



EMPOWERING NARRATIVES: A STUDY OF FEMINIST THEMES IN SELECT FICTIONS OF SUDHA MURTY

R. Supriya T¹ & Dr. R. Jayakanth T²

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Author Details:

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of English,
St. Joseph's College (Autonomous),
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan
University), Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India;

² Research Supervisor &
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
St. Joseph's College (Autonomous),
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan
University), Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author:

R. Supriya T

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.250303058>

Abstract

Indian English novels depicted each and every aspect of human life and we all know how some of these novels revealed the struggle of Indian women to create their own identity, their emotional crisis and their status in Indian Society. Many Indian novelists expressed the real picture of Indian Society and the true condition of women and how a woman is the subject of domestic oppression, suffering and how she struggles to create her own existence. This present paper made an attempt to examine and analyse Sudha Murty's Mahasweta and Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters from a feminine perspective. Institutions of marriage as well as family which are essential for a community, have been situated supporting encumbrances of sui generis currently. Especially acidulous marriage related pressures are compelling women and stand as nit-picking years in their initial wedded life. Two novels of Sudha Murthy are put to test here: Sudha Murthy's Mahashweta (2007); Gently Falls the Bakula (2008). How pain in the lives of the two women Protagonists renovate their path of journey towards empowerment that sanctions them a skill-acquisition through chopping and scissoring put on by famous Portuguese professional foot-ball player Cristiano Ronaldo to fight back on wrongdoing which has been showcased here as 'Naari Sakthi' (Women-Empowerment) of both Anupama and Shrimati textually and pictorially. Sudha Murty and Manju Kapur's novels are full with the themes of 'Gender bias', 'quest for self' and 'Resistance' and 'Oppression'. And also discusses the struggle of the Indian women under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society in Sudha Murthy's novel "Mahasweta" and "House of Cards". The women throughout the country struggle to live life with dignity. Women are facing in every sphere of life whether it is employment, health care or property rights. So in India the women empowerment is still a distant dream. This paper completely reveals the violence denigration and the exploitation faced by the female characters in Sudha Murthy's novels. Women and girls throughout the world continue to experience violence discrimination inequality and poverty and they have laid the foundation of the society but still they have failed to secure the true position in life the reality is that women and girls are routinely unable to claim their basic rights. This research paper would help to create the awareness of strong and vibrant women's movement comprising of women who are empowered individually and collectively to change the patriarchal norms tackled the root causes of inequality and demand the full spectrum of their rights. The themes of feminism are prevalent throughout Sudha Murthy's works. Although she doesn't explicitly critique the male-dominated culture, her characters in her stories question it. Her protagonists are from middle-class families. They are obedient, clever, and selfless in their actions.

Keywords: *Struggle, Indian, women, employment, fashionable, authority, domination, patriarchal, rights*

Introduction

Institutions of marriage as well as family which are essential for a community, have been situated supporting encumbrances of sui generis currently. Marital stress, leading to breakdown of marriage, is indeed, very difficult to address but not uncommon, when one of the couples gives less priority to newly wedded life or long married life giving second fiddle to work. Surprisingly most of the males in India fall to this category. Rapid revolutionary change during last 50 years has challenged conventional, moral and religious dogmas in Indian society. Dominant ideologies, increased responsibilities and change life styles have added oil to the fuel resulting marital values destabilized. The very meaning of stability in marriage has been triggered, as life-long stability is not achieved after each dream wedding. Either mega or trivial stressors challenge couples, especially the female in the wife role, as it affects her social, financial, mental and even family life. Present day generation is individual-centric rather than community-centric focusing on personal growth, freedom and privacy. Expectations from spouse are highly elevated lining up on economic, psychological, emotional wellbeing. When self-actualization becomes a day dream, the wife responds to

profound despair. Though educated women of present era exercise personal freedom, professional growth and career development their role in family is a point of discussion. The economic independence does not serve the purpose as either their earnings or their career growth do not offer any active role to play in the family. Physical hardships sans decision making power creates vacuum in marital relationship. Accordingly, the couples grow apart failing to protect their marital life from harmful effects. When adjustment is not placed by the couple as a strategy but as a mantra to wife, comfort is null in the relation. The feminist movement in India has tried to define, establish and defend women's rights within the society with a dynamic approach voicing for the identity of a woman. Especially acidulous marriage related pressures are compelling women and stand as nit-picking years in their initial wedded life. By far, either in initial married life or very rarely at a later stage, couples face catastrophic phase of balancing family tasks. The couples find it hard sharing simple day to day activity and there by become angry on each other. This susceptibility leads to irreconcilable incongruity. Sudha Murthy's two novels taken for study here showcase the crisis of protagonist-couple leading to separation or marriage break at an early wedlock stage (Mahaswetha) and after long years of wedded life (Gently Falls Bakula). Stressors in wedlock may occur inevitably in initial phase of life or in later years and most of the couples overcome, thanks to the compromising or sacrificing characteristic nurtured among Indian women. The traditional gender roles assigned by society in India are well preserved promoting great disparity among males and females, and the institution of marriage just vouches it. This paper captures gender inequalities in the allocation of authority as its point of departure. Given the widespread evidence of the extent to which a wife, primarily Indian wife, has been marginalised in courses of action by which societal practices are designed and implemented, it puts forward that open mind needs to be shaped to strengthening the wife's capacity for influencing at different stages of the unit of family. Above all, there are solid 'decisive moments' in the life of any individual when the ideas, values and knowledge of key decision-making impact and the individual capacity dominate the role in which s/he set into, conditioned by self and society to which s/he belongs. The present paper sets out to develop a theory that addresses the issue of empowering the role of wife reflecting on factors of change. It applies theory to the 'decisive moments' framework. Finally, it draws on case studies of protagonists (Anupama and Srimati) of Sudha Murthy, to point up means for the transformative potential for empowering the role of wife. Women does not occupy an important place in most of the Anglo Indian novels. Indian women in Pre-Independence era had a different status in society. In Pre-Independence India shows the picture of womanhood was stale and perverted. It was either exaggerated or neglected, or to put in another way. She was considered as a burden, and in literature, she was considered as a non-entity whose only obligation was to fulfil the needs of her family. The Post- Independent Indian writers have depicted women in all her shades. First are the Wives of older generation who willingly or unwillingly accept their husbands as Pati Prameshwar. Second is the generation of the women who fight for their individuality. They manage to escape from the tyrannical order of the society without going out of the boundaries of Wed lock. They resist the undesirable in order to follow the desirable ends. In the third generation are the women are ready step out of the conjugal bonds when they find it difficult to adjust with their spouse. Sometimes they go rebellious against the Orthodoxical norms of life which violates the path of morality. The Indian feminism is not something antagonistic to man but is a means and movement to project the socio-cultural problems liable to deteriorate the condition of women in the male dominated society. The postcolonial Indian English writers focus on major issues relating to women such as her awakening to the realization of her individuality, her breaking away with traditional image, her relation with man and her aims and objectives. In Sudha Murthy's fiction, there is the emergence of the third type of new woman who seeks to synthesize traditions with modern values which is the need of the hour. Here woman is shown to move ahead with positive changes in society. And the women possess a profound inner strength which allows them to find freedom through realization of their individual truth.

These women belong to the third phase of the emergence and growth of feminine tradition. Unlike the western liberated women the India women ones do not wish to discard the social value rather they realize their limitation and try to seek their identity within this limitation which they feel essential and vital for their survival. Their feminine sensibility made them capable to break a new ground in Indian English fiction making and approach from the external to the internal world they created their own world filled with extraordinary sensitive beings. The changed woman in post-colonial Indian English fiction are conscious offer individuality and has been trying to confirm her rights as human being. She seems to be in constant fight for equality to men since long silent suffering and upholding of Indian culture values have been glorified in Indian fiction. Women is designed to perform varied roles in her life the role of mother, a wife, a sister or a daughter etc. but never she has been thought as an individual far from being merely a cog in the family machine. She is deprived of her own identity or aspirations for self-fulfilment in the male dominated patriarchal society. The processes of women's emergence in new form brighten with new thoughts and ideas took place gradually. They revealed changed image of women in the family and society. The Struggle of the Indian women under the Oppressive Mechanism of a Closed Society "Mahasweta" and this novel sets up as a classic and mythological episode throughout the work and the chief characters – Anupama, Anand start revolving faithfulness in their relation and this article contextualizing Indian consciousness in a serious and comprehensive attempt to investigate in issues of women.

Theme

The novel protagonist is introduced as a brilliant actress and an outstanding student who even has familiarity in Hindustani classical music by Dr. Desai to Dr. Anand. She is well versed in Sanskrit novels written by the grand scholar Bana Bhatta. Those works are translated and dramatized by her. She even takes the front role in the play "Mahasweta" because of which Dr. Anand is attracted to her good looks as well as capacity as an artiste. Every one whoever watches her play is spellbound, like her show extremely and admires her a lot. It is not an over statement given by Dr. Desai in praise of her talent and that can be comprehended when the affluent bridegroom who happens to see Anupama's play and interested to wed her. She merely lives for the love of

her husband without considering anything about her career then after her marriage Anupama's mother-in-law shown a ruthless, authoritative and typical of Indian traditional sensibility. And later Anupama's positive image of life shatters with the emergence of the white patch called Vitiligo; she becomes a symbol of 'social stigma', abandoned by her uncaring in-laws and insensitive husband. Her visits to the dermatologist, her pain, anguish, and cry, as well as her inability to voice her thoughts, then she suddenly realized that she reached the top of the hill and entertained the thought to commit suicide from ledge but some unseen power held her back. "Why should she die for husband who didn't even care about her" Sudha Murthy to draw the attention of the reader to the suffering of the patient with cosmetic disease named leukoderma while presenting arrest human being who torments herself to maintain her dignity. This novel portrays that the hidden courage of a woman which makes her strong in the situation when even her husband was not in her favor.

House of Cards, is story of Mridula who stays in the village of Aladhalli. Mridula even though born to a well to do family is brought up in the most simple lifestyle and beliefs. Mridula's trait of austerity and frugality is interesting and a pleasant change in this material world where joys are associated with material things. She doesn't like material life, yet loves and lives life to the fullest. Mridula enjoys life in her village, teaching, cooking and sketching. Mridula finds a husband like herself, who has less demands and needs from life. They move to the city and from there life begins to change for them. Mridula's husband, a doctor, who serves patients considering it as his duty eventually succumbs to the cruel ways, demands and pressures of the rat race. Mridula came from a wealthy background but Sanjay came from a poor background with only two people whom he could call as his family, his mother, Ratnamma and sister, Lakshmi. The couple settled down after marriage in Bangalore where Sanjay joined in a temporary job at Victoria hospital and Mridula got a government job as a school teacher in Yelehanka. The writer explores human relationships intensively. "Every woman wants to change her life but no man understands how. He showers his wife with gifts that he likes but not with what she wants." Mridula remains the same hardworking and obedient wife throughout and Sanjay is influenced by the power of luxury. Mridula, a bright young woman, sacrifices her ambitions and positive energy to make her husband Sanjay successful and popular.

After her marriage she found her husband, Sanjay as a dishonest and untrustworthy person. She struggles to release herself from the marriage obligations and finally made a firm decision to head her life independently. She struggles to release herself from the marriage obligations and finally made a firm decision to head her life independently. This study is an attempt to analyse her novels through a feminist Perspective it reveals the violence denigration and the exploited faced by the female characters of the novels. It is also found that man women relationship and social acceptance estrangement in modern life Forms the core in all novels namely Mahasweta and House of Cards, in this two novel the male characters of Anand and Sanjay are influenced by the power of luxury comfort and steadily climbing up Corporate ladder without realizing the value of family life. The main greed for the power luxury and social status has proved to be very expensive to the female characters. The female protagonists realize the fact that artificial values and material success cannot make a person successful. They also work tirelessly to overcome the barriers drawn by male-dominated society to lead a purposeful life.

The impact of women liberation on Sudha Murthy perspective Sudha Murthy is conscious of the fact that women have their existence as an individual who have their own rights and wishes she fights and write against the timid itself of women as well as men protectoral shell. In her novels women are not mere "goddess are an automation" they move weakness through strength from indecision to self-assertion and from bondage to freedom most of the women characters in the novels of Sudha feel bonded within the so called sacred bonds of marriage the object to being treated as a piece of furniture or a doormat in which women is post to leave the question of values and strive to establish a new order with change standard where can be their true selves. Sudha Murthy portrays two kinds of women characters the typical Indian housewife and a fashionable butterfly type of women. Women of the farmer category are docile, models, gentle religious and living there only on anxiety is the welfare of their husband and resistance as wide range of meanings from rebelliousness aggressive behavioural pattern deliberate defense of authority oppositional action to organized the collective movement against domination. Through her novel invariably point to an inner exhilaration suggesting the beginning of a fresh awakening. Her women strive to overcome their perplexities, sense of isolation, fear and emotional vulnerability and find new horizons of self-esteem and liberation.

Conclusion

Women and girls throughout the world continue to experience violence, discrimination, inequality and Poverty. Even though they have laid the foundation of the society. But they have failed to secure the true position in life. The reality is that women and girls are routinely unable to claim their basic rights. This research paper would help to create the awareness of strong and vibrant women's movement comprising of women who are empowered individually and collectively to change the patriarchal norms tackled the root causes of inequality and demand the full spectrum of their rights. The capacity built through empowerment grant key underlying concepts that relate to women empowerment are: 1. Choices; 2. Control; 3. Power. The selected two novels of Sudha Murthy – Mahashweta and Gently Falls the Bakula -. Showcase how pain in the lives of these two women renovate their path of journey towards empowerment and thereby establish their journey that sanctions both female-protagonists to acquire a skill-set used by the famous Portuguese professional foot-ball player Cristiano Ronaldo known as chopping and scissoring required to fight back on wrong doing which has been showcased here as the 'Naari Sakthi'(Women-Empowerment) of both Anupama and Shrimati.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution: *R. Supriya T:* Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing and
Dr. R. Jayakanth T: Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing

Funding: No

Declaration: All the authors have given consent for the publication.

Competing Interest: No

References

1. Murty, Sudha. Mahashweta. Penguin UK, 2007.
2. Murty, Sudha. House of Cards. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2013.
3. Iyengar, Shrinivasa. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi.: Sterling, 1983.
4. Suba, Mrs P. "From Trauma to Triumph: A Feministic Reading of Sudha Murty's Mahashweta." International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science, 2013.
5. Vishnu, Kshirsagar Rajkumar. "A critical study of Sudha Murty's selected novels and shortstories." (2019).
6. Prema, Ms. S. "Dissemination of Social Awareness in Sudha Murty's Mahashweta: An Inexorable Oppression of Anupama." Studies In Indian Place Names, 40 (41) (2020): 221-225.
7. <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2113084-mahashweta>.
8. Burgess, E.W., and H.J. Locke. (1953). The Family: From Institution to Companionship. New York: American Book Co.
9. Dizard, J.E., and H. Gadlin. (1990). The Minimal Family. Amherst, Mass.: University of Amherst Press.
10. Doherty, W.J. (1991). "Family Therapy Goes Postmodern." Networker. Vol 19, 6-14.
11. Durga Sasi Kiran Saripalli. (2017). Reading Sudha Murthy's Mahashweta as a 'Mirror Literature' to Current Societal Engagement, Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature, Vol 8,
12. Durga Sasi Kiran Saripalli. (2018). An empirical study of fictional female protagonists represented in Indian Writings. New Delhi: Author Press. ISBN 9789387651036
13. Elkind, D. (1981). The Hurried Child. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
14. Stone, L. (1977). The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. New York: Harper and Row.
15. Sudha Murthy. (2007). Mahashweta. Penguin. (2008)
16. Gently Falls the Bakula, Penguin World report on violence and health (2006). Geneva: World Health Organization.

Publisher's Note

The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published data, map and institutional affiliations.

©The Author(s) 2025. Open Access.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>