Feminist Consciousness In The Select Novels Of Sudha Murthy & Manju Kapur

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I Introduction:

Several Indian novelists exposed the real picture of Indian Society and how women are oppressed. Indian English novels revealed the struggle of Indian women to create their own identity. There are many Indian English novelists that depict the theme of feminism and reveal the emotional crisis and status of a woman in India Society. There are several feminist oriented English novels that reveal how a woman as the subject of domestic oppression, suffering and how she struggles to create her own existence.

II Objectives:

The present study has the following objectives

1) To study and compare women characters in the novels of Sudha Murty and Manju Kapur.
2) To observe and understand female literature in a better way.
3) To interpret woman characters in their novels.
4) To examine and analyse feminine perspective in their novels.
5) To study gender bias in the select novels.
6) To consider the impact of “Feminism” over Manju Kapur.

III Hypothesis:

Hypothesis reflects the researchers guess as to probable outcome of the research and it places clear and specific goals before the researcher.

The present research is based on the following hypothesis.

1) There is similarity in Maju Kapur and Sudha Murty’s novels.
2) Both the writers wrote about feminist perspective through their works.
3) The selected novels deal with female issues and gender bias.
4) The selected novels reveal how women struggle to create their identity.
I- Introduction:

Feminism has its origin in this belief that in the patriarchal society women are not given the fair treatment. It attempts to examine and analyse the various causes for women’s subjugation. Feminism is a socio-political movement that purposes to create the political, social and economic fairness between male and females. Feminism fights to establish for equal opportunities for both men and women in concern of education, economic, social matters.

This movement fights for the rights of women including for access of education, right to vote, to own property, equal rights within marriage, equally pay, and to have maternity leave. (en.m.Wikipedia.org date 22/02/2020 time 6:15 pm) Feminist theories were born out of feminist movement. Numerous feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years and represent different viewpoints and objectives. (en.m.wikipedia.org.)

Origin and history of Feminism-

In 1919, women rebelled for the right to vote that first rebel paved the way for Women’s health and education laws in 1920. In the 1960’s and 70’s feminists
demanded equal rights in the workplace. The feminist movement developed in three phases.

1) First phase of feminism- It occurred in late 19th and early 20th century in this phase women protested for political equality.

2) Second phase of feminism- It occurred in 1960s and 70’s this phase pushed the way for legal and professional equality.

3) Third phase of feminism- it occurred after 1970’s, it pushed the way for social equality. In the matter of legal and political equality some rules or resolution is given it is clear to resolve but social equality is complicate yet to be resolved.

   The current feminism is the rebellion against conscious biases that are still existed in the minds of people that disadvantage woman. This movement is dealing with not only the rights of women in all aspects but also with people’s perceptions. It is really not so easy to remove irrational beliefs from the minds of people. This theory advocates for the same rights and respect to both the genders.

   The concept of feminism generally deals with patriarchal attitude of male towards females subjugation faced by women and the ways to improve the condition of women and so on (ugcenglish,. Com feminis-in- 22/02/20/ time 7.21 pm)

II- Feminist perspective in literature:

   In modern time much scope is observed and experienced for the issue of resistance and oppression of women in literature. Because of the advent of the concepts like globalization and equality, women have recognised their strength and capabilities. They are also aware about their subjugation and they are raising their voices from their rights. Sorabji is the paramount Indian English woman novelist who wrote for the liberation of women. ManjuKapur is one of the courageous women writers who picked up the issue of oppression and suppression of her women characters resulting into social and domestic resistance. Her novel “DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS”, “A MARRIED WOMAN”, CUSTODY, and HOME express the same theme. Her novels present the contemporary picture of today’s women who are bold to resist domestic walls of their house to build a world of their own.

   Indian women novelists have given a portrayal of women in various manifestations. In post-colonial strand women writers as Kamala Markendaya, NayantaraSahgal, Anita Desai, ShashiDeshpande, Bharathi Mukherjee, ManjuKapur,
Gita Hariharan, Shobha De and many others presented new woman who fights against suppression and oppression of the patriarchy and who wants an identity for herself. These women novelists dealt with the issues related to women dealing with their family problems, domestic violence their education, career the law, the health care.

Women writers in the post-independence times followed the tradition established and sustained by men writers of an earlier generation. In Independence India till 1960’s the works of women writers mostly dealt with male domination and submissive role of women. Patience or sufferings were the popular ideals. In 1970Women writers have brought an immense change. In their novel, suffering and submissive woman is replaced by the new woman as Sheshadri writes:” The now woman is assertive and self-willed, searching to discover her true self”. In their writing the women struggle for their quest for identity, their self-exploration.

Kapur is a post-colonial writer who has written about position of women in a patriarchal society and deals with the problems of women. Her novels present the longing struggle of women to establish an identity. Kapur’s women fight against social constraints. Her protagonists want freedom, they deny suppression and oppression. Her novel portray women’s quest for identity breaking the shackles of exploitation and oppression. The new women in Kapur’s novels crushes and defies the patriarchal restrictions and expectations to assert her identity and achieves self-satisfaction in her life.

Sudha Murty is also a feminist writer. She is an Indian feminist who wrote in English as well as Cannada language. She wrote three mention worthy novels that are Gently falls Bakula, House of Cards and Mahashweta. In these three novels she dealt with the feminist issue. She portrayed a woman struggling for her rights in patriarchal system of the society. She also focused on the sufferings of women in Indian patriarchal society. She is a down-to-earth writer. She wrote about a middle class woman with clear perception. Her works voice for rights of woman and protest against the oppression and suppression under the mask of patriarchy.

Sudha Murthy is one of the prominent woman writers in Indian English literature. She is also known for her social work through Infosys foundation. She was the woman who made a complain to JRD Tata about gender bias in Tata Motors. This spirit of SudhaMurty against the injustices of patriarchy is well reflected through her female characters in her works.
Through writing, women novelists tried to write through feminist perspective with an aim to end all the sufferings of woman in the society. Earlier writers have shown a picture of woman as a patient sufferer, wife/mother/daughter. A woman was idealised by the same writers but these portrayals of women were not realistic.

In post-independence period, many writers especially woman writers have shown a realistic portrayal of a new woman and her longings and aspirations.

Chapter III Oppression and Resistance in Sudha Murty’s “Mahashweta” and Manju Kapur’s “Difficult Daughters”

Murty’s “Mahashweta” is one of the best novels that tells a story of female protagonist “Anupama” suffering from leucoderma after her marriage. This study is an attempt to analyse her novels through a feminist lens. Mahashweta, this novel portrays the inner strength of a woman Anupama. When she was alone in her life in her struggles she developed courage and remained tough in her trying times. Sudha Murty successfully pictured the humiliation faced by Anupama due to patriarchal system.

In the society, a woman is not judged by her intelligence or capacities but by her looks. Hence Anupama in “Mahashweta”, Suffering from leukoderma faces number of problems. She was the victim of oppression in her own family. Anupama, a studious, hard working girl right from the beginning, but misfortunately due to patriarchal system, Anupama had to leave her study for the sake of marriage. After her marriage with Ananda, she faced oppression not only by men’s hand but also by women’s hands. When Anupama finally tired with humiliation, she decided to be self-reliant and look ahead for a better life by focusing on her career.

Difficult Daughters “Difficult Daughters” is a story dealing with issue of patriarchy which denies woman’s voice and freedom. It is set at the time of partition. The title indicates that a woman who tries to go against traditional norms and search her own identity is branded as a difficult daughter. It is a story of a rebellious daughter who embraces education and career as an alternative to arranged marriage.

IV) Gender Bias in Sudha Murty’s, “Gently falls: The Bakula” and Manju Kapur’s “A Married Woman”
Gently falls: The Bakula this novel is a story of two characters- Shrimati and Srikant Deshpande. Both of theirs ways of life are different from each other, Srikant is very ambitious whereas Shrimati is intelligent yet simple. Srikant worked in it firm and soon reached the peak of success with all his passion for his profession. To assist Srikant fully, Shrimati became a homemaker abandoning all her aspirations in education. Her submissiveness later on becomes the cause of her meaningless life. Srikant putting all his soul to his profession gained success in all means. But Srimati’s life became like a mute sufferer. Shrimati realizes very late that there is no affection and meaning in their relationship. She feels her life empty, so that she decides to take education once again and made a firm decision to live her life meaningfully.

“A Married Woman”, this novel is a moving story of a woman named Astha. She was born and brought up in a traditional patriarchal family. Since beginning she was restricted by her mother and as a result she grew in an oppressive atmosphere. After marriage also she had to live a tragic life. She was belittled by her husband, Hemant. Hemant was less concerned toward her as a result she suffered from regular migraines. She was having excellent painting and writing skill but she and her talent were ignored by her husband. Astha’s conflict between the oppressive patriarchal culture and her imagination and sensibility is focused in the novel. In this novel Manju Kapur presented the female revolt against deep rooted family values and the institution of marriage. Astha struggles to search her own identity through her skills but finally she led a broken life. This novel is an attempt to focus the conflict that Astha faces in her life. Manju Kapur has focused on the suffering of an Indian woman and Babri Masjid issue. (Sampale, May 2018, P.33)

V) “Quest for Self” reflected in Sudha Murty’s “House of Cards” and Manju Kapur’s “Immigrant”

In the novel, “House of cards” the central character, Mrudula suffered from identity crisis. After her marriage she found her husband, Sanjay as a dishonest and untrustworthy person. She struggles to release herself from the marriage obligations and finally made a firm decision to lead her life independently. Due to cunning nature of Sanjay she lost her confidence. Mrudula had to suffer from the first day of her
marriage. She had a deep and serene faith on her husband. Her love, respect for her husband was all from her true heart but Sanjay was truly notable for those things.

Through writing, women novelists tried to write through feminist perspective with an aim to end all the sufferings of woman in the society. Earlier writers have shown a picture of woman as a patient sufferer, wife/mother/daughter. A woman was idealised by the same writers but these portrayals of women were not realistic.

In post independence period, many writers especially woman writers have shown a realistic portrayal of a new woman and her longing’s and aspirations. This chapter Studies a new woman budding to assert her own identity in this male entered world. (Parvathi Publication, 2016, 136) It also focuses on how the central characters suffer from identity crisis due to male domination.

**VI Conclusion:**

In a nutshell, although an Indian woman is liberated and considered as equal to man but still she suffers from a sense of fear and alienation practically. SudhaMurty and ManjuKapur these woman novelists are the voices of all Indian women who live under male dominated pressure in a prejudicial society. Both these writers focused very realistically the true picture of a new woman as well as psychological trauma faced womencharacters is well portrayed in their novels.

**V Relevance of the study to society:**

The present study deals with the issue related to women in patriarchal society the present study would help to understand various causes of women’s oppression. The present study would also help to create awareness towards gender equality in true sense and justice for women.

**VI Research Methodology:**

The present study aims to use the sociological, historical, cultural and feminist methodologies to analyze and examine the concerned issue. The present research is predominantly an analytical, descriptive, interpretative and theoretical research. Since the present research does not involve any field work, the researcher relies on the primary sources- The novels written by Kapur. The secondary sources- Articles, researchpapers, journals, critical books etc. The focus of the study is to point out
oppression of women in Kapur’s novels and find out reciprocal causes behind the resistance. The researcher also proposes to employ the research methods and tools as the need arises with the progress of the work.

VII Significance of the Study:
ManjuKapur and SudhaMurty are a major female voice of Indian fiction in English today. Kapur is a post-colonial writer who intuitively perceives the position of women in a patriarchal society and deals with the problems of women. The novels under study are major voices against patriarchy. The study attempts to analyze the gender bias, causes of oppression and reciprocal reasons behind the resistance. Today woman is considered as equal to man but in most of the places situation is not changed. Still women are oppressed and subjugated under the name of traditional patriarchy. She is treated inferior to male. The right in the family is not given to her. She is oppressed by the family as well as the society. ManjuKapur’s protagonists are the bold, assertive, self-reliant and confident women who rebel firmly against the social customs and struggle to carve their own identity. The study aims to make aware the society about the oppression and for equal status of women.

VIII Data, Scope and limitations of the study:
Primary and secondary data has been collected by using observation method. The present research covers following six novels of ManjuKapur and SudhaMurty:
I. Mahashweta
II. Gently Falls TheBakula
III. House Of Cards
IV. Difficult Daughter
V. A Married Woman
VI. Immigrant

IX References:
Primary sources-

**Secondary Sources**

1) https://en.m.wikipending.org/wiki
2) https://www.merram-webster.com
3) https://www.theguardian.com/world