

JOURNEY OF SELF DISCOVERY IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SUDHA MURTY

1: D.mythily, Research Scholar (Ph.D),VET Institute of Arts and Science (Co-Education) College, Erode

2: Dr. L. Mohanasundari , Co- author ,Associate Professor of English, VET Institute of Arts and Science (Co-Education) College, Erode

ABSTACT:

This paper aims to examine how Sudha Murty's novels explore the journey of self-discovery. It considers the intricacies of life, varying historical backgrounds, cultural diversity, and evolving value systems. Addressing women's issues, while grounded in a shared sense of unity, requires a context-sensitive approach due to the influence of socio-cultural factors. Women who find themselves under the influence of patriarchal control often experience increased limitations and social isolation. They navigate life within the constraints of a closed society, and these themes are strongly present in Sudha Murty's writings. Due to their gender, women face notable discrimination and prejudice. Murty is recognized for her realistic portrayal of women, capturing the evolving mindset of women over time. Her writings empathize with women who are torn between seeking freedom and individuality versus security and protection. This paper focuses on how middle-class urban women are depicted in Sudha Murty's novels: "Gently Falls the Bakula," "Mahashwetha," "The House of Cards," and "Dollar Bahu." These novels center around women and intricately detail their emotions and attitudes. The stories showcase how emerging women strive to establish their own identities in a predominantly male-centric world.

The research concludes that modern women are determined to achieve their aspirations. Just like men, women desire to fulfill their intellectual pursuits.

Introduction:

In the present time, the unique presence of Indian women's writing in English is notable. The artistic creations of Indian female writers, particularly those who pen novels, are characterized by their use of the English language. This language choice serves as a means for women to express their responses to the complex scenarios where traditional values and modern elements intersect and harmonize. These Indian women writers serve as active observers of the distinct socio-cultural, historical, and political challenges that women, particularly Indian women, encounter.

The movement for feminism has gained momentum worldwide, advocating for women's liberation, demanding equal rights, and striving for social justice. Over time, feminism has progressed through different waves, each stage characterized by resistance, protests, and confrontations, often eliciting opposing reactions from men, even leading to calls for male empowerment. As science challenged religious theories of human origin, many patriarchal concepts were challenged, reshaping societal views on the roles of men and women.

Indian female authors delve into the struggles of women, spanning from childhood to adulthood. Through their novels, these women writers promote feminist ideas, offering hope to alleviate the hardships faced by women. The environment in which they exist influences the thoughts and creativity of these authors. In the past, women were often portrayed by male novelists as patient sufferers or idealized figures like devoted wives, mothers, or daughters. However, these portrayals were not always accurate or realistic.

Following India's independence, many women writers have shifted this perspective. They aim to portray the genuine experiences, emotions, aspirations, and challenges faced by Indian women. Sudha Murty holds a significant place in this movement. Hailing from Shiggaon in North Karnataka, she earned an M. Tech in Computer Science from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. As the first woman engineer at Telco and currently the chairperson of Infosys Foundation, she has authored twenty-four novels, three non-fiction books, and four children's books.

Sudha Murty is a multi-talented individual, successful as a writer, social worker, and philanthropist. In her role as chairperson of Infosys Foundation, she contributes to various charitable causes. Recognized for her contributions, she has received awards such as the 'Padma Shri' from the Government of India in 2006 and the R. K. Narayan award in the same year for her literary accomplishments.

As one of the foremost and accomplished contemporary women writers, her works provide a realistic depiction of the socio-psychological challenges encountered by modern Indian women. With a straightforward style, she skillfully examines pressing issues of our times in her novels. She delves deeply into the inner thoughts and emotions of the female characters in her literary creations.

Her writing is characterized by its clarity and simplicity, effectively conveying her ideas. Proficient in both English and Kannada, she primarily focuses on depicting life in Karnataka villages and the people who inhabit them. She actively promotes feminism and empowers her female characters to confront the adversities in their lives. She encourages women to recognize their worth and harness their remarkable potential to achieve their aspirations. Despite her

success, she maintains a humble and modest demeanor and uses her wealth to assist the less fortunate.

She is attentive to the needs and voices of the impoverished, the destitute, and the marginalized segments of society. Her works are situated within the backdrop of Indian English Literature, where the central characters are portrayed as well-educated women with innate strength, prepared to confront challenges under any circumstances and ultimately secure their rightful place within the framework of Indian traditions.

Journey of self-discovery in “Gently Falls The Bakula”

Sudha Murthy's debut novel, "Gently Falls the Bakula," explores the quest for self in the context of a marriage that hesitates under the weight of ambition and self-interest. This poignant narrative touches upon familiar themes like conflicting ideologies within families, the dynamics between mother-in-laws and daughters-in-law, and the illusions surrounding educational qualifications, marriage, and matchmaking.

The central character, Shrimati, dedicates herself as a dutiful, devoted, sincere, and affectionate wife, propelling her husband to great success in his IT career. She sacrifices her own professional aspirations and wholeheartedly devotes her life to her husband. However, Shrikant's inability to acknowledge her sacrifices and spend quality time with her shatters her dreams of a happy family life. Feeling unnoticed and unappreciated, she makes a difficult decision to separate from him, unwilling to continue living in a loveless marriage.

Shrimati informs Shrikant about her decision to leave, mentioning her scholarship and her determination to leave without taking anything from their home. Her actions defy societal norms, especially in a male-dominated society, but she prioritizes what she believes is right over

societal expectations. Sudha Murthy skillfully portrays Shrimati as a resilient woman who embarks on a journey to discover her own identity.

Journey of self-discovery in “Mahashweta”

In Sudha Murthy's novel "Mahashweta" (2007), the protagonist, Anupama, demonstrates profound and unwavering love for Dr. Anand, her lover. However, their love faces a severe test after their marriage when Anupama develops an incurable skin condition called Leukoderma. While Leukoderma is primarily a cosmetic issue, its impact on society has led to significant hardship and emotional distress for those who suffer from it. This highlights the idea that true beauty transcends external appearances, and it cannot be replicated by any artist's canvas.

After Dr. Anand realizes his mistake, he attempts to apologize to Anupama by tracking down her address. Unfortunately, Anupama is not in a forgiving state of mind. She confronts him, pointing out that he knew she didn't have the disease before they got married. Instead of informing his mother about the situation, he chose to keep it a secret, fearing that her appearance would change. Anupama feels victimized by his failure to honor their vows.

Eventually, she firmly declares that their accidental meeting does not mean they are meant for each other and suggests they part ways amicably.

In the first half of the novel, Murthy portrays Anupama as meek, submissive, enduring her fate, and relying on her husband for help. However, in the second half, she undergoes a transformation into a confident, self-sufficient, guiding, and respected individual. Murthy skillfully depicts the journey of a confident woman discovering her own identity.

Journey of self-discovery in “House of Cards”

In Sudha Murthy's novel "House of Cards" (2013), the main character, Mridula, finds herself drawn to Dr. Sanjay during a marriage ceremony in Hubli. Both sets of parents agree to their marriage, and after the wedding, they relocate to Bangalore, where Sanjay secures a job at Victoria Government Hospital and later pursues post-graduation studies in Gynecology. However, Mridula's husband manipulates her due to her innocence and lack of knowledge. Sanjay's cunning nature leads to a breakdown in their relationship.

Mridula becomes aware of her husband's deceitful actions, causing her to lose confidence and feel distressed and betrayed. She had believed in her husband's faithfulness and trust from the beginning of their marriage. Speaking to her friend Anita, she emphasizes the value of trust in a marriage, asserting that it's more precious than money or gold. According to Mridula, Sanjay's dishonesty and betrayal have shattered her trust in him.

She sees Sanjay as untrustworthy and disloyal, feeling that he has betrayed her in the worst possible way. Drawing on Leigh K. Cunningham's words, Mridula acknowledges that trust is a fragile aspect of any relationship, and once broken, it is challenging to rebuild. Mridula, recognizing that marriage is not her ultimate destination, desires an equal partnership rather than subordination to her husband. She admires her mother as an ideal woman, contrasting her own sacrifices and suffering in silence.

Ultimately, Mridula chooses to break free from the emotional burden of her marriage, believing that it's better to be alone and happy than with someone who makes her feel inferior, undesirable, and inadequate. She decides to live for herself, embracing her job, her school, and

her village. Mridula is depicted as a sincere, caring, and bold individual with a zest for life and boundless energy, determined to make the most of every minute.

Journey of self-discovery in “Dollar Bahu”

In "Dollar Bahu," Sudha Murthy's story illustrates how money can corrupt relationships and nearly tear families apart. Vinuta, who marries Girish and moves in with his family in Bangalore, adjusts to her new family dynamics, even in the face of her mother-in-law's constant criticisms. However, when Girish's elder brother, Chandru, based in the US, decides to marry a woman who brings wealth from abroad, Vinuta is subjected to constant comparisons with the "Dollar Bahu."

Over time, the stress takes a toll on Vinuta's peace of mind and health, as her selfless sacrifices and silent suffering go unrecognized by her mother-in-law. In a conversation with Chandru, Vinuta expresses her unhappiness and the constant comparisons with Jamuna, feeling that the family no longer values her presence. Eventually, she decides to move away from that environment.

This reflects the changing roles and aspirations of modern women who seek to break free from societal constraints and assert themselves sexually and economically on par with men. Historically, women were often defined in relation to their husbands and relegated to subordinate roles. However, contemporary women are ready to challenge these constraints and establish their own identities.

In Indian culture, a woman's identity has traditionally been linked to her husband, and she is often considered subordinate and reliant on him. This perspective perpetuates a view of women as decorative appendages who accompany their husbands and interact only with those

approved by their spouses. Any independent associations, especially with the opposite sex, are often stigmatized as immoral.

Conclusion

Thus, the Indian woman, whether she appears passive or assertive, adhering to traditional or modern values, often experiences confusion and emotional vulnerability. A sense of fear and isolation can pervade her life. Despite hearing about ideals like equality and liberation, she grapples with the challenging reality of navigating through deeply ingrained traditional values. In the words of Dorothy Parker, who believed that all individuals, regardless of gender, should be seen as human beings, it becomes clear that true understanding lies in recognizing the worth of each person beyond societal roles. To gain the world's riches but lose one's own sense of self is a profound loss. By comprehending this truth and acting with full awareness, individuals can significantly reduce the hardships they face.

Reference

Murty, Sudha. *Gently Falls the Bakula*. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2008.

_____, *Mahashwetha*. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2007.

_____, *House of Cards*. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2013.

_____, *Dollar Bahu*. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2007.