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Feministic Sensibilities in Sudha Murty's Mahashweta: A Heroic Oppression of Anupama

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Abstract: Indian English literature is replete with events in the outside world and depicts an accurate picture of social realities. In an effort to spread awareness, Indian writers strive hard to arrest the complexities of female emotions and behavior. Contemporary writers use literature to reaffirm contemporary themes such as gender conflict, social injustice, and the perception of the professional world, among others. Among these Sudha Murty's *Mahashweta* is a heart touching book that raises awareness of leukoderma, a treatable white skin patch, among readers worldwide and addresses traditional socio-familial concerns. Dr. Anand doesn't advocate for his wife against society and her orthodox mother. In this novel *Mahashweta* Anupama rejects her husband and embraces her new life as an assistant professor and theater director for college students at Bombay which is her own passion. As a result of her education, oppression, strength and action, she portrays herself the real-life heroic role in 'Mahashweta'.

Keywords: Socio-familial, Tradition, Leukoderma, Oppression, Awareness.

Introduction:

Indian writing in English has accomplished global recognition in recent era. Indian authors tried to bring in many promising themes in their writings. As a result of which, there are increased number of writers in recent times. In this contemporary picture, Indian writers expressed their themes so authentically which covered way for international appreciation. It has reached its readers around the world by expanding its wide horizon in various genres like novel, drama, poetry, short fiction, autobiography, travelogue, etc. In recent days, Women writers too have concerned themselves in creating world recognition by their creative powers so realistically. "Feminism refers to the support of women's right. This right is to remove gender discrimination and gives equal status to female in society" (Attar, 2016).

Sudha Murty is a humanitarian literary figure. She is well known writer and a philanthropist who contributed much to the arena of Indian literature. She is a prolific writer with more than two hundred books to her credit (Prema, 2020). She tries to spread a sense of hope, happiness or social awareness through her writings with a simple and lucid language. *Mahashweta* is one such noteworthy novel. It is a motivating story about a cooperative, courageous woman-Anupama.

Discussion

Anupama; the signal of heroic women: "A young girl of extraordinary beauty, with her beautiful large eyes, exquisite complexion and face framed by long, jet-black hair, she looks like apsara" (8). "Her smile like a parijata flower blooming touch of a dewdrop" (9). She was truly incomparable. Her education was M.A. Sanskrit in top class. She was good singer and impressive theatre actor also. Ms. Anupama has been of immense help in raising funds for the school" (15). She sells tickets door to door with great efforts. She performs the role of Mahashweta on the stage in her college time. Mahashweta is a very beautiful princess, daughter of the king Gandhara. It is the essence of love between the actress Mahashweta and the hero Pundrika. As such in her real life, Ms. Anupama's meeting with Anand at Dr. Desai's house changes her life. She and Anand fall in love with each other. She expelled herself "To me the greatest jewel is my Anand and

the rest only weigh me down” (36). After two months, Anand went to England for further studies and her mother-in-law insisted Anupama to stay for next two months as her new daughter in law perform the Lakshmipuja on the occasion Deepavali and then leave for England (37).

Radhakka was furious with Anupama at every moment. It was the auspicious day of Lakshmipuja, all of them forgot their difference at it was the celebration of the year. ‘Radhakka sent Anupama to get the hot coals to light the incense for the goddess’ (45). Anupama was badly burned on her foot as a flaming piece of coal dropped on it when she was returning from the kitchen. he did not tell anyone about this. A couple of days later she noticed a small white patch on her foot where she got burnt. She did not bother much she began to suspect that it could be Leukoderma, and became numb with fear. She was too shocked even to cry. She tried to give all her efforts to the students, she was friendly to all staff, students and always ready to help anyone on her way. She became confident and self-assured. “When she had got a job in Bombay, she had sent half her salary to her father. But she had never felt like going back home” (130). Her office friend Dolly’s accident and Anupama’s blood donation, care of Dr. Satya who was Dr. Vasant’s friend during his illness, attending wedding ceremonies and presenting the small gifts as symbol of love and affection to each and every one in her friend circle indicates her multifaceted personality. Towards the end it is evident that she rejected the proposal of marriage by Dr. Vasant as she does not wish to marry again. Also, she refused to go with her husband, Dr. Anand. This shows that she has discarded the concept of marriage in her life. She decided to live alone and face different challenges in the male dominated society.

Anupama’s father was a mathematics teacher, an example of financial constraints in the village. Shamanna could afford to spend a very little money for his daughter’s marriage. “Anupama’s father had bought her an artificial silk sari, for that was all he could afford” (36). Other event is during the ‘Gowri festival’ when Anupama was denied a visit to her father’s home, he sent a hundred rupees by money order. Radhakka humiliated Anupama and her father, with disgusting words as, ‘The baksheesh I give our cook is more than this’ (45). Nanda’s marriage was cancelled due to Anupama’s skin disease and financial problems. He told “Why did I have to father girls? They have become milestones around my neck. My worries have become doubled since Anu returned home. Why does she have to remain here? I am going to retire soon; how will I fend for all of us?” (72). The writer skillfully portrays the constant suffering endured by Shamanna, providing a poignant depiction of the hardships faced by the lower class in society. The author illustrates his severe struggle in upbringing his girls’ children.

Anupama’s step-mother is so calculative with materialistic mind. She has two daughters, Nanda and Vasudha. She is unwilling to educate Anupama as she believed that after her marriage, she would definitely prioritize supporting her husband’s family. So, she continuously harassed her husband, Shamanna. The behaviour of a step-mother abouts Anupama is reflected in her own words, ‘This apsara won’t get married herself and insists on destroying my girls’ lives!’ (26). She has always partial behaviour with Anupama. She heartedly wished that Anupama should not get a good husband. This symbolizes the brutality of a step mother.

Radhakka was extremely orthodox and narrow minded. They had two children, Anand and Girija. When her husband Gopala Rao died, the thought that she was a widow made her fill very uncomfortable although she had no financial worries. With the death of her husband, she felt she could no longer celebrate the puja of goddess. She believed that only her daughter in-law could perform the Laxmi puja, so she was waiting for Anand to get married. She always wants to find a match the bride with equal status in her community for her son. Nevertheless, she wished to marry a good-looking girl irrespective of the wealth they possess. When Anand expressed his love for Anupama, with a heavy heart, Radhakka accepted her as daughter-in-law. Radhakka commented, “She wanted to ruin our reputation! How dare she! I agreed to this alliance only because Anand was so adamant” (45). This line clearly reveals the mindset of Radhakka regarding the wedding. She accepted Anupama not because of her generosity; it was only to please Anand.

Girija, the younger daughter of Radhakka was not good in studies but no one bothered about it. She was always reluctant to Anupama from college days and after marriage also. She went to picnic with her boyfriend, while Anupama needs to get permission from her mother in-law even to go out for a small function. She should follow all her mother in-laws’ instructions and perform her duties as a dutiful daughter in-law according to her in-law’s wish. Radhakka insists her as, “Give the child a silver bowl as a gift. Remember to wear your emerald ornaments and take the car. But don’t stay too long in their house” (40-41). Radhakka’s intension was attending a function was not so much to socialize or participate in the festivities as to flaunt

one's wealth. It shows unequal treatment between daughter and Anupama. She believed someone who has Leukoderma will bring bad luck to the lives of the family. This leads Anupama's in-laws to throw her out of the house.

Dr. Anand has very rich family background. He was tall, fair with curly hairs and charming smile. He was so brilliant in his field. He was very fortunate, blessed by both Saraswati and Lakshmi. Seeing the beauty of Anupama and her passion towards acting, Anand was captivated towards her. He put forward his opinion about marriage with the help of Dr. Desai. Both the parties were happy as all the expenses would be shouldered by Lakshmi Niwas. He found it is too hard to digest the fact about Anupama from the letters of Radhakka. He was awestruck after knowing about Anupama's leukoderma. Anand always had a great passion for beauty; but when he knew the fact about Anupama's reality, he couldn't react to the situation. Afterwards he got busy himself with extra work in the hospital in order to divert his attention. At this time, he thought about his future, his unborn children and the humiliating situation which he needs to face in this society. He did not respond to any letters from Anupama. "External beauty is short lived, but beauty of nature is permanent. A good human being who is compassionate to others, who tries to understand the other person's difficulties and reach out to them in their hour of need has real beauty. Anand had been bright, sharp and intelligent, but very immature! He had never ever thought of beauty in such term" (132). The real success of marriage depended not on superficial factors such as those but upon love and mutual understanding between husband and wife. He knows that before marriage no any leukoderma to Anupama and the fact of treatable disease. He was wide awake about his social status and its dilemmatic situation he failed to respond as a loyal husband.

Anupama was a sensitive and very good theatre actress. She is an excellent student with good academic records. Before her marriage, she was a free bird, but after her marriage "she was locked up in a gilded cage" (41). Her journey of life was totally change in the world of cultural environment. She totally lost all her love for acting and staging. Anupama feels suffocation in Laxmi Nivas. No communication to anybody, dinner and lunch was sent to her room and she has no permission to move and mix with any others likely to be jail or quarantine. Anupama was hated by her family members and society. No any response from Anand and Radhakka told, "You deceived him into marrying you for his money" (54). She criticized Anupama without mere consideration. Anupama was unable to prove that she had raised a white patch on foot after marriage. Most important incident is that if the woman is poor, she again doubly stressed in the society. Anupama narrates the well definition of marriage "A marriage is a lifelong commitment; for better or worse, till death" (45). The traditional attitudes and thoughts that have outweigh in social life have limited the women's abilities. Indian women's life shows even after independence the status of women remains secondary (Kale 2022). Anupama breaks the traditional thinking of all women and makes her own career and stimulate the women to build their own lives against the socio familial humiliation.

Sudha Murty efforts to identify the socio familial injustice and its blaming through Anupama. Inexorable issues arise in front of Anupama is one of the examples of socio familial realities; it is an undeniable image of the humanity. Author trying to connect very easily, characters of Anupama and others. Her simplicity in the narration which incites a clear indication of traditional women's sufferings. Duhan (2015) explains, literature is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a corrective mirror in which members of the society can look at themselves and find the need for positive change (192). Sudha Murty's aim is to focus on social awareness. It is proved in the postscript of the novel that Leukoderma caused by melanin pigment, is neither contagious nor hereditary. She played an important role in Malati's marriage who also suffers from leukoderma, provokes a social concern in everyone. The groom read Sudha Murty's novel Mahashweta. He did not like the character of Dr. Anand. "The plight of your heroine touched him deeply" (153). The couples were wedded happily and their life had changed completely. This novel encourages the readers around the nation to focus their social responsibility.

Conclusion: Sudha Murty reflects a social message of hope in life to those who suffers from Leukoderma or any other medical issues in the family and society. Women always treated secondary in the family and society. The education is the only key to Anupama's success. It is only education which makes Anupama to fly high, raise voice and fight against the male dominated society. She inspired that the male should know the equal status of women and accept current scenario of awareness in the next generation.

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