

Denying Patriarchal Values: Women Resist for their own Identity in Sudha Murthy's Select Novel

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Abstract:

Sudha Murthy is a prominent Indian writer, an educator, and philanthropist. For her contribution in the field of social work, she got position as a member of Parliament. She was awarded the Padma Shri, Bal Sahitya Puraskar, and Padma Bhushan. Her fiction presents the image of women who resist against the patriarchy. They resist and demand for their own identity. They challenge against rigid rules of patriarchy, and traditions which was made by the conservative people of society. Through education, self-respect, and courage, women raised their voice for their rights. Her protagonists have the courage to talk about their rights by questioning to the authority. Through close reading of *Mahashweta*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *Gently Falls the Bakula*, this study examines how women realize their own rights and identity, and how they are raising their voice and dare to question to authority in select novels of Sudha Murthy. This study aims to highlight the issue that how women resist against the patriarchy and how their resistance impact on her life. In *Mahashweta*, the protagonist Anupama resist through education and self-support. In *Dollar Bahu*, the protagonist Vinuta resistance within domestic environment. In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Shrimati resist against patriarchal values. Her works show the strength of female who want to live without the burden of being a silent doll or passive listener instead they are resisting for their own right in Indian English literature.

Keywords: Resistance, Courage, Education, Patriarchy, Feminism, Identity, Struggle, Self-reliant.

Introduction:

Resistance is the one of the most important themes in Indian English novels. Resistance means that fighting back against somebody or something, stop to bear other's rules instead raise voice for own rights. In Indian English Novels, we saw how women accepted patriarchy without raising their voice and without questing to authority. Most of women wanted to live under patriarchy. In Indian Cinema, we also saw that how women suffered under the patriarchy. But after sometime later, women realize for their own rights, they raise their voice by wholeheartedly. They deny to live under men's guidance. They are resisting for study, jobs, independent, and rights. Most of women challenge male dominance and restrictive values. Indian writers, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Manju Kapoor, Anita Nair, Sudha Murthy and others write about women's feeling how they suffer and how they resist for their own life in their novels. They are presenting the realistic view women's suffering and women's desire to maintain their position in the society.

The main focus of Sudha Murthy's writing is to present women's everyday life experiences like family, economic struggles, and marriage. She is highlighting women's desire to live life according to their wishes. In her novels, Sudha Murthy's narratives are based mostly on the lived realities of Indian women. Her women characters often start within the framework of patriarchy but later realize their identity as individuals who question against their sufferings, resist, and fight for their rights. The paper focuses on how Sudha Murthy's novels, *Mahashweta*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *Gently Falls the Bakula* critique patriarchal norms and resistance.

Research Objectives:

The Objectives of this study are to show the concept of resistance in the select novel of Sudha Murthy. Through her novels, this study also presents the portrayal of women's resistance against patriarchal norms, and showing the importance of education and economic independence in the life of women.

Research Methodology:

This study uses qualitative analysis and interpretive research. The primary texts include Sudha Murthy's novel *Mahashweta*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *Gently Falls the Bakula*. The analysis is supported by feminist criticism, and psychological and ethical values. This includes a close analysis of characterization, Sudha Murthy's female protagonist's journey through patriarchal structures.

Women from Submissive to Self- reliant:

This paper shows the transformation of women from a submissive wife into self- dependent individual in the select novel of Sudha Murthy. In the novel *Mahashweta*, Anupama who is the protagonist of the story, presents her life from submissive wife into an independent woman who rejects the oppressive people, marriage, society and her in-law's home. Anupama is very talented, educated and beautiful woman. When she suffers from leukoderma by an incident in home on Diwali, then she is treated as untouchable by her family and society. "Before the infection of leukoderma she was very beautiful, she got admiration for her beauty but after the white patches on her skin, she becomes an untouchable to them." Anupama's family and her husband leave her alone. Then, she decides to go to Mumbai and make her own identity.

Anupama restarts her new life and rejects the traditional barriers who controls her life. She is giving more important to her education and career. By starting her life as teacher, she is being independent and starts earning for her own livelihood. Due to this, she breaks the patriarchal thinking that "A woman is only depends on a man." She is writing her own story by her own pen. By this profession, it becomes an act of resistance because she abandons her parental home and in-laws' home who controls her life and not happy with her and now, she is free to do things according to her wish. She has freedom to live her life according to her own wish instead of being dependent on her husband.

After some days later, her husband Anand realizes his mistake and wants Anupama back in her life. He goes to meet Anupama; he wants to reunite with her. Anupama denies to live with her, now she does not accept the patriarchal thinking that "If a man says sorry, and previously did not care about you, patriarchal typical woman forgives him." But Anupama resistance against it, she rejects her husband's offer and refuses to go back with him. She accepts selfhood and independent against the social conversations.

Vinuta is the protagonist of the novel *Dollar Bahu*. Vinuta is homemaker although she is educated, and intelligent instead she chooses to be a homemaker. She is innocent, humble, and hardworking lady. She takes care of her family and making all efforts to do best for her family. She is considered as a silent

resister. Her mother-in-law, Gouramma does not like her because she is not earning dollar. Gouramma likes Jamuna because she is earning dollar in America. The proverb, “If you have money, like the sun you will shine; if you don’t have money, like a dog you will whine, was quite apt in this case (Murthy, 55)”. In home, women’s value is measured by their economic conditions of the family and not by their individuality. Although Vinuta works hard at her home but her domestic work remains unrecognized. As bell hooks observes, patriarchal societies often normalize women’s emotional and domestic labor without acknowledging its value (hooks 43).

Vinuta maintains her dignity rather than arguing with revenge and anger. She does not want to hurt her family members so she remains silent. Her silence does not look as weakness but as a refusal to participate in bitterness. This shows as an ethical form of resistance. Vinuta realizes that it is enough to bear emotional well-being. She decides to distance herself from the toxic environment instead of living lifelong humiliation. This decision makes her transformation from passive to active self-preservation. Her resistance shows that self-respect is more important than social approval. *Dollar Bahu* portrays as a form of generous feminist resistance where women discuss about patriarchal values through education, strength, and self-realization. By showing the forms of discrimination within domestic spaces, Murty questions to reconsider traditional definitions of duty, motherhood, and womanhood.

According to Simone de Beauvoir statement, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” shows patriarchal society treats women as the “Other”, denying them independent subjectivity. Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex* that women are socially maintained to show themselves through men's achievements rather than their own achievements. Shrimati initially accepts this role, believing that her husband’s success is sufficient. She compensates her own sacrifices for her husband achievement. However, as she presents her intellectual emptiness, she takes action against the patriarchal thinking that limits women to supportive domestic roles.

Gently Falls the Bakula is published in 2008. The novel revolves around the story of Shrimati and Srikant. Srikant is the childhood friend of Shrimati later. They feel same attraction to each other, and love each other. They start communicate through the letters and later they both get married. Shrikant starts works in an IT company and make her career as a corporate leader. Shrimati leaves her career for the marriage and becomes as a corporate leader’s wife. In starting phase of her marriage, she willingly abandons her academic aspiration because she thinks that marriage requires compromise. She does not care about her academics; she continuously supporting her husband’s corporate career. After sometime later, when she meets to her professor, he tells to Shrimati about academics and suggests her to continue her study again. Then she realizes that she must be to become an independent rather than dependent on her husband.

She is rejected her marriage as a patriarchal Indian wife. Now, she moves one step ahead to make her own identity. Shrimati wants to know her worth in her husband’s life. She resists her husband’s high-class society, and corporate culture. Through her education and selfhood, the novel shows active resistance instead of passive endurance. After guidance of her professor, she decides to continue her study, and she pursue admission in Ph.D. in the United States. Now this act she breaks the patriarchal norms of the society. This also as an act to refusal as a "good wife". She focuses on her own identity, and for her own individuality over to live in a performative marriage. She rejects her husband’s financial dependence, and move ahead to become an independent woman. She rejects the idea of self-sacrifice. She does not want to live where her role is considered as passive.

In the novel, the Bakula flower presents as a central symbol throughout the story. Unlike loud, showy blossoms, the Bakula flower preserves its fragrance when it falls. It symbolizes Shrimati’s quiet honor,

and resilience. Though her dreams did not complete due to her marriage, her core identity remained intact, when she gets the second chance in her life, she blossom independently in the world.

Sudha Murty's novels *Mahashweta*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *Gently Falls the Bakula* show female protagonist as a voice of resistance who challenges patriarchal structures through silent resistance, self-respect, education, and moral values rather than open rebellion, and fight. The protagonists—Anupama, Vinuta, and Shrimati show ordinary Indian women who previously accept the discrimination, emotional neglect, and gender inequality. Their resistance is presented in personal transformation and the courage to reject social norms that hide their dignity, their rejection of society norms can emerge through independent decision-making, and self-reliant.

Through these protagonists, Murty presents resistance as an inner strength rather than an external conflict. Her protagonists neither reject family nor tradition completely instead, they question against oppressive cultures and redefine their roles within society as independent rather depend upon male patriarchy. Their story presents the realities of many middle-class Indian women who suffer between cultural values and personal aspirations. Murty's feminist vision is portrayed as feminism, emphasizing equality, education, independence, and self-respect rather continuously live in social patriarchy and restrictions of culture. They feel free and realize that one should live according to one's own choice.

In conclusion, Sudha Murty's novels show a significant contribution to Indian English literature by presenting women as resistance protagonists whose courage lies in their ability to maintain their dignity. The novels *Mahashweta*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *Gently Falls the Bakula* collectively show that silent resistance is achieved by self-realization, and the determination to construct an identity beyond patriarchal society. Murty's woman protagonists continue to inspire readers by showing that empowerment starts with the courage to value oneself, making her works enduring texts in the study of feminism. In the novel *Mahashweta*, Anupama leaves her marriage to maintain her identity and she achieves independence and self-respect. In *Dollar Bahu*, Vinuta resists against social pressure by restarting her career and as result, she establishes her own self-worth. In *Gently Falls Bakula*, Shrimati neglects her marital life and pursues education. It results as she gets intellectual and emotional independence. Finally, the empowerment of women in the novels of Sudha Murthy is portrayed as a process of self-discovery and self-respect.

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