meets Sanjay, falls in love and gets married. Both of them settle down in Bangalore. After marriage she experienced the selfish and materialistic world. She feels disappointed looking at her ambitious and corrupt husband and takes the decision to walk out of the marriage.

Mridula, a beautiful soul with vibrance of happiness, who lives the moment of life, the girl to whom her values matter more than material assets. She meets Sanjay last time in marriage and then in Mumbai. Both fall in love and get married. Sanjay has to complete his post-graduation in Bangalore. They had difficult time but supportive Mridula overcomes the situation. Sanjay who is a hardworking, sincere doctor, works under a senior doctor gets frustrated as his hardwork diminished in the eyes of other and credit been stolen. He gets disappointed and opens his own nursing home. As he earns good from his hospital, they get improved economically. But greed and never-ending ambition made Sanjay more materialistic. Mridula remains the same hardworking and obedient wife throughout and Sanjay is influenced by the power of luxury. Mridula sacrifices her ambition and positive energy to make her husband successful and popular.

Corrupt practice of Sanjay loses the tight bond of husband-wife relationship. Marriage is bond on trust, but selfish Sanjay does not sense it.

At the moment, something inside her just shattered into pieces. When the foundation of trust cracks, how can a marriage remain the same? Mridula felt like she was drowning. Her thoughts haunted her. (House of Cards, pg. no. 183)

At last she feels to be out of the marriage for self-respect, peace and her own happiness.

I have to live life on my terms if I want to be happy. And that's not possible with Sanjay around. He ridicules and dominates me and it affects my confidence terribly. I can't take it anymore. I have to do something. (House of Cards, pg. no. 216)

Mahashweta:

Mahashweta is an inspiring story of a young girl, named Anupama and her marriage. She meets Dr. Anand and falls in love with him. Anupama's fairy-tale marriage to Anand gets destroyed when a white patch is discovered on her foot. Vitiligo, a skin disease plays a damaging role in the life of Anupama. Insensitive husband, lack of social acceptance made her life miserable. It pushes her towards suicide. She goes through worst situation only to rebuild herself as an independent woman.

Mahashweta is a story of courage in the face of betrayal and disappointment. Anupama a mesmerizing beauty, is the protagonist of the novel. Dr. Anand gets attracted to Anupama and marries to her. In the beginning Anupama is very much happy and satisfied. Emergence of white patch shatters Anupama's positive image of life. She is abandoned by her uncaring in-laws and insensitive husband. She gets the same treatment in her father's home also. The social reactions and denials give her pain and anguish. What is more painful for her that her husband married her only because she had a beautiful face and body. She is left to her own fate by her father, step-mother and pushed into loneliness to contemplate suicide.

At the peak point she decides not to give up for these selfish and useless people. She moves to Mumbai and starts her life on her own terms. She returns back to her passion, a beautiful world of literature and theatre. Her own earning gives her confidence and an independence that she had never known before.

Conclusion:

Sudha Murthy has developed a type of heroine who are fearless, firm, independent and do not need to depend on a man. We see the transformation of the women characters from weak, submissive, dependent into brave, bold and independent one. In the end, Shrimati, Mridula and Anupama are changed women and head strong characters. They are not insecure or powerless as early phase in their life; rather now all of three are total economic independent. We can see other traits in them like simplicity, hardworking and innocence. Shrimati, Mridula and Anupama are highly sensuous, matured for their physical world. By taking such bold decision in the end shows the revolt against patriarchal society and journey towards empowering themselves.

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