



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

EXPLORING SUDHA MURTHY'S NARRATIVE MAHASHWETA: A JOURNEY FROM REJECTION TO EMBRACING TO EMBRACING FEMALE IDENTITY.

Prajwala S Sanil^{1,2} & Dr. Arputhem Lourdusamy^{3,4}

¹Research scholar, Institute of Social Science & Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore-575001, Karnataka, India.

²Assistant Lecturer, Dept. of English, Govinda Dasa PU College, Surathkal, Mangalore, Karnataka, India,

³ Research Professor, Institute of Social Science & Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

Abstract: Women's efforts to seek their independence, self-respect, and self-identity started a revolution all over the world, and even in India, we find many such women who have achieved it. This novella, 'Mahashweta', throws light on the social stigma of Leucoderma. Due to a lack of education and proper awareness, even now, people discriminate against and mistreat people with such skin afflictions. Such prejudicial thinking resulted in the annihilation of Anupama's life. 'Mahashweta's novel explores the dark complexities of the human mind as well as its resilience. 'Mahashweta' is a very inspiring, compelling, and completely engrossing book that helps you grow as a true human being. The female protagonist, Anupama, finds solace from her problems by seeking self-identity and self-respect through her diligent passion for theatre as well as teaching. The text was exceptional and a prime illustration of feminist literature. Some claim that women's bodies are capable of giving birth to mortal and finite beings, namely kids, whereas men's bodies have the ability to "give birth" to immortal creations such as books and art. Mary Klages, aged 94. Nevertheless, these texts exemplify the fanciful and enduring nature of such fiction, as evidenced by the theme of "male uncertainty regarding their paternity" (Mary Klages, 94). Sudha Murthy, the author of this novel, serves as a prime illustration of this. Female authors focus on portraying authentic female characters in their literary works, expressing their emotions and perspectives. So, as in the case of writer Sudha Murthy, who beautifully portrays a world of powerful prejudices, shattered illusions, and bewildering betrayals, there is also the indomitable courage of a young girl who learns to face, all by herself, the challenge of rebuilding her life in such a way that she can stand on her own two feet and fulfil and nurture others who are in distress.

Key words: affliction, leucoderma, marginalisation, self-identity, social stigma, rejection.

Introduction: Sudha Murthy is a highly productive columnist and the author of nineteen novels. The book "Mahashweta" was first released in the year 2000. She eloquently explores the depths of human existence, displaying deep empathy and insight into the experiences of women who repress their feelings and endure silently. In addition, in her capacity as a social worker, she has directly witnessed a multitude of individuals who experience such distress without engaging in any unlawful behaviour. This research aims to analyse how the author's viewpoint, namely as a woman, has highlighted the societal discrimination and bias linked to the 'cosmetic' condition known as leucoderma. Dermatitis is a non-communicable skin

disorder. According to her, a person's attractiveness lies in their simplicity and self-assurance. "Hence, the recommendation is to prioritise one's own well-being and not be overly concerned with the opinions or expectations of others," she counsels, since it is important for each person to pursue their own personal journey." The reference is to page 127 of the book "Mahashweta".

'Mahashweta' 1960 is also the title of the Marathi work written by Dr. Sumati Kshetramade (1913–1997), an Indian Marathi writer from Maharashtra and a physician by profession who also spoke about the same theme of social stigma of leucoderma and how it affects the life of the protagonist, Sudha, and her struggle to overcome obstacles in her life.

Mahashweta is the story of Anupama, a stunning young lady who hails from an impoverished family and receives a scholarship to finance her education. Her greatest passion is the theatre; she delights in directing, acting, and being immersed in the world of theatre. The very meaning of the name "Anupama" is "imparable" or "unmatched." The narrative commences with gynaecologist Dr. Anand, who spends the entire night attempting to assist his patient, who has a critical heart condition. When the newborn female infant does not cry, he attempts and succeeds in resuscitating the infant via artificial respiration; however, the female infant begins to sob. Prabhavathi, an experienced nurse in the maternity unit, maintains the view that female infants exhibit greater robustness at delivery compared to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, as the male offspring progressed into adulthood, he would acquire superior physical power compared to the female. "He would later dominate and suppress her" (Mahashweta, page 2). Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that culpability for such heinous acts against women seldom lies exclusively with the implicated guy. Rather, his family members, including his mother, sister, and other female companions who encourage and support his heinous actions, are frequently held just as accountable for such brutality and exploitation.

According to the narrative, upon hearing and seeing Anupama's first sound and appearance, Dr. Anand is instantly captivated and resolves to wed this exquisite young lady. Radhkka, Anand's mother, exhibited a composed and subdued disposition as she consented to his insistence that Anupama and he enter into matrimony. Radhkka came from an exceptionally wealthy family. After conducting a thorough analysis of the horoscope, she discovered that she was incapable of generating any logical objections to the proposal (Mahashweta, pg 32). As a result, she felt obliged to give her consent. Because Anupama was born into a profoundly impoverished family, Radhakka and her daughter Girija held her in contempt and consistently exhibited hostility towards her. By virtue of being informed about Anupama's skin condition, Radhakka was able to seclude her from her household and the life of her son. Radhakka exemplifies the prevalent fallacy of stereotyping those who are affluent or impoverished. Her lack of effort to comprehend Anupama, notwithstanding her unique attributes, is conspicuous. Shamanna, Anupama's father, was an extremely impoverished schoolteacher whose second wife, Sabakka, consistently exerted dominance over him. Anupama's very existence perpetually infuriated Sabakka, and her hostility increased until Anupama moved to Mumbai and started helping her financially. Her former adversaries were given the chance to mock her and ruin her existence. Without seeking her assent, each individual imposed their own desires upon her. Grandiose ceremonies are not what determine a marriage's true success; rather, love and understanding between the husband and wife do. So true love is not dependent on outward appearance, boasting, or anything artificial; it is natural, and when she married Anand, she felt she was on cloud nine. But her happiness is dashed when she notices a white patch on her foot. Anand stayed silent throughout her anguish, simply thinking of his own pain. Her several letters of pleading failed to soften his heart. He remained mute for all her distress letters. It's primarily because he never loved Anupama as a person; he was only interested in her physical attractiveness, and when that faded, he abandoned her. In front of her eyes, the institution of marriage's promises were shattered. Everyone saw her as a huge burden that needed to be lifted off their shoulders. They regard her as a massive burden. Anand failed to rise to the occasion when the genuine nature of man was revealed.

The novella effectively portrays the adage that women are their own worst adversaries by featuring female protagonists who endure mistreatment and humiliation at the hands of Sabakka (Anupama's stepmother), Girija (Anupama's sister-in-law), and Radakka (Anupama's mother-in-law). To accomplish gender equality, females must cease passing judgement on one another. One must develop the ability to respect other women whose destinies they determine in a different way. The societal indoctrination that governs the

upbringing of women in the country constitutes a significant barrier to their liberty. Radakka, who purported to be an orthodox woman but was in fact cunning and self-serving, expelled her daughter-in-law. However, upon coming to terms with her skin condition, she forgave her daughter Girija, who had an extramarital affair prior to her matrimonial union.

Throughout history, women have been subjected to such tribulations for no apparent reason. (162 Mahashweta). Anupama was not an exception; upon her return from her husband's residence, her stepmother and other villagers subjected her to mental anguish and torment. Indian society has become incredibly callous and irrational towards women who have lost their husbands, are widows, or are childless. Such women are regarded as ominous or unlucky. In order to prevent such hostile reactions, she began to abstain from attending such events.

Anupama faced the cruel comments of her stepmother, who blamed her for her own daughter's failed marriage due to Anupama's illness. Additionally, rumours regarding her husband's potential for a second marriage circulated. In the end, her yearning to be with her father was extinguished by Shamanna's poignant, helpless words, "I am unaware of why girls are brought into this world and why she must continue to exist here" (Mahashweta p. 77). It was tantamount to the fatal strike that sealed her fate. Almost immediately, she realised that no one had any regard for her. She is ostracised by her in-laws, husband, and even her own father, causing her to feel increasingly bitter and contemplate suicide. However, upon careful reflection, she chooses to embrace life because her husband has failed to fulfil his promise, and she realises it is not worth sacrificing herself for someone who has not shown care for her. Consequently, she makes the decision to depart from the country and establish herself in Bombay with her best friend, Sumithra, in order to live an autonomous existence. However, when her best friend's husband, Hari, behaves inappropriately towards her, she successfully defends herself and promptly organises alternative lodging. Hari, like Dr. Anand, is a hypocrite and opportunist who is solely preoccupied with a woman's physical attractiveness.

People who have always lived in the sunlight will never understand darkness. (Mahashweta pg.81) There are so many people around us with one or the other deformities or shortcomings who struggle every day with themselves and crave acceptance, but many times we turn our backs on their agony and become so inhuman and insensitive. Atrocities and ostracization they suffer—we can't even imagine it in our dreams. Everywhere, Anupama was marginalised and insulted. In spite of being ruthlessly punished, she turned out to be stronger than before.

Mahashweta, on page 117, asserts that the most egregious transgressions one can contemplate are acts of betrayal and the inability to uphold one's obligations. These lines are a clear indication of Anupama's principles of life. She remains a good friend of Dr. Vasant and Dr. Satya, who helps and treats her when she meets with an accident, and both are enchanted and influenced by the compassionate and helping nature of Anupama. Dr. Vasant takes the initiative to propose marriage to Anupama, but she declines due to her awareness of the societal stigma associated with leukoderma, particularly in rural areas where it is considered a curse or a consequence of past life crimes. Individuals with this condition are sometimes regarded as foreboding or inauspicious. Since she saw Dr. Sathya's girlfriend leave him for someone better than him, As Anupama had a profound understanding of the suffering that results from deception. Anupama demonstrates empathy towards him and endeavours to establish a connection by sharing her own life experiences, with the intention of helping Dr. Satya to overcome his despair.

Anupama is an intelligent woman who easily understands the selfish motives of a male-dominated society. She is aware of the fact that Anand only appreciated her bodily beauty and not her pure love. When his beauty faded, he deserted her. 'The rules were different, and a male-dominated society would not question his behaviour. He would escape punishment without any consequences. She also realised that society always blames women for leading a lonely life but never questions a man about anything. Women is also considered a 'Kshamaya Dharitri' Sanskrit shloka; it means to have patience like earth. In our ancient scriptures, women are attributed to practicing such virtue, where she must possess a big heart to forgive her oppressor or the one who has done wrong to her. But Anupama shatters such a fragile stereotype image of women; it is irreplaceable. She had judged the situation and made up her mind. Anupama asserts that she has acquired the knowledge that courage and confidence are the true assets in life. Education has the ability

to improve it. The reference is to page 127 of the book "Mahashweta". In this passage, the author underscores the significance of education as the sole means by which women can attain empowerment. Anupama, having received an education, is able to live autonomously and unrestricted, without relying on others. The attributes that brought her contentment and confidence were her optimistic outlook on life, her empathy and care for others, her acceptance of people as they are, and her lack of judgement. "I embrace life's circumstances without any remorse." The reference is from page 127 of the book "Mahashweta". She embraces life's challenges and triumphs over her psychological distress.

Anand's mother pretended to be a devout woman and accused Anupama of being a sinner because of her splotchy appearance, then evicted her daughter-in-law. Anand laments his gullible trust in his mother. Contemplating the genuine essence of his sister and mother, he reflected over the perplexing situation of his mother, who unfairly condemned his innocent wife. He strongly disliked her hypocritical nature, since she acted like a sinner while questioning the integrity of the saint, and subsequently expelled his wife from the residence. He experiences heightened remorse for betraying her and making impulsive decisions, intensifying his feelings of disgust and unhappiness. Although he is aware that leucoderma is not a clinically recognised condition and is not contagious, he regrets his actions. Upon comparing his sister and mother with Anupama, he perceived Anupama to be significantly superior to anyone in terms of morals, intellect, and conduct. She unequivocally rejects Anand's apologies due to her aversion to a reckless individual, deeming her spouse untrustworthy. Anupama's refusal to reunite with Anand signifies her opposition to the patriarchal culture that seeks to oppress and penalise her. Additionally, it demonstrates her process of recognising and asserting her own feminine identity. Moreover, she asserts firmly, 'It is inappropriate to address an unfamiliar woman by her given name.' The reference is to page 165 of the book "Mahashweta". Anupama is the best example of a strong character who is suppressed and marginalised by a patriarchal society. Anupama, with her self-confidence and bold attitude towards patriarchy, raised a powerful voice of protest against patriarchal dominance.

Conclusion: -

Sudha Murty portrays Anupama as a strong character who is content in her way. Married to a wealthy, educated man but left alone to fight against leucoderma, she struggles alone in the clutches of a stereotyped, judgemental, and male-dominated society. Her family and the whole society try to ill-treat her and impose many restrictions on her. They never understood her feelings or respected her as a woman. Even the women never supported her; instead, they proved to be the main reason for all her miseries. Being isolated from her family members and also from society, she retaliated against all odds and sought name and fame by chasing her passion for theatre. Through her plays, she tries to voice her feelings against oppression, and her life becomes an inspiration for many of her students, whom she treats like her children. Despite being alone, Anupama endures the societal oppression, bravely continues with her uphill task of fighting against skin ailment, and, through her compassion, wins everyone's heart, including Dr. Vasant. This way, once rejected, Anupama enters a new phase of self-realisation and comes out of all odds as a winner. Her sufferings led her to self-discover her innate potential and lead a peaceful and content life.

References

1. Murthy, Sudha. *Mahashweta*. New Delhi.: Penguin Books, 2007.
2. Kshtramade, Sumati. *Mahasweta*. Kolhapur.: Rhea Publication, 1960
3. Klages Mary, *Literary Theory: A Guide For the Perplexed*.
4. S Parvathi, *The Evolution of a New woman in Sudha Murthy's Novel Mahasweta* Research Journal of English Language and Literature(RJELAL) International Journal,2016.
5. Sudha Murthy (17 July 2011). . The Hindu
6. Shankar Joshi, *An Evening with Bhabani*, The Sunday Standard, 27 April 1969.
7. B Parinitha, *The Soul and Spirit of Morality in Sudha Murthy's Select Short Story Book for Children*. 2022 <http://dx.doi.org/10.53032/issn.2455-6580>.
8. Barry Peter (2013)- Beginning Theory
9. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. Encyclopedia Britannica, 21 May 2020. <https://www.britannica.com>
10. Rimah Saleh Alyahya (2019). *Articulation of women in the Lens of Intersectionality and its Dimensions in One Part Woman and Singarevva and the Palace*. Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews. 7(2):72-76. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.728>
11. Rimah Saleh Alyahya (2019). *The Social and Ethical Values in the Select Novels of Sudha Murthy*. Pp667-673 <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.728>
12. Cvinar, J. G. *Do suicide survivors suffer social stigma: A review of the literature*. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, (2005)., 41(1),14-21.
13. Nisha et.al(2017) *The Bold determined female characters in Sudha Murthy's Novels: A real portrayal of the present Indian corporate life*. *Journal of English Language and Literature*. 4(4):140-143.
14. Sambaiah M (2019) *Emergence of New Woman in Sudha Murthy's Mahasweta: A Study*.
15. Geeta Somjee (1989). *Approaches to the Study of Problems of Women. Narrowing the Gender Gap*. The Macmillan Press Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-19644-9_1
16. <https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/237609>. Wilma-Manikiller
17. <https://www.pinterest.ru/pin/329114685269826390/?nic=1>
18. Google and Wikipedia