



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: [www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home](http://www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home)



### Addressing Gender Conflict and Sexism in Sudha Murthy's Novels

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**How to Cite the Article:** Rathee N., Monika (2022). Addressing Gender Conflict and Sexism in Sudha Murthy's Novels. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 1(4), 30-33.

#### Keyword

Patriarchal, Oppression,  
Victimization, Violence,  
Gender Conflict.

#### Abstract

Literature is the reflection of society. The purpose of literature is not only to entertain or aesthetic, but it also presents everyday social, political, and cultural issues. Many Indian Women Novelist like Arundhati Roy, Geeta Hariharan, Anita Nair, and Manju Kapoor explores women's problems and the female subjectivity of patriarchal society through their books. Sudha Murthy is a contemporary writer who tries to bring social reformation and gender equality in her works. She is portraying the image of innocent women that lose their identity due to gender discrimination in society. The Present paper explores how gender conflicts are part of Sudha Murthy's works. The study examines how her female characters reject male domination, domestic violence, injustice, oppression, and traditional norms constructed by the patriarchal system. Further, the study will analyze how her female characters' rebellious nature helps them to fight for their existence and self-identity.

#### Introduction:-

Since ancient times, India has had a patriarchal system, which means all the social, political, and economic power enjoyed by males. Women always consider a homemaker and seen as inferior beings, obedient daughters, and silent wives. Women are assumed only to make up for social responsibilities and family duties—all these circumstances create significant differences between the power and status of men and women. Gender discrimination in society is responsible for a woman's self-sacrificing image. It affects her social achievements as well as her confidence. As Justice Ravinder Bhatt says:-

It perhaps needs no elaboration that Indian society is deeply patriarchal, culturally and economically, severely affecting women's career progression (Times).

Over time, Many Indian writers have focused on female problems in their writings. Kamala Markandya's *The Nectar in the Sieve* presents the picture of a woman struggling against social norms. Just as in the narrative of *Cry the Peacock*, Maya presents the Sufferings of a Woman's life in the Patriarchal system. In Modern times, writers have started to use the resistance mode of writing. They are against women's objectification and victimization and by traditional norms and cultural dominance. While Deshpande's female protagonists are the epitome of self-awareness and self-love, Manju Kapoor's characters resist patriarchal norms in all her works, re-presenting defying traditional and gender norms.

An outstanding and significant development in modern Indian fiction is the growth of a feminist or women-centered approach, which seeks to project and interpret experiences from the viewpoint of female consciousness and sensibility. Many Indian women novelists have explored female subjectivity to establish identity (Karia).

Sudha Murthy is one of the most prolific writers of modern times in Indian English writings.

Her books present the pain and agony of women in a male-dominated society and work as an eye-opener about social practices where women face traumatic conditions. Her writings give females a new independent personality that became their power to break the barriers of stereotypes and fight against traditional discrimination. Her characters reflect the female psyche, gender differences, and woman's sufferings throughout their journey.

Her characters are educated, cultured, modest, and strong enough to tolerate silently the unkind treatment meted out to them but walk out of their marriage when they realize the worthlessness and meaninglessness of their marital relationships. The females await the desired change and end with the awakening and realization that the life they are gifted with is more precious than subservience (Adkoli 101).

*Mahasweta* is a well-written book by Sudha Murthy. It describes a heart-touching story about a girl named Anupama, who is beautiful and skilled at the theater. She falls for a boy named Anand. However, her suffering starts after she marries Anand. Her laws treated her severely or inhumanely and threw her out of the house. The novel begins with a statement showing male superiority in society: "Even though the female child is stronger than a male child at birth, adults are the man who becomes the oppressor and the women who suffer" (1).

Anupama breaks the rules which are attached to a person's physical beauty. Leukoderma is a skin disease looking with evil eyes in Indian society. Peoples connect the disease with someone's previous sins. However, Anupama dares to raise a question against the superstitious belief and accepts her body as it is. She focuses on her inner strength and breaks the norms of physical beauty. In the Indian patriarchal system, a woman only considers a beautiful object, and beauty always has a higher place than inner qualities. As for Sumitra, her mother says, "Though her family was very well off and could afford to pay enough dowry, sadly, her dark complexions would still pose a problem" (21).

Anupama gets her realization that Ananda is only attracted to her physical beauty. He married her because she was beautiful and had no emotional attachment to Anupama. He left her when she needed him most and broke all marriage vows. This situation shows the troublesome condition and position of women in society. In marriage, women do everything for their families but never find sympathy or a sense of attachment. Anupama experienced being left out of the house when she needed her family most. In addition, the book discusses women's education in the Indian context. In Indian Society, Education is considered only beneficial for men. She is an educated girl who wants to study for higher grades. But her stepmother constantly taunts her regards in the matter. Her mother is also of the view "not [to] educate her further; it might become challenging to find a husband for her; besides, she will not support us. She has to marry and go to somebody else's house" (20).

Murthy presents her women as more substantial because they fight for their rights and equality. Anupama denies all traditional arguments and rejects the prejudiced theory of education. She completed her study and became self-independent even though her father did not want that. Further, the book shows how women are bounds to their families. She cannot make any personal, social, or economic decisions.

Anupama could not go out without taking the car and the driver, and never without her mother in laws permission. Before her marriage, she was a free bird and had gone wherever she pleased. Now, she felt locked up in a gilded cage (41).

*Gently Falls the Bakula* explains the life sufferings of a young couple, Shrimati and Shrikant. They fall in love and marry to live a happy life. After the marriage, they moved to Mumbai from a small town named Hubli. They promised to spend all ups and down altogether. But when Shrikant got great success in the corporate world and only focused on his ambition. Now he is a different person because "Success makes a person confident. But Shrikant put it in a different way: Repeated success makes a person arrogant" (141).

In the material process, he forgets his responsibilities towards Shrimati and ignores her sentiments. She was never accepted as a daughter-in-law in the house. She felt alone and lonely in the place. As per Indian tradition, a girl assumes to follow her husband's wishes, even without raising

a question. The book shows a clear discrimination of gender,

It was a purely patriarchal society where the head of the family decided everything—be it arranging a marriage, making a donation to a temple or an ordinary household matter. The women were always in the background, suppressed, subservient, irrespective of age (12).

But when Shrimati did not find any sign of her existence in Shrikant's life, she took a decisive step. She became a warrior of herself. In addition, she breaks the rules of a patriarchal culture that tells women should follow their husbands at every cost. At last, she tries to find her identity and leaves Shrikant's house to complete her doctorate. She resisted traditional norms that a wife should die only in her husband's house. In Brief, the book tells how Shrimati denies accepting the oppression of patriarchal society, becomes a rebel for her rights, and starts to live a happy life without thinking about societal norms or pre-determined traditions.

No one in this male-dominated society would appreciate her step, but Shrimati had left him without even bothering about what people would think. She had acted on what she felt was right (165).

Sudha Murthy is famously known for her well-constructed plot, *The House of Card*. The book is about a young couple named Sanjay and Mirdula. Sudha Murthy shows that individuality is the foundation of human happiness. The book tells about Mirdula, who struggles to find her identity in the dominant male Society. Through the Character of Mirdula, Murthy reflects how the community bounds women with traditions and norms. All the female characters, Like Mirdula, Anita, Ratnamma, and Laxmi are searching for their place and space in the family and society. Mirdula, who is deceived by her husband, shows the inner conflict of a woman. Mirdula is in a significant identity crisis when Dr. Rao says, "Mirdula, in a male-dominated society like ours, all the critical decisions are made by a man, including choices about what his wife wants" (212).

Mirdula shares Sanjay's all responsibilities as a good wife and never tries to raise a voice against him. Her whole life depends on her husband, and She never thinks about her benefits. She always follows him blindly. But when Sanjay cheats on her, she breaks into many pieces. She became depressed.

She did not feel like getting up from the bed or going anywhere. She felt like crying all the time and did not want to meet anyone. She stopped feeling hungry as well. She tried to talk- but there was nobody to talk (186).

With the help of her determination power, she fights all her sufferings in life and finally realizes that her life is valuable without her husband. She denies the patriarchal norm that society is acceptable for those norms that a man can deceive his wife if he is not mentally and physically satisfied. A male can live according to his personal choices and desires; on the other hand, women have no power to express their views. Murthy Says. "Mirdula, in a male-dominated society like ours, all the important decisions are made by a man, including choices about what his wife wants. But every woman values her freedom to choose- much more than her husband's money or position" (212).

After concluding all the conditions of her life, Mirdula finally decides to separate from Sanjay rather than accept his deception. She throws some light on her soul and leaves her husband's house without caring for society. Now she realizes she can live happily alone rather than with a husband who cheated on her. She says, "No, I have spent twenty-five of my most important years with you, yet, I never felt I belonged to you and your family. I am still an outsider. 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" ( 218).

In Brief, Murthy's heroine fight self-existence in society. They are victims of societal gender norms and are suppressed by the dominant male culture's standards. They are the victims of the patriarchal system in the community. Sudha Murthy's heroine tries to mold traditions and defiant ill behavior in society; they are not mute; they stand for themselves and fight for their rights and equality.

### Conclusion:-

The research paper's findings are that Murthy's woman protagonist rejects and resists a patriarchal society's established norms. They try to find opportunities and equal status in society where they belong. The study also reveals how the patriarchal system generated in the community is responsible for the loss of women's existence. The paper explains how Sudha Murthy's characters break the female psyche and create a new woman that fights for her rights in a male-dominated society. The research paper would help to find out that Sudha Murthy's female characters are most robust and courageous, which helps to make women empower individually and collectively.

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