



Postmodern Feminism in Sudha Murty's *Mahashweta* and *Gently falls the Bakula*

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Abstract

Postmodern Feminism is an amalgamation of postmodern ideas and feminism. This theory declines to extend one elucidation for this striking theory to confirm the code. Postmodern feminists never give importance to all the feminist ideas that give a distinct clarification for women's maltreatment and there are no biological differences among the critics. Sudha is a famous writer in Kannada and the English language. She is also a philanthropist and a distinguished leader in the computer sector. She is credited with the most respected Padma Shri award for her social work and the notable R.K.Narayan award for her literary works in the year 2006. She has also received the Lifetime Achievement award for her talent. Sudha Murty's novels Mahashweta and Gently falls the Bakula give a grand picture of the mental and physical agonies of the female protagonists. Mahashweta tells about the superstitious beliefs and sufferings of Anupama and later how she created a new happy life for herself. Gently falls the Bakula portrays the protagonist who was trapped in a loveless and sophisticated life. Both of them discuss the sufferings of women in society and their incarnation into a brave and strong minds to face tribulations in their individual life. The protagonists of her novels are ordinary women who effectively handle extraordinary responsibilities and problems and emerge as new beings with western education and culture. Hence, this article decodes the thirst for knowledge in women and the anxieties in women's life that make a way for a new feminine literary tradition known as Postmodern Feminism.

Keywords: Postmodern Feminism, Sudha Murty, *Mahashweta*, *Gently falls the Bakula*.

Introduction

Indo-English fiction has been called "the twice-born fiction" by Meenakshi Mukherjee because it has two parental traditions, one is Indian and the other British. The word 'Fiction' is derived from the Latin word 'Fictum', which means "created". Indo – English fiction prefers to take some of its subjects from peripheries itself. Indian women were living under the circumstance of Indian tradition and they were unaware of the real world and they kept silent against injustices done by others. Sudha Murty has produced a distinct, space for her meticulous concentration to the dilemma of women and social prejudice. Sudha Murty shaped a new form of writing throughout the patriarchal is replaced by matriarchal. The last few decades have observed an enormous leap in feminist writings in



Indian English literature.

Postmodern woman Sudha Murty became the foremost female engineer to be hired TATA engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO). As an only female, she did her B.E in Electrical Electronics Engineering from B.V.B College by breaking the restriction. The paper portrays on the sufferings and sorrows that the protagonists have faced throughout the novel and to some extent, they emerge as brave and bold characters. The women characters grow up intellectually and psychologically. By emanating Arundhathi Roy's thoughts Sudha Murthy's fiction is her individual experience.

Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern Feminism is an incorporation of postmodernism, post-structuralism and French feminism. It first appeared in the work of Judith Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble*. Postmodern feminism opposes feminist perspectives which give a single explanation for grand theory; it refuses the progress of Feminism. Postmodern feminism has emerged developed from the thoughts of Michel Foucault, Simon de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan and Kate Millet. Postmodern feminism refuses to develop one comprehensive explanation and emphasizes plurality and multiplicity. The purpose of postmodern feminism is to unstable the patriarchal norms rooted in society that has led to gender inequality. Many women in the postmodern era chose their careers over housework, and marriages were delayed to make them economically independent. Economic independence helps many dissatisfied to lead their life courageously without any support and independence.

Mahashweta is a stimulating and eye-opening novel for modern Indian women. The title, Mahashweta is taken from the Sanskrit novel "Kadambhari" by the great scholar, Bana Bhatta. In the Sanskrit version, the heroine is named as Mahashweta. She is the only daughter of King Gandhara. Pundarika, the herp of the novel meets with an untimely death. Mahashweta tackles the situation herself with a penance by wearing a white saree in the jungle. Through her effort and heart-rendering love, she gets her lover, Pundarika back to life and is reunited.

Implication of Postmodern Feminism in the Novels

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 tragic. 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. According to Simone de Beauvoir "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". The meaning of being a woman in society is created by a man for his benefit. The woman is strong enough to man in society. 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, she sends some money to her father and supports her family.

Anupama marries doctor Anand and leads her life happily. Like Rohini to Chandra, like Lakshmi to Narayana, am I to him. As a representative Indian woman, she yields herself to Anand, without considering education and knowledge. She lives for the love of her



husband without caring about the career. Radhakka, Anand's mother accepts their love half-heartedly for the sake of her son. Radhika was proud of her daughter-in-law's prettiness while Anand's sister Girija was jealous and thinks as a rival. While performing the pooja the burnt incense fell on her leg and created a wound. The wound was in the white spot it slowly develops bigger. It is named leukoderma, the illness is considered inauspicious.

Anupama compared her life to Girija's clandestine relationship, was not loyal and leading a happy life but the miserable happened to Anupama was not her fault. A woman leaves her husband's house she does not have a place to live. Anupama is enforced to depart her husband's house. A woman without her life partner has to face much humiliation in the society. Even the parents also consider her a bad luck. Anupama suffered a lot because she was in her stepmother's house. Anand's silence affects her mentally. "So husband ought to love their wives as their bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." –Ephesians 5:28. Anand fails to be a good husband and forgets her vows taken during their marriage. If he loves Anupama as his flesh he never allows her to suffer. Due to leukoderma, her stepsister Nanda's marriage was stopped by their in-law's family because they doubt it was a hereditary problem. Anand's silence also makes her sad. The moment Radhakka found out, she sent the daughter-in-law packing. Now she is searching for a new bride for Anand. (M-74). Anand fails to rescue his wife. She could not bear that agony so she thinks to end up her life. Anupama tries to obtain the rights when it fails and she goes to search for her individual identity. She creates courage and resoluteness and prays to the goddess,

Give me the courage to live no matter what happens! (M-79).

You should be ashamed of yourself. You have called me your sister ...will you behave with your sister like this? I have always considered Sumi as my sister and I will certainly tell her all about your edifying qualities. Get out of my way; I want to go out. (M-88)

Vasanth proposed to her, as a mature girl, with a determined voice she rejects the idea and tells him that she didn't want herself to commit again to any relationship. Anand apologizes after knowing his sister's secret affair and Anupama's purity. They have remade their lot having reconstructed the traditional culture, changing the discriminatory and patriarchal concept of the past and creating the new concept of the present which is completely free from all prejudices of the past. Anupama proved her talent and lead her life better than in her past is denoted here as postmodern feminism. In the final stage, she shows her steady immersion in modern culture without leaving her cultural identity and teaches Anand a lesson. Women are both breadmakers and breadwinners. Anupama emerges as a new being with western education and culture.

In Sudha Murty's nonfiction *Wise and Otherwise the vignette "A Wedding to Remember"* makes the person repent for his mistake by reading the novel *Mahashweta*. It becomes a thought-provoking fiction and it helps Malati to retain her life from misery. 'We came to know that he read your novel, *Mahashweta*,' he said.

'The situation of my son was similar. It seems he read this novel at least ten times and understood the plight of the girl. He took a month and decided he did not want to



be like the man in your novel, who shed his responsible only to regret it later. Your novel changed his thinking.’ (Wise and Otherwise -108)

Gently falls the Bakula portrays the drudgery life of the female protagonist, Shrimati, who seems to experience the pain from her marriage but her husband Shrikant fails to realize the sacrifice of her life. The Bakula flower is considered a souvenir of their love, even though it would dry up, its fragrance will be the same as their love. *Gently falls the Bakula* is the story about Shrikant Deshpande and Shrimati Shrikant Deshpande, the protagonist is a hyper-intelligent girl. She was very much fond of History subject. It helped her to have good knowledge of Indian history and its architecture. Shrimati stands first in the essay competition. Shrikant's friends could not tolerate his defeat, so he tried to console his friend Ravi by saying

“History is not a great subject.....real intelligence is scoring in science” (GFTB-5).

Hence to prove Shrikant is not correct, Shrimati attains state first rank in the SSLC board examination. While hearing his rival's rank Shrikant could not tolerate it, as a man he is not ready to bear his rival, a female. Shrikant's mind went numb. Mr Kulkarni's chatter continued, but Shrikant did not hear a word. Had a thunderbolt struck him or had he touched a live wire? (GFTB-21). To repay Shrikant's educational loan, Shrimati plans to work for money to repay as soon as possible.

“The day we send the last instalment, I will stop working and pursue my studies”. It doesn't matter if I am late by a year. Can you please find a job for me? (GFTB -77)

Indian woman sacrifices her intellectual longings and supports her husband as a submissive wife. Shrimati gives up her passion and ends up as a dutiful wife to her husband, after marriage. By doing this she approves and accepts him in his good and bad. Here the litterateur resembles Shrimati with the character of Bhamati; who sacrificed her whole life to support her sage husband without expecting anything from him. When everyone praises the sage's achievement and failed to notice Bhamati's sacrifice, the sage says as follows:

No, Shri, I am perfectly all right, but don't you think we should have children now? We are well settled financially. Both of us are over thirty, and thirty is late for a woman. (GFTB -96)

Shrikant gives all the happiness to his beloved but fails to give real happiness. A woman's life is fulfilled when she bears a child. Society expects a married woman to care for her home and she has to give an heir to his family. A childless woman is considered a social stigma. Love and marriage between them sustain when there is mutual trust and respect. Shrikant's dedication to his work made Shrimati feel lonely and also put barriers to her desire of becoming a mother. Shrikant does not spend his time with his beloved rather he concentrates on his work even in the house. Shrikant's love for work makes her feel lonely. Their marriage is based on loveless life and rather based on the mechanical process. As an Indian woman, she is afraid of her mother-in-law about “being barren”. Shrimati remembered telling Shrikant a few times that his mother always bought the cheapest of gifts for her, but for Rama, she would buy things worth thousands! (GFTB -151) Shrikant's



mother shows discrimination between her daughter and daughter-in-law. When Shrimati tells Shrikant he comforts her and is not able to understand that a gift has a measure of love in it. It shows the value of recognition towards the person. Shrimati did not agree with that belief. She felt that there was a limit to which one could be obedient and subservient, but once that limit was crossed, the individual's happiness became more important. (GFTB - 157). Earlier women identified themselves with the sub-name of wife, mother and daughter. They accept this identification willingly because they are not financially independent to lead their life individually. But now time has changed and women reject this relational identity. Now she can understand the dishonesty of this identity that is thrust upon her by society, so that she may control herself as a being. Postmodern women are the women of sensibility and consciousness of their low position in the family and society. They are educated and mentally strong to lead their life in prosperity and now woman wants to stand on her feet as a full human being, equal to man in society. The guests insult her favourite subject which makes her burst out in emotion. Shrikant feels sorry for the inconvenience because of his wife's behaviour and insults Shrimati before the guests. It stimulates a sense of anger and bursts out her inner feelings. Shrimati shares a deeply affectionate relationship with her husband and it becomes very hard for her to take a decision. She decides that she would not tolerate any more humiliation being of Shrikant's wife. She realizes that her life is her own which she has to shape as well as face the events of her life.

“Your silence will not protect you”- Audre Lorde Shri, I am leaving and I don't have any plans to return, I am handling all the responsibilities of the house to you. (GFTB -160)

Shrimati gains the courage to leave the house where respect is no longer being served. She does not want to be in her husband's shadow with a luxurious life without self-respect. It is better to create a place in a society, instead of living a discriminated, suppressed and sophisticated life. She finally finds a way out of the dilemma to seek her own life. To turn out of this boredom and meaningless life she decides to have a peaceful life by concentrating on her studies.

Money is one thing which rarely unites and mostly divides people”-Sudha Murty. Shri, you told me the other day that I am more intelligent than you and I can decide what I want. This is what I decided. (GFTB-162)

Shrikant lost his lovable wife Shrimati. She understands that she is going to get her identification. So she decides to go to the U.S for doing a Ph.D. By doing this she tries to defeat men and breaks all the chains and norms propounded by patriarchal society on women. Now Shrikant realizes the sheer love of Shrimati and has felt, before seventeen years he had lost his meaningless first rank and now the most precious Shrimati. However he tries to divert his mind to work, but he cannot stop thinking of Shrimati. Their love metaphorically symbolizes the flower 'Bakula'. It blooms, withers and falls to the ground, and so does the romance and love of this couple eventually.

Conclusion

Hence, the novels *Mahashweta* and *Gently falls the Bakula* are not only about the



nostalgic love for the past but also about a reformation and reconstruction of new life. Postmodern women have broken the walls of restrictions and traditional prejudices. Anupama and Shrimati typified the life of the postmodern world, even though they face tribulation and humiliation like the female in the feminist world they are not kept silent. As postmodern females, they come out of their worries and built a new life which gives real happiness as well as an individual identification. Postmodern feminism acknowledges her as an asset and proves women are not helpless and dependent. To represent postmodernism the protagonist's life does not end but rather starts from her decision. Education helps them to take a decision. The woman is more capable than the man; it clearly expresses that in the present age women have to realize their capabilities. The suppressed protagonists get frustrated and try to prove themselves; in this process, a woman has to undergo a series of humiliation, and betrayals to make her life cheerful. Postmodern women perceived education as an asset and to make the world positive.

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