

# An overview on the Themes, Characterizations and Feminism in Sudha Murthy's Novels

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**Abstract** - The literature of India has played a significant part in the growth of both India and the rest of the globe. One of the most influential Indian women authors, particularly Sudha Murthy, is an example of this. Every location has a need for the English language. For Indian literature, the evolution of language has been crucial in bringing it to a new level. The writings of Sudha Murthy are regarded as landmarks in contemporary English literature. Her writings cover a wide range of topics, including education, religion, culture, family, social attitudes, economics, and feminist issues, to name just a few. As a prolific writer, she is able to cover a wide range of topics in her critique of society, including the political, social, educational, and home lives of Indian women. 'Postmodern Feminism' is a fusion of postmodernism, poststructuralism and French feminism. Gender Trouble, Judith Butler's 1990 book, is where it originally appeared. Phenomenological feminism, which rejects the advancement of Feminism, is opposed to postmodern feminism. The goal of postmodern feminism is to dismantle the patriarchal conventions that have contributed to gender inequity in the first place. Since the 1960s, women's rights movements have inspired feminist literary critique. As a result, it has far-reaching effects. There is a lot of debate over the male-dominated culture. Even literature is influenced by the zeitgeist. Research in this article will focus on Sudha Murthy's books, their themes and characters.

**Index Terms** - Themes, Characterizations, Feminism, the role of theory, the nature of language, Literature, Indian fiction, etc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism and postmodernism, it is the ultimate accepting of the multiplicity of postmodernism. For this big idea, it refuses to provide a single rationale. In their view, there are no biological distinctions between men and women, and hence no need for postmodern feminists to reject all previous feminist theories. Her husband, Nagavara Ramarao Narayan Murthy (the co-

founder of Infosys), is a prominent Kannada and English writer, philanthropist, and computer expert. Sudha Murthy has received the Padma Shri award for social work and the R.K.Narayan award for her literary works in 2006, as well as a lifetime achievement award for her contributions to literature. The suffering of the female heroines in Sudha Murthy's books Mahashweta and Gently falls the Bakula is vividly depicted in her works. During Mahashweta's narration, Anupama's superstitious beliefs and subsequent hardships are recounted, as well as her subsequent transformation into a joyful person. 'The Bakula depicts the protagonist, who has been locked in a loveless and sophisticated existence, finally breaking out.' It focuses on the hardships women encounter in society and how they transform into courageous and strong minds capable of coping with their own hardships. It's as though Sudha Murthy captures the essence of what it's like to be a woman in contemporary India in her art. As a result of their exposure to Western education and culture, the characters in her stories are able to manage exceptional challenges with ease. Postmodern Feminism is a new literary genre that emerged out of women's need for knowledge and anxiety about their lives.

## II. SUDHA MURTHY'S WRITINGS: CHARACTERIZATION

Human or heavenly characters are the most common kind of characters in works of art. It is a person who is capable of taking action. As the characters and the textual representation converse, the world is formed. Margolin defines it thus way: 'A character might be anybody or anything in a narrative fiction work—human or otherworldly, average or extraordinary.' As a result, characters exist in the fictional worlds they inhabit and have a hand in at least one of the situations

or events described in the storyline. 'A character may be regarded as a participant in the fictional universe.' When a writer creates an individual, he or she creates an individuality, a persona. A writer's ability to make this shift is a measure of their expertise, or lack thereof. For realism, the author employs a variety of literary devices such as descriptions, talks, conversations, and internal monologues. According to their appearances in the literature, characters were usually categorised as heroes, villains, or minor characters based on their roles. Depending on their importance in the storey, they were referred to as 'major characters' or 'minor characters.' Traditionally, characters were divided into flat and round characters. However, this classification has been abolished recently. With terminology like protagonist and primary hero, characters reveal a shift in our hero paradigm that was intended to be noble, heroic and complicated in the past.' Subalterns make up the bulk of the cast nowadays. These characters include Bakha in *Untouchable*, Balaram in *The White Tiger*, Velutha in *The God of Small Things*, Rukhamani in *Nectar in a Sieve*, and likes. 'Characterization art has evolved as a result of contemporary advances in psychology and anthropology. Disruptions are described in the characters' brains as well as their bodily looks. 'Readers are intended to be able to decipher the motivations of the characters in order to understand their actions.' 'Through the author's attempts to situate his characters in diverse situations, he creates a rich and realistic depiction of his characters.' The ability of the writer to develop characters in connection to one another is critical to characterization.' Characters in Sudha Murthy's work are notable for their middle-class origins. They either come from the educational or service industries. Sudha Murthy connects them to both the traditional Indian civilization and today's ultramodern society. For the most part, the young people in the show are focused on their personal and professional development. Riches beckon the venerable characters, yet they are unable to better themselves because of their inherent limitations.

Modern technology creates tensions between the old and the new, as well as between traditional ways of doing things and newer ones. Sudha Murthy's female characters have a positive outlook on life when compared to the female characters of other Indian female authors. They place a high importance on hard labour. In general, they have a positive outlook on life. Kamala Markandaya, played by Rukhmini, accepts her destiny. In a sad twist of destiny, she is an impoverished human being. In Tanner's care, she is taken out of her previous house. Now her children have abandoned her. She's getting a bad rap from society. All of this is met with her quiet acceptance, and she is unfazed. Outside, she is ruled by powerful forces. Their own destiny is decided by Sudha Murthy's ladies. In the face of adversity, Mahashweta and Mridula refuse to succumb. Mahashweta and Mridula aren't to blame for the current state of affairs. As a result, they prefer to focus on improving the exterior environment.'

'Imagination is lacking in the portrayal of Sudha Murthy. She has difficulty delving into the inner turmoil of her character. It's not uncommon for young men and women to tie the knot and have a family. They don't go on dates where they can be alone. This is a little out of character. It's unrealistic to expect young adults with impressive academic qualifications and expertise of romantic relationships to get married if they don't go out and meet people and date.'<sup>1</sup> Despite these flaws, her depiction art adheres to the narrative tradition in India, which is simple and direct. As a consequence, Sudha Murthy's books and short tales are solely available to Indian readers. As a great storyteller, she stands out due to her love of Indian culture and her refusal to imitate the Western way of doing things. India has progressed, but the Indians have not, as shown by this fact.<sup>2</sup>

### III. THEME IN SUDHA MURTHY'S WRITINGS

The novel's central topic is referred to as a 'word theme.' A book has been written on it. To be a writer, one must have a motive for writing. In order to convey

<sup>1</sup> S. PARVATHI, D. S. (2016). 'QUEST FOR SELF' IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SUDHA MURTHY. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE.

<sup>2</sup> Govind, R. (2019, 11 27). Sudha Murthy's new book profiles strong, brave women from mythology. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-authors/sudhamurthy/article30096474.ece>

a message, criticise bad conduct, disseminate morals, or tell a story from a different angle, the author plans to do all of these things. In a nutshell, an author sets out to accomplish a certain goal. In other words, he doesn't talk to himself. Thematically, every work has a primary topic and a supporting cast of subplots that revolve around it. Parallel or opposing ideas may develop from the supporting themes to emphasise the main subject. Indian fiction authors in English have written on castes, classes, social inequality, oppression, isolation, discrimination, unemployment, the rural-urban divide, etc. in their works. One or more of the topics listed above may be addressed by a writer at the same time. In actuality, a novel's grandeur is determined by its ability to handle a wide range of topics in a single work.'

She doesn't only write about women's concerns; Sudha Murthy covers a wide range of topics in her writings. Her work shows a major shift in the general perspective of female writing. Feminine literature sometimes blames men for women's problems, as if men and women were born competitors and marriage was a licence to carry out a men's women's subjugation agenda. One lady and her husband are to blame for another women's woes, according to Sudha Murthy, an Indian author writing in English. In all four of her works, the delicate connection between two women in a family is shown. To put it another way: Sudha Murthy also examines the influence of increasing capitalism on Indian society's deep personal interactions. Indians now have hundreds of ways to gain wealth because to economic liberalisation in the country. 'Young men and women were given the opportunity to go to first-world nations and take use of contemporary amenities.' On the one hand, it changed their social and financial status. In contrast, it caused tension in the family's close-knit community. All of Sudha Murthy's works dealt with the deterioration of family relationships.' Her paintings include a variety of subplots. In general, Indians have a strong sense of superstition. They adhere to a strict caste structure that emphasises the importance of arranged weddings. There is a significant role played in Indian daily life by horoscopes, favourable dark periods, rituals, habits, conventions, and religious beliefs. In all of her writings, Sudha Murthy brilliantly exposes the absurdities of Indian society.

#### IV. 'GENTLY FALLS THE BAKULA' & 'HOUSE OF CARDS': WITH REFERENCE TO FEMINISM

Feminist literary criticism has established itself as a foundational notion in literature. To some extent, the feminism of the 1960s has influenced modern feminist literary critique. There is feminism in the classical and traditional writings even prior to the women's movement. In their publications, they strove to find answers to the issue of women's inequality. This list includes works by Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, and John Stuart Mill, all of whom are known for their feminist perspectives. In the 1960s, the women's movement was primarily a literary one. It recognised the importance of literature's portrayal of women, and saw it as necessary to challenge and question the male-dominated society and to reclaim power and respect. After 1970, feminist critique took off. The function of theory and the nature of language have been the subject of many debates.

The nature of language: The nature of language has long been the subject of discussion. There was a debate on whether or not there is a distinct language for women. The nature of language is a subject of debate among linguists. Language is gendered, according to Virginia Woolf in her essay 'A Room of One's Own.' Women who begin novel writing are surprised to discover that there isn't a standard sentence available to them. Dale Spender argues that language is sexist because males have had the authority to define the meanings it contains, and these meanings represent men's perspective of reality rather than women's. Language has become a shared resource, according to their assessment. Most feminists, however, disdained the use of slovenly language and instead created their own clear and pure literary style. Many feminists, both in theory and in practise, highlighted the importance of context-dependent language. When it came to writing, Jane Austen was the master of her craft.

The role of theory: This spawned three distinct feminisms. Some people prefer the English form, while others prefer the 'Anglo-American' version. This kind of feminism is more cautious and suspicious. 'Traditional critical notions like as subject, motif, and character are still very much a part of their work.' They see literature as a collection of portrayals of women's lives and experiences that may be compared to the facts of life. The second kind of feminist critique is that which originates in the United Kingdom. It's not

like the US at all. As a result, lumping it in with a 'non-theoretical category' is an evident mistake. 'It tends to be 'Socialist feminist,' in orientation associated with cultural materialism or Marxism.' French feminism, on the other hand, focuses more on theory than the other two. Poststructuralists like Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida provided the framework for their work.

Indian feminists are influenced by the 1960s women's movement. Sudha Murthy is one of the few Indian feminists who is still active in the country today. Social worker Sudha Murthy is a prolific Kannada and English writer. Initially, she worked as a computer scientist and engineer. The Infosys Foundation is led by her, and she serves as its chairwoman. Penguin has been her primary publisher for a number of her works. More than 15 languages, including Hindi, Marathi, and others, have had translations of the book 'How I Taught My Grandmother to Read.'

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.

Symbolic meaning in 'Gently Falls the Bakula': The Bakula Tree is a metaphor for women's lives. Bakula trees may survive for up to one hundred years before dying. Flowers are what draw people to this little, light green tree. It has an intoxicating aroma. A faint scent remains even after the blossoms have dried and become brown. When the tree is in full bloom, the ground underneath it is covered in a carpet of blossoms. Bakula's flowers are a metaphor for women. For the sake of their loved ones, they put their careers on hold. They're like a pillar holding up the house's roof. Work, family, and even the achievement of her spouse might provide them delight. They don't save anything for the future. She is a candle that glows brightly for her family.

Gentle Falls the Bakula: Shrimati and Shrikanth, the two main characters, play significant roles in this storey. Srikanth's neighbour, Shrimati, lives nearby. 'They went to the same high school in Hubli, a tiny town in North Karnataka.' They have a fierce rivalry. Shrimati is consistently recognised and rewarded by her educators. Friends and professors alike show their admiration for her. Even Shrikant is aware of how

formidable a foe she is. In spite of this, he develops feelings for her and she reciprocates. They wed..... It is a little world she inhabits after marriage. She doesn't pay attention to the direction of her career. For the sake of her spouse, she gives up her time, education, and ability to make her own judgments. To her husband, she is nothing but a passive, obedient spectre. When her husband is out at work, she devotes herself to serving and awaiting his return. Shrikant, her spouse, on the other hand, works hard to improve his technical abilities and quickly rises through the ranks of the company. He sets up his own business. In the process, he neglects and forgets his wife's contribution to his progress.

This message was communicated symbolically by Sudha Murthy. Shrimati sacrifices her job for her husband, just as the Bakula flowers fill the air with their sweet scent. Shrikanth, a classmate of Shrimati's, proposes to her. She is a constant source of inspiration for him, never bringing attention to herself or her own issues. His mother and sister's bad conduct is known to him, but he chooses to remain quiet, allowing Shrimati to bear the brunt of it. They go out of their way to make fun of her and make her feel humiliated. Even yet, Shrimati devotes her life to her husband. She's bright and smart, but she doesn't give a damn about her professional future. In spite of her loneliness, she hopes for Shrikant's success and quietly bears the weight of his accomplishments. He'll never be able to get to the top without her unwavering backing. Shrikant's ego, on the other hand, is adamant that she be excluded from the credit for his success because of her contribution. Every time he looks back, he sees it as his accomplishment, not hers. He treats her almost like a personal assistant who takes care of all of his responsibilities. – Shrimati considers the accomplishments of her spouse to be her own. Shrimati will remain the same if Shrikanth acknowledges her role. His egocentric and domineering demeanour helps her see her error. She leaves her spouse to run his company and goes to another country to get a doctorate in psychology. After a few minutes of thorough consideration of Shrimati's choice in the book, the reader's opinion shifts in favour of it. Only through life's ups and downs can one come to terms with the truth. Shrikant comes to terms with his oversight, but it's too late to correct his course of action. Because he knows that she won't be back,

House of cards: In this narrative, Mrudala, a young woman from a hamlet in Karnataka, tells of her aspirations to become a doctor. Sanjay, a young doctor, introduces her to a new world. They married and make Bangalore their home. A deeper understanding of human selfishness and materialism emerges as she spends more time in the business sector. She has a positive outlook on life despite the ups and downs that come her way. As soon as she arrived in Karnataka, she began her new job and life as a teacher. Sanjay made less than her. Sanjay handed Mrudula his income as soon as they were married and instructed her to handle it. She meticulously tracked every rupee that passed through her hands. They were content with the earnings they'd racked up. On the other hand, Lakshmi, Sanjay's sister, is a squanderer. While she's married to a typical clerk, he makes his living by accepting bribes. They like flaunting their money. In their large mansion, they had everything, even extravagantly expensive furnishings. Their nature and location will be altered later on. When Sanjay resigned from the government and started a private practise, her woes increased significantly. She serves as a pillar of support for him. She's right there with her, holding her hand as she makes her way up the mountain. For the purpose of opening a care home, they've both taken out loans. For the sake of her husband's financial well-being, she pawned her jewellery. Having too much money thrown away is something she opposes. No auto rickshaw for her, and she has no interest in her saris. Starting a new care facility went very well, and money started pouring in. Sanjay's desire to gain more and more leads him to engage in unscrupulous actions as a result of his increased wealth. Because of his desire for power and money, their relationship suffers. The husband and wife are on opposite sides of the tracks. Her beloved Sanjay is no longer Sanjay to Mrudula. She has come to the conclusion that she can no longer be in a relationship with them. She flees from Karnataka and returns to her home in the countryside.

Mythology: The major Indian epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. You'll be able to connect the dots back to Sita, the great Ramayana heroine. Sita is said to be the adopted daughter of the monarch Janaka and the daughter of the soil goddess Bhumi. She weds Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, in a syamvara, a Hindu ritual of marriage. After her marriage, she and her

husband and brother-in-law are exiled to the jungle by Rakshasa Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, who kidnaps her. Until Rama frees her, she is held captive in Ashokavana. After the conflict, Rama refuses to marry her. Sita enters the flames as a test of her holiness. God Agni is afraid to even look at her. It demonstrates her innocence and total devotion to Rama. They return to Ayodhya and are crowned king and queen. Rama, on the other hand, is willing to take a risk with her own life. Rama abandons a pregnant Sita since it is his responsibility to do so. Sita gives birth to twins Lava and Kusha in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki. With the help of her husband, she nourishes and binds them together. Sita no longer desires to control the country, despite Rama and his people realising their error. To her dismay, she returns to the earth's womb.

Comparison of the two novels: Between two books, there is less of a divide. Villagers Shrimati and Mrudula were raised. In contrast, one is a teacher while the other is pursuing an academic career. They prioritise spending time with their loved ones. Both women have been abused and abandoned by their spouses. There is, however, a little difference in their duties. Mrudula is stuck in a rut and can't get out of it. She takes him back, but Shrimati made him understand that what's gone is lost.

Males are expected to demonstrate equal devotion and care for their wives and families in patriarchal societies, but they should also be aware that they have an obligation to do so. The patriarchal system has ruled for millennia. Similarities may be found in the characters of Sita in the Ramayana, Shrimati in Gentle Falling the Bakula, Mrudula in House of Cards, and many other women's characters. Women are just like this. They are recognised for their patience, intelligence, and submission. It's quite impossible to get close to them after they've lost their cool and reacted.

## V. CONCLUSION

Sudha Murthy has shown that the use of simple words may also be used to convey thoughts and perspectives. The relevance or talent of a piece of literature doesn't necessarily need the use of esoteric terminology or terms. In terms of comprehension, Sudha Murthy's writings are so accessible that they become a topic of interest for any reader. The audience and the tale form a strong connection very quickly. Writing or narration

may benefit from this. This shows Sudha Murthy's passion and effectiveness in presenting stories and conveying concepts. In all of her works, Sudha Murthy expresses her thoughts clearly. She communicates her ideas in plain language. 'Unlike the older and classical authors, whose use of language befuddles contemporary readers, Sudha Murthy is a breeze to get through. Her words are devoid of clichés and clichéd terms.' A reader will never be lost because of the author's use of jargon in her book. She gave English a fresh lease of life and made it more accessible to the general public.

Traditional Indian ladies have not changed even after their country gained freedom. She is a social outcast because of her vulnerability and emotional numbness. She is bound by the shackles of tradition, both within and publicly. She has a hard time adjusting to the realities of daily life. Women in the present period are also violent and sad as a result of the continual torture in the household and outside, therefore they are unable to deal with other people. Human beings should be treated as such by both men and women.

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