



SUDHA MURTY'S *MAHASHWETA*: A STUDY OF MODERN WOMAN

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Abstract: Sudha Murty, a down-to-earth writer in English and Kannada, has outlined the life of proletariat Bhartiya women with a comprehensive narrative. She explores the character's psychological state as she believes that inner spirit decides a character more than outer state of affairs. Women writers like Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai have produced female protagonists who are symbolic and suppressed. But Sudha Murty has created an explored woman who is liberal, struggling, self-assertive and progressive finding herself in an independent journey. This paper connects the concept of self-determination theory to the struggle and triumph of dynamic Anupama who is the protagonist of *Mahashweta*.

Keywords: Modern, Exploration, Woman, Struggle, Life.

Manuscript

Sudha Murty, a renowned educator and author, has dealt with education, cultural aspects, religious trend, social attitudes, family relations, feminine transformation and so on. She, being the chairperson of Infosys Foundation, contributed techno-oriented facilities in Govt. schools of Karnataka State. She has supported many orphanages and focused rural development movements. She highlighted the needs and problems emerged in middle class society through her writing. She was conferred with Padam Shree (2006) and Padam Bhushan (2023) for her dedication in the field of social work and education. For her contribution in social work, the President of Bharat has nominated her in the Upper House of Parliament, Rajya Sabha.

Feminism is not only a term but a literary movement that advocates social, cultural and legal liberty, and equal opportunity for women. As a literary movement, the main objective of feminism is to eradicate the womanly restrictions of domesticity in patriarchal society which is considered masculine superior and feminine inferior. The feminine writers express trepidation in their writings for sexual harassment, domestic violence, mannish superiority, self-negation etc., and slam the predicament of women, and attempt to infuse a sense of oppose for self-identity. Helen Cixous writes in *The Laugh of the Medusa*:

“Woman must put herself into the text- as into the world

and into history- by her own movement.”

Bhartiya Women, since ages, remained in the mode of acceptance, and were oblivious of the outer world. Few writers influenced by the feminist ideology of West, came forward for their betterment who tried hard to get them a meaningful position. With their efforts and educational advancement, the curve of sense of equal opportunity for women raised and many changes revealed to improvise women's position in the society. Postmodern feminist writers surface women as catalyst, and portray them as self-reliant, self-assured, independent and bold.

Sudha Murty's *Mahashweta* seems to be inspired by the Banabhatta's romantic novel in Sanskrit Kadambari. *Mahashweta* is the story of Anupama, a modern woman who belongs to an impoverished family consisting father- Shamanna, step mother- Sabakka and two stepsisters- Nanda and Vasudha. Anupama is an accomplished beautiful and courageous girl who wants to complete her studies before marriage. Dr Anand, a surgeon captivated by her acting skills and beauty, and falls in love with her. Though he belongs to a wealthy family, he gets married to Anupama despite his mother- Radhakka's reluctancy. Now Anand leaves to abroad to pursue his higher studies leaving Anupama with his mother. Over the time, her beauty starts fed with white spots on skin which is diagnosed with albinism. Now Radhakka started humiliate her for hiding her disease at the time of marriage. Ultimately, fairytale of couple starts declined. Consequently, Radhakka rejected Anupama and sent her to her parental house. Anupama doesn't bow before the wealthy family status. Unlike other traditional Indian women, she frees herself from the traditional shackles and doesn't sacrifice her self- respect and honour. Being a modern woman, she gives importance to her dignity. The novel starts with:

“Even though the female child is stronger than male at birth as adults it is the man, who become oppressor, and woman who suffers.” (1)

Anupama is criticised by her stepmother in her father's house. It is painful to deal with these taunts. Even her husband, Anand does not reply to her messages. She finds herself unsupportive from both parental side and Anand. Her stepmother's allegations and taunts make her to contemplate suicide. But she rejects all insults and abuse, and move forward with confidence to seek work in Bombay and a new way of life. She finds a job with the help of her college friend Sumitra and her husband Hari Prasad. She becomes financial independent and sends money to her poor father. Despite many odds, she doesn't embrace patriarchy but shows courage to overcome the traumatic stigma and prejudices for her existence. Then she moves to Dolly's house where she accepted the suggestion to become a college lecturer. In this way she turns a woman of immense potential.

Her stepmother illtreated her but now she has no personal grievances with her. Instead, she supports her by sending financial help after her father's death, and arranges her stepsisters' marriages. Anand has made attempts to get her return in the family but to no avail. She clearly refused to have no relation with him. It signs the maturity of a new woman in Anupama. Now she wants to live a happy life that indicates, woman doesn't need any support of man to be existed. With her courage and perseverance, Anupama embodies the image of the modern woman. Her decision on her married life is well explained in her words to Anand:

“How can you possibly expect a burnt seed to grow into a tree? Husband, Children, affection, love... all are irrelevant to me now. It is too late for us. I am no longer the naïve Anupama whose world revolved around you. I know what my goals are and I am heading and I don't need anyone's help to reach my destination.”(150)

It is notable that her confidence level is at its peak in the end of the novel as she doesn't need anyone in her life to be happy. As per the concept of self-determination theory, the external events influence the motivation level and apparent competence. The theory could be related to the climax of the novel when Anupama excludes the idea of dependency. The determination found in Anupama is purely positive outcome from the external predicament that she had undergone in her past life.

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