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Gendered Contexts in the Select Works of Dr. Sudha Murthy



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Abstract: *This paper attempts to study gender consciousness in the select works of Dr. Sudha Murthy. Gender is a neutral term that describes biological identity of any individual. Gender consciousness helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of biological sex which will further reach to gender equality.*

Due to monopoly of patriarchal society, women and issues faced by women were rarely represented through literature until women writers like Nayantara Sahgal, Rama Maheta, Kamla Das, Anita Nair, Susan Viswanathan, Dina Maheta, Kamala Markandaya. Shashi Deshpande, Anniita Desai, Bharati Mukharji, Indira Goswami, Ruth P. Jhabvala, Manju Kapoor, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai came forward. This gave birth to the emergence of gender consciousness and women writers across the world picked up the issues and worries faced by women. Women writers expressed their outrage against patriarchal society for ill

treatment given to women and helped in spreading awareness about gender equality. Women suffered discrimination and they have been the victim of subjugation. English literature is abundantly filled with women writers like Shashi Deshpande, Nayanthara Seghal, Arundhati Roy, and Kamala Markandaya who expressed themselves about the pains and pangs they underwent because of subjugated treatment they received even in educated families also. Psychological crisis - As the pollutants we breathe affect our body, in the same way, social factors exist around us in all forms, all the time, and when they influence our behaviour, we call them psychosocial factors. In India, patriarchy is the biggest inducer of them, affecting women's mental health at different stages. Women suffer is also prominently highlighted by women writers.

Keywords: *Gender consciousness, Patriarchy, isolation.*

RESEARCH PAPER

“Gender, is now one of the busiest, most restless terms in the English language, a word that crops up everywhere, yet whose uses seem to be forever changing, always on the move, producing new and often surprising inflections of meaning”

David Glover and Cora Kaplan

Sudha Murthy is one of India's most beloved writers. Her work appeals to both children and adults. Born in 1950, she became the first female engineer to be hired at the largest auto-manufacturer in India, TELCO. She has written not only novels, but also short stories, travelogues, technical books, and books for children. She has received several awards over the years, including the R.K. Narayana's Award for Literature, and even the Padma Shri, which is the fourth highest civilian award in India. Prolific award-winning writers in both English and Kannada, her books have been translated in all major languages. Her books were simple, yet profound and can make you laugh, cry and feel nostalgic at the same time.

Sudha Murthy is an inspiration for every single woman in this country. Her work has continuously broken several barriers and improved society in every way it could. She candidly discussed the theme of discrimination based on financial status of women, domestic problems faced by women, gender consciousness etc. through her famous novel 'Dollar Bahu', 'Mahashweta', 'Gently Falls the Bakula' 'House of Cards' etc. Sudha Murthy portrayed two daughters-in-law and the mother-in-law offers ill treatment to the daughter-in-law who happens to be from elite family and she continuously disrespects the other daughter-in-law because she hails from middle class family. Sudha Murthy has aptly highlighted the treatment of isolation based on stereotypes through her another literary masterpiece 'Mahashweta'. Anupama is the protagonist in this novel who suffers from lokederma; a skin disease which curable yet her family members isolate her blaming that she had hide it from them intentionally. Sudha Murthy touches on the social evil practices like dowry, devdashi through her short story collection 'Wise and Otherwise'. She focused the plight of young girls from poor families who tormented by their in-laws for dowry. In one of her stories, she portrayed how kind a woman could be who was expressing her gratitude even from deathbed to her benefactor.

Psychologically women have been tormented by their family members. Societal things are also at play as society is not flexible enough to change the perception about women despite of spread of education and the worst part is that well educated families have taken centre stage in tormenting women psychologically. Culturally things haven't been conducive for the women as social menaces of gender discrimination and slavery is still persistent. People have become well educated but unfortunately have not become well formed in terms of culture.

Gender consciousness has been abundantly researched. Moreover, the study might prove significant in understanding various realities and ideologies explored in the select works of Dr. Sudha Murty. The proposed research put forth voices of women from India. The proposed research also covers the dilemma faced by Indian Women. It deals with the domestic violence created by their personal lives for petty reasons and social costumes. Patriarchy has silenced women and has not made them independent in terms of their personal and professional lives. The proposed research work focuses on gender consciousness with respect to Indian society. Being aware of the differences between male and female and creating opportunities for the spread of gender consciousness so that the social status of women could be uplifted.

Gender Consciousness has been considerably reflected in works of literature of Indian Writers such as Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay, Kamala Das etc. The portrayal of women and their hardships have been at centre in various research papers. Women and enslavement, domestic violence, physical, psychological, social and cultural exploitation have been highlighted vividly in various research papers and works. In some cases, women have been playing the role of protagonist and trying to create their own identity through their hardships and struggles by coping with mentality of patriarchy thereby gathering courage and self-confidence for their survival.

P.K. Rajan in his research paper "*The Two Voices in The Old Woman and The Cow*" mentions about playing central role and projecting a women's point of view. He writes that Gauri, being the heroine in the novel, becomes the victim of continuous sufferings after getting married to Panchi. Despite of brutal treatment from her husband and traditional customs of her society, Gauri successfully wins over the struggle and snatches her right to

live in the same society as an honourable human being. Gauri becomes an example to other women who can fight against her exploitation and achieves self-esteem.

The paper also examines gender consciousness through the literary works of Dr. Sudha Murthy. The significant point to research is to examine how gender consciousness is reflected through her works. The paper throws light on her style of writing and approach; she preferred to expose gender consciousness to achieve new insights regarding the concept of gender consciousness and to co-relate gender consciousness with the patriarchal society by throwing light on how gender consciousness will lead to women empowerment. There is a reflection of gender bias in the select works of Sudha Murthy. Gender consciousness plays an important role in revealing the identity of women characters in the works of Sudha Murthy. Gender stereotypes affect the character of women in Sudha Murthy's work. Absence of gender consciousness is the major constraint in empowerment of women.

The need of the hour to have gender neutrality is to explore gender issues and identify gender-biased attitudes and behaviour which has roots in patriarchal mindset. Well-structured education system which will foster gender consciousness which will pave the way to achieve women empowerment. This will in a way help to make the society progressive. It will also help them in determining assumptions in matters of gender stereotypes. Gender consciousness requires not only intellectual efforts but also empathy and open mindedness. We should create awareness about gender conscious at home, primary, secondary, higher secondary, college and university level, and particularly in society to the larger extent.

Gender consciousness incorporates miseries faced by women. This has been reflected through characters, incidents, anecdotes and plot. What is gender consciousness? Will gender consciousness help in curtailing the miseries of women? Why society has not changed the perception with regard to the role of women? Why are we not empowering women? What are the ways to empower women? Why are women being victims of domestic violence? What is effect of gender discrimination as a whole on the society? The research presents how gender consciousness is still not common in patriarchal society. How the absence of gender consciousness affects society at large. It will be crucial to see that gender consciousness is absent in elite as well as middle class families too who claim to be educated and mannered. Gender consciousness will curtail gender discrimination and will give way to women empowerment.

The proposed research will be focusing on gender consciousness highlighted in works of Dr. Sudha Murthy. It will be studied with understanding of characters and plot of the works wherein Dr. Sudha Murthy has touched on real life incidences and anecdotes. But the researcher takes a fresh approach so that the readers will find it interesting and worthy to read. Gender consciousness will be explored with respect to Indian culture. Women are still playing their part in progressing the society in particular and India in general. .

The study proposes to analyse the original texts which deal with gender consciousness. In the literary texts, only gender consciousness will be examined and other aspects and concerns will not be focused.

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