

Women Empowerment in Sudha Murty's select novels 'Gently Falls the Bakula' and 'House of Cards'

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ABSTRACT

Sudha Murty is a renowned and prolific Indian English Writer of the contemporary era. She has contributed to the Indian English Literature through her eminent novels which are widely known as masterpieces of her philanthropic perspectives. She acknowledges the truth and real conditions of modern society through her writing. The present paper is a sincere effort to shed light on the women empowerment through characters of Sudha Murty's select novels 'Gently Falls the Bakula' and 'House of Cards'. The researcher tries to highlight the genuine and earnest problems of women quest for identity and struggles for empowerment through the female protagonists in both novels. The novels are the critique of male dominated society in which a woman has to search her identity through the realization of empowerment. Murty outspeaks about the declining values of women in Indian society as well as depicts their quest for identity and empowerment. Women Empowerment has been a significant phenomenon in the world. The great efforts are being made in the various fields for empowering the women.

1. Women Empowerment as an Eminent Issue

Women Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process of leading deprived, neglected and downtrodden women in the society towards the realization of their rights and abilities. It refers to the efforts of making them capable and aware about their competences in every field. *Women Empowerment means emancipation of women from the vicious grips of social, economical, caste and gender-based discrimination. It means granting women the freedom to make life choices. Women Empowerment itself elaborates that Social Rights, Political Rights, Economic Stability, Judicial Strength and all other rights should be also equal to women. There should be no discrimination between men and women.* (<http://www.iaspaper.net/women-empowerment-in-india>)

Women empowerment has been a universal issue which is being considered in an earnest manner. Nowadays the women have become so aware about their fundamental rights and therefore they are seen working in the both public and corporate sectors. They always try to seek the space of their own.

Most of the writers and critics have raised a voice for the empowerment of women through their writings. *Diane Mariechild says, 'A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform'* (www.wiseoldsayings.com).

Sudha Murty, being a chairman of Infosys has undergone through many real experiences of corporate world. She understands the genuine problems of women in the society. Hence she throws light on empowerment of women through their struggles in her novels. In democratic country like India, the place of women in the society was initially neglected by men over a long period. But certain movements and revolutions have been taken place in different countries

regarding women empowerment. Then the society which was dominated by men, is now a society of women due to their sense of equality and awareness of their rights. Though women have to meet many problems yet they are enough capable to overcome over the problems and accept any challenge to prove their abilities to survive in any circumstances. Nowadays women empowerment is considered as an eminent issue everywhere because the process of women empowerment is still being undertaking in all the fields. Barack Obama, 44th USA President has rightly said, *'There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.* (www.huffingtonpost.com)

2. Women Empowerment in Gently Falls the Bakula

The researcher has made an effort to bring out the women empowerment in Gently Falls the Bakula written by Sudha Murty which is a story of a married couple Shrimati and Shrikant. Both have studied together. They study in the same school and college as well. Hence they are very familiar to each other. They are intelligent students in the class. Shrimati's performance in the school and college is sometimes better than Shrikant. They are also childhood friends. It causes to have some attraction and fall in love with each other. They both decide to marry and execute their decision successfully. They live happily in the beginning of new marriage life. When Shrikant joins IT Company then he becomes busy in work. He is completely changed due to his profession. He remains busy in making money and property. He prefers to see her as an uncomplaining housewife who can perform household duties only at home. He doesn't let her work outside. Shrimati doesn't get the way of coming out of it. Though she gets everything from her husband but she feels bit of sadness.

She comes to realize the fact when she encounters with a doctor at her home. He makes her realize about her education, her ambition and self respect which she has lost after

becoming a housewife. It makes her think of her lost ambition and self respect. She feels upset and uneasy. She thinks that she has wasted her life becoming only an uncomplaining wife. Therefore she summons up courage and determines to leave her husband for the sake of fulfilling her ambition and self respect. The following lines will throw light on her realization of woman empowerment-

"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 lines show her understanding of her helpless condition. She opposes to her husband's everything. She doesn't want to live in the house which is full of material values. She believes in equality and freedom. She doesn't want to live under the domain of the patriarchal society. Her decision of leaving her husband to fulfill her dream is the dogma of her empowerment. This is her first step to empower herself. This novel criticizes the patriarchal society in which women are neglected and not allowed to fulfill their ambition and self respect. There are many women like Shrimati who wish to make their career bright. They are equal to men and can do better than men. Yet they have to remain deprived from their rights. There is a significant trait in Shrimati's character that she is shown transforming from an uncomplaining housewife into an empowered woman who decides to leave her husband only for the fulfillment of her ambition and respect but does not break her relationship with him.

3. Women Empowerment in *House of Cards*

House of Cards is the best example of women empowerment which throws light on the struggles for quest of identity of a woman through the female protagonist, Mridula. It has been a serious concern not only in India but also in the other countries as well. Though the women are free to live as they want yet they are sometimes restricted by the patriarchal monarchy and ideology. Today's world is a world of Science and Technology. The women are being seen trying to empower themselves in the various fields. They have the competence to prove and achieve the highest position in the society. The researcher has tried to elucidate the realistic picture of Mridula in *House of Cards* in which she has to undergo through the struggle to empower herself.

Mridula is an educated and kind hearted girl. She has a lot of concerns for the poor people in the society. She is aware of the social, economical, political, religious and psychological conditions. Therefore she seems to be a strong woman of strong passion to do anything. When she encounters a boy,

Sanjay who is an impoverished doctor, they fall in love with each other. She observes his nature and behavior which she likes most. She knows that Sanjay's economical condition is not much good. But he works as a doctor in a hospital to serve the patients from the lower class society. That makes Mridula think about him. They both love each other. Mridula gets ready to marry him. Because she has determined to assist him for uplifting in the society and serving the people. They get married at last. They live happily for some years. The sudden change in the character of Sanjay becomes the cause of Mridula's concerns. He works in a government hospital in Bangalore. He resigns from his job to do the private practice with the clear intention of earning a lot of money. Mridula doesn't like this. She doesn't want money but love only. But Sanjay was greatly influenced by his mother's practicality and his friend, Alex's ideas. Hence he wants to have everything in his life through private practice and he starts doing it. It causes to the breakdown of their relationship.

Mridula belongs to a small village and she is grown up in a good and natural atmosphere. She is from well to do family but her family has blessed her with charity. She believes in spirituality. She loves values. But the transformation of Sanjay from an impoverished doctor into a practical one makes her think about her decision of marrying him. She can not live in the atmosphere of material values. At last she leaves him and goes to look for a space of her own. She works as a principal in a govt. school yet she cherishes her simplicity and ethics. But she is not a common woman who can tolerate sufferings only. She craves for emotional attachments from her husband who is now busy and egoistic. He doesn't look after her. He doesn't have time for her. She outbursts her feelings on the occasion of their wedding anniversary when Sanjay comes to home to receive Mridula at palace. She said, *"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 burden 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). Her above aforesaid lines represent her strength and ability that she is no more dependent on anyone. She has not got happiness and satisfaction from her husband for whom she sacrificed everything. At last she has to leave him for his material values that she could never live with. She becomes empowered ultimately because of her ability to make her way through the difficulties of her life.

4. Women Empowerment as an emblem of Gender Equality

Gender Equality is the state of equal ease of accessing opportunities. It is required to create the awareness in the society which has always been advocating to the gender discrimination for long years. Women are sometimes neglected by the patriarchal society. They are exploited over a period and kept them away from education, economy, politics, and so on. They are not given equal opportunities to change their

conditions in the society. But due to the revolutions in many countries, many great changes are taken place in favor of empowering women in all the sectors. In the democratic country like India, the constitution is enacted in favor of both men and women. The Indian constitution has conferred many essential rights and opportunities to women for the empowerment. It has brought the positive changes in the lives of women and helped them out to empower themselves. Regardless of gender, they should be given equal opportunities to uplift and make their life empowered.

Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula* and *House of Cards* throw light on the gender equality. The female protagonists of both novels, Shrimati and Mridula are well educated. They cherish moral values of life. They seem to be very responsible and kind hearted as human beings. They both marry with the persons whom they know very well. They always perform their household duties carefully yet they have to undergo through the genuine problems of loss of identity. As women, they are not supposed to do only the household duties; despite of having equal education to their husbands, they have to live under the domain of patriarchy. It makes them think of their lost self respect and ambition. At last they realize that they need to empower themselves to prove their own identity in the world.

They are shown enough capable of facing adversities of life. Therefore their sense of empowering themselves seems to be the emblem of gender equality. They leave their husbands in order to show the world that they will not follow the false ideology of patriarchal society where women are restricted to do many things while they are equal to them in respect of everything.

5. Conclusion

In the light of Sudha Murty's novels *Gently Falls the Bakula* and *House of Cards*, the issue of women empowerment is beautifully discussed through the female protagonists, Shrimati and Mridula who try to empower themselves for seeking a space of their own in the patriarchal society. The researcher has substantiated the capability of women for empowerment through the female protagonists who represent those women who fall prey to the patriarchal false ideology and are not allowed to execute their own decisions and desires. Murty's novels can be regarded as social novels which bring out the reformation in the society especially for women. The researcher intends to motivate the women in the society who are still looking forward to empower them through this paper.

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