



A QUEST FOR EGALITARIAN SOCIETY IN SUDHA MURTY'S SELECT NOVELS 'GENTLY FALLS THE BAKULA' AND 'HOUSE OF CARDS'

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Abstract:

Sudha Murty being a disciplined and renowned Indian English Writer has contributed to the Indian English literature through her remarkable fictional and non-fictional works. Her works reflect the plights and the earnest issues in the society. She outspeaks the problems of women in the Indian society who have to struggle for getting their fundamental rights of equality. The society which is basically known as the patriarchal one, does not seem to be based on the doctrine of egalitarianism. As a result of it, the women have to suffer and make their own ways in a quest of egalitarian society. The researcher has tried to highlight the struggles, concerns and the quest for egalitarian society in Sudha Murty's novels '*Gently Falls the Bakula*' and '*houses of cards*'. The protagonists of these novels, Shrimati and Mridula have to undergo through many difficulties despite of being well-educated due to the domain of patriarchal society. At last the women protagonists of the novels take the ultimate decision of leaving their husbands to empower themselves and try to create the egalitarian society.

Key Words: Quest, Egalitarianism or Egalitarian Society or Equality, Search for Identity, Women Empowerment.

Concept of Egalitarianism or Egalitarian Society:-

Egalitarianism is a philosophical doctrine and trend of thought especially in moral equality. It basically refers to the ideology based on fundamental rights of social equality to every human being. All human beings have the equal rights and opportunities irrespective of caste, creed, religion and race. Egalitarianism may be defined in different contexts. The emergence of Egalitarianism may be traced back in the Greek political philosophy. It promotes to the ideals and the humanitarian perspectives which confer the world rights and equality. It has been effectively used and developed by the writers like John Lock and Karl Marx. Egalitarianism is defined as follow-

-Egalitarianism refers to the class of distractive principles, which claims that individuals should have equal quantities of well-being or morally relevant factors that affect their lives. (Hirose 2014, p.01)

-‘The belief that everyone is equal and should have the same rights and opportunities’. (<http://www.oxfordlearnerdictionaries.com>)

-‘Egalitarianism is the position that equality is central to justice’ Godon (n.d.)

-Egalitarianism is a philosophical perspective that emphasizes equality and equal treatment across gender, religion, economic status and political beliefs. (<http://www.investopedia.com>).

A Quest for Egalitarian Society in Murty’s novels ‘Gently Falls the Bakula’ and ‘House of Cards’:-

A quest of egalitarian society as a great concern is found in Murty’s select novels. Murty herself intends to focus on the discernment of the society where the women are still kept away from the equal rights and equal opportunities in the life. The following two novels will depict the desire of the protagonist for the creation of egalitarian society.

‘Gently Falls the Bakula’

The present novel reflects a quest of egalitarian society through the story of the protagonist, Shrimati. Shrimati is shown a very simple, kind hearted and educated girl. She gets married with a person, Shrikant who has been her classmate and childhood friend. She likes his nature and humanitarian approach towards life. She is equally educated like Shrikant. They love each other. They live happily for few years of the marriage life. After completing engineering, Shrikant joins IT Company. When he becomes so busy in the works and runs after money, it brings many changes in his nature. Later he doesn’t think of giving time to her. He remains outside for business purpose and forgets his responsibilities towards his wife. She tolerates everything without complaining. She becomes very upset when she comes to know that Shrikant is completely changed. He has been practical, money-minded and hedonist towards life. She feels very sad that he doesn’t value her emotions and education. She performs her all the responsibilities and duties as a responsible and uncomplaining wife. But Shrikant never thinks of her loneliness. She feels so lonely in the house. Though she is well-educated yet she has no opportunity to create her identity on the basis of her education. On the contrary, Shrikant prefers to see her as an uncomplaining house wife that makes her realize and think about her life. She longs to have equal rights and opportunity for the women in the society. It shows her quest for egalitarian society. Ultimately she decides to take decision of going away from him. Shrimati suffers a lot being a woman. She wants to make her way to prove her ability but her husband doesn’t want her to do anything except doing household duties as a housewife. The following dialogues will throw light on her attempt to create an equalitarian society as below-

“No Shri. Listen to me patiently. Very few people can work like you to achieve what you have, not bothering about material benefits or happiness in life. But nothing is free in life, Shri. In achieving your position, you have lost your Shrimati. I cannot live in this kind of an atmosphere with these artificial values. I require to breathe fresh air. I do not want to live as your shadow. I want to find my own happiness. Shri, if I had not been sensitive and bright, I wouldn't have had to suffer such loneliness. I could have enjoyed your wealth. When I was thinking about my life so far, what my goal has been, I have realized what I want”. (Murty, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, p.161).

The above aforesaid dialogues are nothing but the expression of her innermost feelings as an aggrieved woman who reluctantly leaves her husband to empower herself and create egalitarian society for the women as well.

house of cards

The researcher tried to elucidate the quest for egalitarian society through the character of a woman protagonist, Mridula in the present novel. She is a common, lovable and civilized girl. She is grown up in a small village, Alladhalli. She lives with her family happily. She has inherited the spiritual values from her father. Therefore she helps the poor and serves them in the village. She is well educated and works at govt. school in her village. She believes in humanitarian perspectives. Later she encounters Sanjay in a marriage of her friend in her village. He does medical practice in Bombay's govt. hospital. He proposes her and expresses his desire to marry with her. Mridula thinks over his proposal and tells about it to her parent. Her parent loves and believes in her a lot. They get ready for that marriage. Here the important thing is to note that she belongs to very well to do family. Sanjay is an impoverished doctor who is doing practice in government hospital where he earns very less. He is physically handicap by a hand. Yet Mridula doesn't think about all these things. She just likes his nature and expects to serve the people without cheating and hurting them. At last she accepts his proposal and gets married despite of his physical deformity. She wants to uplift him to serve the poor sections of society as a doctor.

She transfers to Bangalore for him when he joins govt. hospital of Bangalore. She lives happily for some years but later she finds the drastic transformation in Sanjay. She helps him in all the situations. She provides financial assistance selling her ornaments for starting his own hospital. When he starts doing private practices, then he is completely engrossed in the works. He longs to earn only money and luxurious things. He forgets his duties as a husband and a responsible doctor to serve poor people in the society. He does everything to get luxurious life. He neglects her and becomes practical and hedonist. It hurts her a lot. She gets psychologically so disturbed. She doesn't want to live in the atmosphere of material values. She has never expected from him the bungalow, money, property and luxurious life. She feels very sad and lonely in the big house where there is nothing for her. He doesn't look after her. She opposes his way of earning money which is immoral and inhuman. At last she expresses her true emotions to him on the occasion of their wedding ceremony through the following dialogues that reflect the quest of egalitarian society where a woman can be considered equal to men and equal opportunity shall be provided her. The dialogues are as follow-

"No, I've spent twenty-five of my most important years with you and yet, I never felt like I belonged to you or your family. I'm still an outsider. My father's house now belongs to Vatsala and I don't want to be a burdon on my brother and her. Sishir is independent and you can take care of him better than I can. My duty towards both of you is over. I've fulfilled all my duties as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Now, I want to live for myself. I have my job, my school and my village. You don't have to worry about me any longer. You and Sishir can visit me whenever you want." (Murty, *House of Cards*, p.218).

The above dialogues reveal her attempt to break the shackles of traditional bondage of patriarchal society. She prefers to go away from his all artificial things that could never give a sort of satisfaction. Therefore she looks for a space of her own for empowering herself and creating the egalitarian society.

Women Empowerment as emblem of creating a quest for egalitarian society:

Women Empowerment refers to the emancipation of women in any section of the society. It advocates to the capabilities and the potentialities of the women to prevail over the problems and adversities of their lives in the patriarchal society. The women protagonists of the novels, Shrimati and Mridula represent the struggles and problems of women in the society which is not likely to be based on the doctrines of egalitarianism. As they both suffer and long to have their individual identities to prove their competencies in the world, likewise many women have to come across with the same circumstances. If they also make up their minds like the women protagonists in the novels, they can also empower themselves and create their own egalitarian society where no women shall be discriminated from the rights of equality and equal opportunity.

Conclusion:

In the limelight of above mentioned explanation of Murty's select novels, the researcher tried to highlight the real plights of women in the Indian society through the protagonists in the novels. It has clearly been shown that why women have to seek a quest for egalitarian society. Despite of being equal to men in all the sectors, they are discriminated and deprived from the development and equal opportunities of improving their standard of lives. Sudha Murty has tried to set the ideals for women in the society through the characters of Shrimati and Mridula. The women should be aware of their rights of equality. They should try to empower themselves in any critical circumstances and create egalitarian society.

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