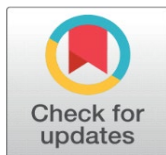
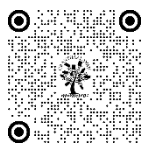


NEW WOMAN AS PORTRAYED IN SUDHA MURTHY'S MAHASHWETA

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i3.2024.2808](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i3.2024.2808)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The representation of women in Indian fiction, from ancient to contemporary times, can be discerned through various literary works authored by numerous writers. The depiction of women has undergone a significant transformation, transitioning from a portrayal of women enduring hardship, suffering, and exhibiting no signs of respite to one where women triumph over the challenges posed by dominant forces. In current literary discourse, female characters have been depicted as resilient and emancipated individuals. This paper focuses on the theme of female empowerment in Sudha Murthy's novel Mahashweta. Moreover, the present study sheds light on the central character whose emancipation from societal stigmatization and prejudice is depicted through her unwavering optimism, tenacity, and bravery. The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate the resilience and determination exhibited by women in overcoming various challenges in their lives.

Keywords: Resilience, Transformation, Accident, Gender

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's progress in contemporary society has been remarkable, as they have emerged as influential and empowered individuals. Sudha Murthy, a renowned and prolific author, has gained significant recognition for her bestselling literary works in both Kannada and English. The author has produced a diverse range of literary works, including travelogues, collections of short stories, novels, technical books, and nonfictional works. Many prominent Indian languages have been employed to translate her literary works. The literary work "The Mother I Never Knew" comprises two novellas that explore the journeys of two individuals in search of their previously unknown maternal figures. This study critically analyzes the female characters in the novel from multiple perspectives.

Sudha Murthy is widely recognized as a prominent female author in India. In 2006, she received the prestigious Padma Shri and the R.K. Narayan Award for her contributions to the field of literature. Sudha Murthy's inaugural literary work, "Gently Falls the Bakula," debuted in the Kannada language three decades ago and has been rendered into English through translation. With a compassionate lens, this literary work demonstrates the detrimental effects of ambition and self-interest on marital relationships, leading to their dissolution. The novel's exploration of contemporary work ethics and values remains highly pertinent.

Despite facing numerous challenges, she exhibited a revolutionary spirit by demonstrating unwavering determination to reconstruct her life. Sudha Murthy adeptly employs her personal experiences and unique narrative style to effectively depict various events, drawing on her roles as a mother, teacher, granddaughter, daughter, and wife. The individual in

question was born in Shiggaon, a region located in North Karnataka, in 1950. In due course, she assumed the esteemed position of Chairperson at the Infosys Foundation. Recognizing her notable achievements, she was awarded the R.K. Narayan Grant for Writing and the prestigious Padmashri in 2006. Despite her numerous accomplishments, she does not portray herself as an exceptional individual but as ordinary. The discerning reader would readily recognize the commendable qualities exhibited by the subject rather than focusing on any potential shortcomings. She possesses a unique ability to captivate audiences through her storytelling prowess, enhanced by her genuine acknowledgment of personal errors and her empathetic regard for others.

The literary works authored by Murthy demonstrate her profound commitment to feminist ideals, advocating for the emancipation and empowerment of women. The author's works demonstrate a profound understanding of her gender identity and a sincere commitment to addressing women's issues. The author's work provides a realistic depiction of society, prompting significant considerations regarding current societal perspectives on marriage, gender roles, and relationships between men and women. The author investigates the authentic social and emotional connections that women establish. Individuals acquire the skills to effectively navigate a societal context that places significant emphasis on upholding traditional values while actively embracing modernity and cultural heritage. The main character in Sudha Murthy's novel is commonly portrayed as being open and receptive to various changes in lifestyle. The author portrays the psychological and emotional instabilities experienced by these women, demonstrating her ability to discern their innermost thoughts. The author's literary works delve into the profound importance of personal identity, focusing on women's experiences. This observation highlights the significant sacrifices that women often make for their families while underscoring the disparity in the respect and recognition they receive compared to men. This principle advocates for all women's equitable and autonomous treatment, devoid of any sense of superiority or inferiority.

The literary work "*Mahashweta*" explores gender issues, shedding light on the unequal impact of societal norms on women, specifically within the realms of marriage and beauty ideals. The narrative can be interpreted as a critical examination of a societal structure characterized by male dominance, wherein a woman's value is frequently diminished by her external appearance and capacity to conform to conventional gender roles. The novel also explores the theme of female resilience and courage, emphasizing Anupama's ability to overcome challenges through her inner strength and unwavering determination. Ultimately, she achieves personal fulfillment and satisfaction on her unique terms. Although "*Mahashweta*" does not exclusively focus on gender issues, it provides significant perspectives on the diverse forms of marginalization and discrimination experienced by women. Additionally, the novel presents potential avenues for empowerment and autonomy.

The author emphasizes Anupama's strength throughout the narrative. She breaks free from being a typical daughter-in-law and does not sacrifice her self-respect and dignity for her in-laws' preconceptions. Anand studied overseas after their marriage. Little white spots on her foot mar her beauty, and she develops leukoderma. Her mother-in-law deems her skin condition a family disgrace. Thus, she is not permitted to work in the home, and Radhakka humiliates her for hiding it before marriage. Even though she knew, Radhakka refused to acknowledge that Anupama had no white spots before her marriage. Anupama is not thankful for marrying into an affluent family because it has worsened her life by making her a servant in the house. She is shunned by her mother-in-law and exiled to her father's house for fooling Anand and his family. She cannot express her pain to Anand. Anupama defies family position, unlike other Indian women. She initially shows her new-age womanhood when she refuses her father's request to her mother-in-law and leaves the house without looking back. Instead of suppressing her self-respect, Anu attempts to break free from societal stigma and discrimination.

She discovers that her mother and Anand do not support her. Her stepmother's allegations and skin condition make her consider suicide. Anupama learns her lesson and comes home to Bombay for work. Anu understands that if her sister-in-law Girija could marry into a respected and prosperous family despite her affair before marriage, why can't she choose her path? Anu puts her family and society's insults behind her and pushes forth with her faith in herself as a new woman. Anupama gently accepts her skin condition and musters the fortitude to start over. She flees the taunting and moves to Bombay to pursue a new profession and live freely "She was now ready to face the world, determined to stand on her own feet and build a new life for herself" (79).

Anupama lives with her college classmate Sumithra and her husband, Hari Prasad, in Bombay. Anupama gets a good clerk job with the couple's aid. She becomes financially independent and sends money to her rural father. Her confidence grows with financial freedom. Despite all the difficulties, Anupama did not become a typical housewife or daughter-in-law who accepted patriarchal rule. Instead, she breaks the stigma and prejudice that destroyed her life to display her strength. Anupama exhibits courage when she learns Hari has bad intentions. Later, she moved into Dolly's house and became a college instructor at her recommendation. Hari does not enslave her. Education gave her the strength to

overcome Hari's abuse. She even manages Dolly's residence. Anupama is a promising woman. Sabakka does not keep grudges on Anupama despite her mistreatment. After Shammana's death, Anu financially supports her stepmother and marries her step-sisters. Anand keeps searching for Anupama but fails. She decides she has no relationship with him. She refuses to be kept hostage by marriage and family. Dr. Vasanth's idea fails. She rejects the offer, stating she no longer wants family and discrimination.

they are all irrelevant to me now. It is too late for us. I am no longer the naïve Anupama whose world revolved around you. I know what my goals are and where I am heading, and I don't need anyone's help to reach my destination. (148)

Anupama's refusal to marry shows her transformation into a new woman. She shows readers that women may conduct their own lives without men. The author shows how education and self-confidence may help women overcome many hurdles and live a successful and happy life. Through her strength and endurance, Anupama becomes a courageous new woman. Anupama, Sudha Murty's heroine, is modern. She defied stigma and prejudice and created her own identity. Her perseverance and willpower to overcome betrayal and disappointment give her an identity beyond being a professor, Sanskrit and drama scholar. Her search for self has made her a modern lady, professionally and emotionally. Indian women have long struggled and been oppressed by patriarchy. Women were viewed as a commodity, a sexual instrument, and a lesser sex and told they could only raise children and do housework. Social stigma and discrimination destroyed women's lives. The situation of women nowadays has changed drastically. Sudha Murty's Anupama, which depicts the modern woman as a liberated woman who overcomes societal and familial challenges, is unique. The present Indian culture is not ready to equalize women and men. Patriarchy and familial status still haunt educated women in our nation. Our culture should stop treating women like caged birds. Women are autonomous and motivated to reconstruct their lives like Anupama in the story. The novel reveals that women may overcome all difficulties to find freedom.

Sudha Murthy has created a female protagonist characterized by fearlessness, determination, independence, and a lack of reliance on male counterparts. This character embodies the pursuit of genuine love and equality. Ultimately, Anupama undergoes a transformative journey, emerging with a resolute and assertive demeanor. In contrast to her earlier life, she currently exhibits a sense of economic independence, indicating a lack of insecurity or powerlessness. Anupama's character exhibits additional qualities that extend beyond the realm of feminism. She is actively seeking new perspectives and opportunities to advance the status of women in society. She possesses a heightened sensuality and displays a level of maturity suitable for navigating the complexities of the physical realm. The final decision demonstrates an apparent defiance against the prevailing patriarchal norms within society. The novel Jane Eyre portrays the protagonist's pursuit of dignity and respect, which undergoes a significant transformation as the narrative unfolds. The publication of this book was accompanied by significant influence, and it effectively portrayed the contemporary perspective on the societal role of women. Ultimately, "Mahashweta" portrays the transformative journey of Anupama as she transitions from a state of dissatisfaction to one of fulfillment.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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