

# A Critical Study of Women Protagonist in Sudha Murty's Novels

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## **Abstract:** —

This paper focuses on Feministic approach in the novels by Sudha Murty, taking in account the complexity of life, different histories, culture and different structure of values, the women's question, greed for money and working abroad as status symbol in Indian society. The article mirrors that Indian mentality which is fascinated by the foreign currency which is valued more than sentiments, morals and relationship. Murthy is considered to be one of the most realistic authors, for she is able to bring the true picture of psyche of the women changing with the times. Her concern for the women who are caught in the dilemma of liberty and individuality or stability and protection is understandable. Literature is a mirror of human society. Over centuries it has been more powerful medium of provoking human feelings and emotions. Sudha Murty's novel Mahasweta and Gently falls the Bakula picturize the mental and physical agonies of the female protagonists. Mahasweta tells about the superstitious beliefs and sufferings of Anupama and later how she created a new happy life for herself. Gently falls the Bakula portrait who was trapped into a loveless and sophisticated life finally she goes beyond her dream. It discusses the suffering of women in society and their incarnation into a brave and strong mind to face the tribulations in India. The protagonist in her novels is ordinary woman who effectively handle extraordinary responsibilities, problems and emerge as new beings with the western education and culture.

Key words: Feminism, Culture, Tradition, Multiculturalism.

## **Introduction:**

Novel is a modern genre of English literature which was originated in England in sixteenth century. The novel is a relatively long work of narrative fiction, written in prose which depicts human experiences: love, desire, hatred, revenge, depression, passion, etc. Indian English novelist mostly talk about colonialism and its effect on Indian society. R. K. Narayan. Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao were the most famous novelist in the pre independent era. But novels take various forms in independent era. Writers are talking about so many individuals and social problems like caste, poverty, superstitions, illiteracy, unemployment, women rights etc. Although India got freedom, there are so many problem and challenges to overcome. Patriarchy is the most severe problem in India form the ancient time. Women had been deprived all the privileges that man had been enjoying. Women have been badly treated in the Petrarchan society. There are many traditional beliefs which scattered and exploited lives of women. Sati practice, child marriage, devadasi, dowry system, and no equal rights for women in every walks of life which awaken feminism in Indian literature. Sudha Murthy's novel portray the life of urban women who fall victims to the old rotten ideas of so called modern and developed society. Her female protagonist are strong rebellious, determined and intelligent. Unlike the stereotyped, helpless, uneducated rural women who are unable to fights against the society and live a painful life supporting her husband and in laws by accepting so much hatred from them. In the corporate family's women are silent sufferer who always abandon their own dreams and aspirations for the success of their husbands.

Mahashweta is stimulating and an eye-opening novel for the modern Indian women. The title, Mahashweta is taken from the Sanskrit novel “Kadambhari” by the great scholar, Bana Bhatta. In the Sanskrit novel the heroine is named Mahashweta, she is the daughter of King Gandhara. The hero, Pundarika meets with an untimely death. Mahashweta could not afford him dying, so she tackles the situation herself with a severe penance by wearing a white saree in the forest. By her effort and heart rendering love, she gets her lover, Pundarika back to life and is reunited.

Mahashweta (2007) is one of the best works of Sudha Murty. The novel picturizes a young beautiful and bold girl named Anupama. She gets married as in a fairy tale and later she was affected by leukoderma and her life became very tragedy. The novel begins with “the female child is stronger than the male child at birth, as adults it is the man who becomes the oppressor, and woman who suffers. (M-1). According to Simone de Beauvoir “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. The meaning of to be a woman in the society is created by man for his benefit. The woman is strong enough to man in the society. You know that from the first year of college till now, I have survived on scholarship. (M -20) On the contrary to the earlier opinion that women are considered a burden to their families, Anupama enacts some historical dramas for her personal needs and from her savings. Mahashweta is an inspiring story of courage and resilience in a world marred by illusions and betrayals. This poignant tale offers hope and solace to the victims of the prejudices that govern society even today. Anupama’s fairy-tale marriage to Anand falls apart when she discovers a white patch on her foot and learns that she has leukoderma. A feeling of misery engulfed Anupama. She realized that her position had become lower than that of a servant in just one day. The servant can go home and sleep after finishing the day’s work. But where could she go? ; To her father’s house? Where would she find kindness and trust? ; With Anand ? But how would she reach England? She did not know the answers to any of the questions that plagued her. Abandoned by her uncaring in-laws and intensive husband, she is forced to return to her father’s home in the village. The social stigma of the married woman living with her parents, her stepmother’s continual barbs and the ostracism that accompanies her skin condition force her to contemplate suicide. When her friend Sumitra was getting married to Hari Prasad, She prayed for Sumi’s Happiness:

“Let your husband be a man who will only shower happiness and love on you. It is better to have an understanding husband than one who is merely handsome and wealthy. Marriage is a Gamble. The result cannot be predicted beforehand. Finding the right match is a matter of chance. I was unlucky in this. May you be more fortunate?” (MS,65)

Sudha Murthy’s *Gently Falls the Bakula* explores the life of educated rich urban who think money making is their only aim of life. The novel portrays the step by step development of two class mates, Shrikant Deshpande and Shrimati. After the industrialization, we have achieved technological progress and scientific advancement, financial independence and all the facilities but what we lost in this progress is the foundation stone of our life, our family.

The story opens with the background of a school where Shrikant and Shrimati study. Both were neighbours, equally talented and intelligent while Shrimati is a little bit more brilliant than Shrikant. Shrimati took history and Shrikant got admission in IIT Bombay. Soon they realize the relation was more than friendship. She was very special to him. They met under the old Bakula tree and there was always a string of Bakula flowers on her hair. The smell of the flower is so nostalgic to Shrikant that throughout the story Bakula plays a very important role. Shrikant marries Shrimati without the permission of their families and were shifted to Bombay, a mechanical city with no human relationship. His people were greedy and they wanted a bride who was richer and younger than Shrimati. The wedding ceremony was simple but Shrimati was contented. Just like a typical Indian bride, Shrimati wanted to win over her mother-in-law. So she helped her in the kitchen. But Gagakka didn’t like her to enter into it. (page 70)

At first they lived in a small single bedroom apartment at Bandra. Shrikant was hardworking; sometimes he would work even at night. Gradually she become one among the people in the crowded trains. Shrimati got a small job to pay money for her mother-in-law for the loan that was taken for Shrikant's study. After sixteen months she resigned her job. Shrikant become the manager and she explains the story of Bhamati to her husband. Shrimati wanted to enrol for her Ph.D but he was shifted to Delhi. Many unexpected things happen in life and Shrikant's boss was extremely happy with his performance in Delhi and he was promoted as a project manager and sent to Los Angeles, USA. They were shifted to America and life got totally changed. She had been in touch with professor kollins, in USA, she was fascinated by the market, the roads the people and everything. Soon he become the general manager and came back in india, life was at its peak, a new car and a driver, three bedroom flat facing the sea at Bandra. Shrimati was amazed, for everything was beyond her imagination. Shrikant had become extremely busy and was touring a lot. He travelled twenty- to twenty- five days a month. His life revolved around the company and nothing else. Shrimati started to feel quite lonely, one day she was shocked to see grey hairs on her head, the symbol if ageing. She wanted a baby and they consulted a doctor who commented that human body is not machine or computer. They have ordinary potency or sub-fertile' condition. Shrimati felt utterly hopeless and helpless. The gates of her dam of sorrows broke open and tears gusted out as floods. All the children she had dreamd of would remain only dreams. (Gently Fall The Bakula page 98). She remembers her in-law's referring to her as barren women. But Shrikant consoled her. He was very practical and said that nobody can expect their children will look after them in their old age. He was also planning to start a charitable trust for the needy children. The very thought that she wouldn't experience motherhood was hurting her deeply. She feels that she lost her identity. She was just an obedient servant. She felt upset, yet she could not disobey the instructions. She was exhausted mentally and physically. She wanted to get out of the house. The love affection and sharing of the ideas and dreams are disappeared from their life. Shrikant was totally changed who was only interested in name fame and position, money and status. He was forgotten his dear wife in his busy life. She did not want to disturb him and never talk him. Shrikant ignored the changes in Shrimati. He never took it seriously. Every dinner, every conversation, every relationship was based on profit and loss. She was bored with snobbish ladies who always talked of jewellery and sarees. They become two strangers. She felt she was searching for the path of love in darkness without a torch. Shrimati decides to fly away into the world of history and finds her own identity and free herself from the shackles of patriarchal society. She wanted to live free and independent life. The novel ends with Shrikant looking back at his domineering self and how cruel he was to wife by not giving her attention. He realizes that he was the cause for her departure. Sudha Murthy presents the bold, intelligent Shrimati, who faces her life alone. Without any complaints, she accepts her fate tried to do all the greedy in-laws and the guests. She even forgets her own life, her dreams and the right to become a mother.

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