

Marital Dissonance in the Select Novels of

Sudha Murthy

Atchaya S

(20PEN002)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for Women, Coimbatore-641 043.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

MASTERS OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

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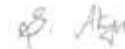

Signature of the Supervisor


Signature of the Head of the Department

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled '**Marital Dissonance in the Select Novels of Sudha Murthy**' submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A) is the record of work carried out by me during the period December 2021 – May 2022 under the guidance of Dr. Chitra Sivasubramaniam, Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.



Signature of the Candidate

CERTIFICATE

CERTIFICATE

I declare that the project entitled "**Marital Dissonance in the Select Novels of Sudha Murthy**" submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A) by Atchaya S (20PEN002) is the record of research work carried out by her during the period December 2021 – May 2022 under my guidance and supervision. This work has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.

Chitra Sivasubramaniam
Signature of the Guide 19/5/2022

Chitra Sivasubramaniam
Signature of the Head of the Department 19/5/2022

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

Introduction

Literature is the communication of thoughts, ideas, and feelings through the written word. The word literature comes from the Latin root *litaritura/ litteratura*, which means writing created with letters. Some definitions also include spoken or sung texts. Literature is divided into fiction, non-fiction, poetry and prose. It is classified into primary forms such as a book, short story, or drama. Works in literature are frequently categorized by historical periods or their adherence to specific aesthetic traits or expectations of the genre.

Indian English literature is a multilingual, intercultural, and socio-historical combination of great importance. Indian writing in English began to develop and gained worldwide attention in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite initial difficulties in getting their works published in the mid nineteenth century, writers continued to write in English as they received more attention and found readers in India and abroad. Writing in the English language also gave the luxury of an elitist tendency that flaunts their western education. The English critic William Walsh said that the Indian English writers Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao are the Trinity of Indian English Writing. They have pioneered and set the trend in the country. In an article “A Brief History of Indian Writing in English”, Surendranath quotes the words of Walsh, who says:

It is these three writers who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established its assumptions; they sketched its central themes, freed its character's first models, and elaborated its particular logic. They used an accessible, natural idiom that was unaffected by the opacity of a British inheritance. (3)

The trinity writers struggled in their early exponents in the use of English to describe an Indian experience but were unable to understand the Western form successfully, and resulted in the development of the Indian English language. Rao in the preface of *Kanthapura* points out that, “One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own spirit. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.” (43) He further continues to say that while English is a language of our intellectual makeup, it is not a language of our emotional setting.

In addition, numerous women writers emerged during the post-independence period in Indian English writing, with Kamala Das emerging as the doyen among them. In the world of literature, Indian women writers in English have made a significant impact. Women writers are noted for writing about their private domestic lives. Their writings were in the English language of the cosmopolitan society, which provided them wings to fly. They are willing to investigate the tragedy, humility, and subjection of their existence and give a voice to show the world that they are equal. In some instances, they defy man’s triumph. As anthropologists, novelists, essayists, and travel writers, they thrill with incredible agility. Women writers surpass the worldwide benchmark established by postcolonial and postmodern writers. They are the middlemen who reflect the social and political issues at hand. Their writings have received a lot of academic attention and have excelled in the global literary area.

Throughout history, women have been the subject of several literary works. This large population segment cannot be overlooked in this age of rapid progress and flux in nearly every field. Indian writers in English have also emerged from their cocoons of ‘non-attachment’ and ‘non-involvement’, realizing the Indian woman’s place in a culture ruled by men. The concept of Indian womanhood is as diverse as the

country itself, and it has changed dramatically from one century to the next. From spiritual ascent to communal strife, from imprisonment to independence, from agrarian revolution to cyber technology, Indian women have travelled from their patriarchal past to their current state of women empowerment. The Indian woman's function evolved from that of a deity to that of a devadasi, from shakti to abala, and from a mere housewife to a professional woman.

The women of India reflect the respective society that they live. Surveying the history and alterations of the status of Indian women, it is the general observation that women once, in the ancient era, enjoyed considerable honour, freedom, and privileges in both private and public fields. The civilization in the medieval period started some forms of victimization for the women with actions like child marriage and Sati. In the twentieth century, it was replaced by female infanticide and amniocentesis. The average Indian woman is rising from her stoic acceptance of her tradition-bound roles. Women are gaining momentum in their careers, yet the air of 'freedom' that touches them is like a kite strung into their husbands' manipulative and manoeuvring hands.

Kamala Markandaya, a post-independence writer, paints her canvas on the changing socio-economic landscape, making her works a magnificent kaleidoscope. Her choice of characters and settings demonstrate competence. She brings a wide range of female characters, from harried, downtrodden peasant women, princesses in Havelis, queens, and concubines, rural and city-bred, English officials in India, and Indian emigrants in England. She portrays the versatile battle of women in a multi-faceted society, ranging from physical survival to the search for identity.

Contemporary women literature evaluates writing by women authors, who have written between 1970s and the present. Reformation has become an essential feature of Indian writing in English by the nineteenth century and women began to

play more prominent roles in society and project their voices with their writings.

Although women writers have received respect and recognition since the nineteenth century, they continue to face discrimination from male writers, readers, and reviewers. Women writers in modern India write about their experiences with new dimensions that emphasize awareness of women's concerns and demands, rendering a platform for self-expression and assertion. They investigate their existence's sadness, humility, and subjection and give voice to demonstrate to the world that she is equal to man.

The majority of contemporary Indian women writers, such as Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri, focus on the psychological sufferings, oppression, and frustration of women whose only option is to suppress the storm within and the inevitable existentialist predicament of women in a male-dominated society. Anita Desai in her works shows concern on the psychological state of women and structures her protagonists with deep psychological turmoil in their man-woman relationship. Desai's fiction is known for focusing on the inner experience of life. In her novels *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), and *Clear Light of Day* (1980), Desai has portrayed oppression, suppression, and self-determination with their spatial existence. Shashi Deshpande focuses on the case studies of women with difficulty and anguish in their relationship with their environment, society, families, children, and, most importantly, their men. Deshpande encourages women to speak up and break the silence within their tradition and attain empowerment with modernity. In the novels, *That Long Silence* (1988) and *Small Remedies* (2000), Deshpande brings out the theme of the search for identity by overcoming their struggles from the relationship and society.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, born German and a naturalized Indian, is a modern woman writer who holds a unique position in Indian English writing. Her six novels are about a Delhi middle-class family. In her novels, *To Whom She Will* (1955) and *The Nature of Passion* (1956), she explores the varied lives of Delhi's metro politicians with objectivity that led K. R. S. Iyengar claim her novels to be exquisite comedies of urban middle-class life in the 1950s and 1960s. She is an astute observer of the Indian landscape and people. Jhabvala focuses on family, personal relationships, and social issues concerning women in her novels and several collections of short stories.

Arundhati Roy, one of India's most noted authors and human rights activists was awarded the Man Booker Prize for the debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997). The book reflects its irony against casteism, which is a major discrimination that prevails in India. It portrays the truthful picture of the plight of Indian women, their great sufferings, anguish and anxieties, their humble submission, persecution and undeserved humiliation in male dominating society. It shows women's marathon struggle for seeking the sense of identity in a totally averse and envious society. The social structure of an average Indian woman is full of ups and downs, ifs and buts, that which can be very clearly seen in some of the women characters like Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Rahel and Margaret Kochamma. The writer has used themes like Indian history and politics, caste relations and cultural tensions, forbidden love, social discrimination, betrayal and mysogynism. She has published a wide range of non-fiction, covering topics from the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan to a condemnation of India's nuclear tests. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* published in June 2017, marked her return to fiction after a twenty-year-long hiatus. It is about land reform that dispossessed poor farmers to the 2002 Godhra train burning and

Kashmir insurgency. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* takes on the concept of gender and its performativity as a socially constructed concept. It illustrates the sufferings, pain and right of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) community in the contemporary India. The novel also incorporates many social and political events that occurred in India and other parts of the world against the backdrop of its story.

Anita Desai is the winner of the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. Her other credits are Padma Bhushan and The Guardian Children's Fiction prize. She presents the vast canvas of India's contemporary society in the broad perspective of globalization, through themes like alienation, cultural clashes, displacement and exile. Her award-winning book, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), is a testament to the enduring quality of her work. Her novels usually revolve around working out the mystery of the inner life of her characters. She uses stunning visual imagery to show the inner working, and many have compared her modernist sensibilities to writers like T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf.

Anita Desai examines the deep psyche of her characters, especially the women characters. She is a keen observer of the society and the position of women in the contemporary society draws her special attention. Her works are the explorations of the family problems, which perhaps is the chief cause behind the extravagant of the women from their family. All her novels describe the psychosomatic growth of the female characters, who cannot cope up with the practical world. In Indian writing, feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario as far as women writers are concerned.

With a fiercely powerful voice and strong female protagonists, Chitra Bannerjee Divakurni's writing seeks at its core to capture the soul of a woman.

Divakaruni has written fifteen books, all of which blend prose and poetry, magic and realism beautifully to get at the heart of her character's stories. Divakaruni's novels include the best-selling *Mistress of Spices*; *Sister of My Heart* and its sequel, *The Vine of Desire*, *Queen of Dreams* (2003); *The Palace of Illusions*; *One Amazing Thing* (2009); and *Oleander Girl* (2013). Her works have been widely published, anthologized, and translated. She is also the author of young adult fiction, including *Neela: Victory Song* (2002) and the trilogy, *The Brotherhood of the Conch: The Conch Bearer* (2003), *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* (2005), and *Shadowland* (2009). She has written children's book named, *Grandma and the Great Gourd: A Bengali Folktale* (2013), with illustrations by Susy Pilgrim Waters. Her novels and short stories illustrate educated, adamant, mentally strong and rebellious female characters who don't hesitate to liberate themselves from male chauvinism. The enigmatic Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) and rebellious Anju and Sudha in *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and beautiful Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and strong women in the series of stories of *Arranged Marriage* (1994) are all delicately presented as credible characters. Her story collection, *Arranged Marriage* won the American Book Award, the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, and the PEN Josephine Miles Award. Her other short-story collection is, *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001).

An Indian-born American writer, Bharati Mukherjee beautifully explores the internal cultural clashes of characters most of whom are immigrants in the books like, *The Middleman And Other Stories* (1988) and *Jasmine* (1989). Mukherjee's work features not only the cultural clashes but also the undercurrents of violence. Her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), tells the story of a sheltered Indian woman shocked by her immersion in American culture and her return back to India. The

novel, *Wife* (1975) details an Indian woman's descent into madness as she is pulled apart by the demands of the cultures of her homeland and her new home in New York City. In Mukherjee's first book of short fiction, *Darkness* (1985), many of the stories, including the acclaimed "The World According to Hsü," are not only indictments of Canadian racism and traditional Indian views of women but also sharp studies of the anxious inner lives of her characters. *The Middleman, and Other Stories* centres on immigrants in the United States from developing countries, which is also the subject of two later novels, *Jasmine* and *The Holder of the World* (1993). The former work, among her best known, centres on a Punjabi woman living in Florida, and the latter tells the story of a contemporary American woman drawn into the life of a Puritan ancestor, who ran off with a Hindu raja. Mukherjee's later works include, *Wanting America: Selected Stories* (1995) and *Leave It to Me* (1997), which traces the journey of an American woman abandoned in India as a child and her return to the native land. *Desirable Daughters* (2002) attracted considerable acclaim for its intricate depictions of Indian caste relations and the immigrant experience of reconciling disparate worldviews. Mukherjee delved further into the family history of the characters from the novel, *The Tree Bride* (2004), broaching the issues of time-spanning ramifications of colonialism. Her last novel, *Miss New India*, was published in 2011. In her fiction, Mukherjee explores the experience and dilemmas of being an immigrant and the culture shock and alienation it entails.

Githa Hariharan's work belongs to the era of renaissance of Indo-English literature. Her first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993. Encapsulating the lives of three generations of women, in Chennai, the novel focuses on how they are torn between tradition and modernity in trying to shape their lives in their own ways and in turn connects their

stories to the ancient myths, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Her other works include the short story collection *The Art of Dying* (1993); the novels *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003), *Fugitive Histories* (2009) and *I Have Become the Tide* (2019) and a collection of essays entitled, *Almost Home: Cities and Other Places* (2014). The feminism of Githa Hariharan is actually filled with very sensitive explorations of human relationships planned in a practical fashion. From the novel, *The Thousands Faces of Night*, she clearly voices feminism.

Jhumpa Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, is one of the most widely recognized contemporary writers of world literature. An Indian-American by birth, her stories usually discuss sensitive dilemmas faced by Indians, particularly touching upon the diasporic reality of migrant Indians. Sometimes hidden in the plot are stories of women confronting difficult choices in life. Her work in Italian called *In Other Words* (2015), for example, gives a platform to a female voice that has been crushed by the burden of obligations to others. Jhumpa Lahiri is a Bengali-American author who writes about life as an immigrant in America. Being both, Indian and American created a complex identity for Lahiri. She struggled with the competing cultures of assimilation into American culture but keeps her heritage and Bengali roots. Although Jhumpa Lahiri is known for her collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), she is significantly influenced by her family's heritage and struggle of growing up stuck between two cultures.

In all her works, Jhumpa Lahiri deals with the themes of culture identities and the problems of generation – of Indian parents and their children growing up in America while facing challenges in coping with the demands of their parents who are nostalgic about Indianism, memories of Indian life and the pressures of American life

– its ways and norms. These conflicting norms and values regard life's important affairs like love and marriage, that finds very effective expression in her stories – both short and long. In the treatment of the themes, she looks for cross-culture marriage and explores the possibility of accommodation and adjustment thereby ensuring the happiness of home and family.

Contemporary writers deal with the themes of broken families, women's emancipation, tales of oppression and sexual violence or of gendered identity which is explained as colonial/postcolonial experiences, expectations and encounters, and culture conflicts due to East-West encounters. Jhumpa Lahiri tells her readers that life demands understanding, maturity and marital success leading to the creation of a happy home. It may be the leading concern behind Lahiri's art that make her stories immensely readable and she loads them with a virtue of a different kind. Given the obvious compulsion on her part to priorities the dominant concern in the multicultural world today for a home that guarantees happiness and comfort of existence as civilized individuals, she finds the theme of happy home and intellectual adjustments in life and in love quite a natural choice on which she could concentrate.

Anita Nair is a prolific writer in English, who has written everything from crime fiction to short stories, poems, and children's stories. She is best known for her novels, *The Better Man* (2000) and *The Ladies Coupe* (2001). Through works like *Mistress* (2005) that highlights the changing relationship between a woman and her husband, Nair in her novels bring out the life experiences of Indian woman in their day-to-day life. Nair has also written other books, such as *Adventures of Nonu* (2006), *The Skating Squirrel* (2006), *Living Next Door to Alise* (2007) and *Magical Indian Myths* (2008). Nair's works also include many travelogues. With the play *Nine Faces of Being* (2011), she became a playwright, adapting the script from her book *Mistress*.

Her book *Cut Like Wound* (2012) introduced the fictional character, Inspector Gowda. The second book in the series, *Chain of Custody* was published in 2015. Other works by Nair include, *The Lilac House* (2012) and *Alphabet Soup for Lovers* (2016). The novel *Idris: Keeper of the Light* (2014) is a historical and geographical novel about a Somalian trader who visited Malabar in 1659 AD.

Anita Nair is a prominent Indian writer, who is celebrated for her novels, short stories and travel writings. As a writer with uncommon narrative power, unparalleled psychological realism, extraordinary historical semblance and unusual amorous sensibilities, her writings are an unorthodox exploration of psyche as well as the inner spirit of individuals. Anita Nair's novels are a journey to the interiors. She situates deciphered realism, coloured fantasies, fragmented consciousness and disconnected visualities in her fiction for augmenting encoded cyclic narration. Even though her characters are mostly strangers to the core values and customs of the society and they like to subsist on their own terrains of agony and ecstasy, they are ordinary human beings in another sense as they always desire to relish the emotional wilderness of estranged individuals. Nair's novels and short stories portray individuals, who can overwrite their destiny over their crude imagination and can get away from the assigned intricate trap-doors of everyday lives. They are always on a long struggle not only with the stratified world but also with themselves in order to overcome the multitude of infernal fires burning, both inside and outside their mind.

A novelist and professor, Manju Kapur's first novel, *Difficult Daughters* (1998) won the 1999 Commonwealth Prize for First Novels (Eurasia Section). In 2011, her name was shortlisted for DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, and many television sitcoms have been inspired by her writing. She currently teaches at Delhi University. Manju Kapur is a distinguished novelist, who deals with women and their

problems, the theme of love, marriage and sex in all her novels. Kapur, a well-known name in modern Anglo-Indian literature, is widely known as the Jane Austen of India. Her novels deal with everything that is related to the modern family and the patriarchal society. Her novels present the contemporary picture of today's woman, who is eager to break free from the domestic walls of their house to build a world of their own. Her novels *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011) and *The Brothers* (2016) explore women's struggle in the patriarchal setup.

Manju Kapur has used different themes like patriarchy, search for identity, infertility, infidelity and struggle for existence. Manju Kapur's works create awareness about social evils against women. Even though she presents male characters, they are not up to the level to attract readers as that of her women characters: Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, Astha in *A Married Woman* and Nisha in *Home*, Nina in *Immigrant* and Shagun and Ishita in *Custody* and Tapti Gaina in *Brothers*. Manju Kapur displays a mature understanding of the female psyche. She concentrates on women's issues. She writes about women and comments about the space which they occupy in domestic relationships. Her fiction stresses on the women's need for self-fulfilment, autonomy, self-realization and a fight for their own destiny.

The most recognized humanitarian and social activist, Sudha Murthy, is one of the most well-known modern female writers in Kannada and the English language. *Dollar Sose* (2001) was her first novel, which she authored in Kannada and later translated into English as *Dollar Bahu* (2003). Her works are used as course material in schools, demonstrating that she has created educational works and has taught both, children and youth the true meaning of life. Her stories convey the

message naturally and expressively. Her writings make the literature look beautiful and bring the character to life. Sudha Murthy's writings depict a wide range of themes, and her works are not confined to women's issues alone.

Sudha Murthy's stories show a significant shift in tone from masculine to feminine narratives. Negi. D, in the article "The Kind of Role-Model We Women Need Today", mentions that,

It is common in feminine writing to blame men for women's sufferings as if men and women were born rivals and marriage was a license to carry out a men's women's oppression agenda. Sudha Murthy is probably the first Indian writer in English to rationalize the problem by blaming one woman and the man in the family for the misfortunes of another woman. All four of her novels display the complicated relationships between two women in one family. (8)

Negi interprets Sudha Murthy's works and says that her writings investigate how growing capitalism is a theme that affects close interpersonal relationships in Indian society.

The works of Sudha Murthy inculcate several themes from middle-class Indian society. Middle-class Indians are prone to horoscopes, auspicious and dark times, rituals, habits, norms, and religious beliefs. All these play a significant role in the lives of Indians. In her writings, Sudha Murthy deftly highlights anomalies in the lives of Indians, with the protagonist frequently attributed to creating an interplay between the character and readers within the textual depiction. In the article, "The living handbook of narratology" (2011), Uri Margolin defines that:

Character refers to any person, individual, or group, usually human or supernatural, inserted in a narrative fiction work. Characters, therefore,

reside within the worlds of fiction and play a part in one or more of the states of affairs or incidents spoken about in the plot, no matter how small. A character can be described briefly as a participant in the world of stories. (149)

The thoughts of the characters contain both descriptions of disruptive physical features. One of Sudha Murthy's most distinguishing characteristics is that they are from a middle-class background. They come from either the educational or the service sector. Sudha Murthy connects them to both, traditional Indian civilization and contemporary ultramodern society. Parvathi. D.S. in the article "In Quest for Self" (2008) mentions that:

The majority of young characters are engaged in their growth professionally and personally. The old characters are drawn to wealth but, in other ways, are unable to improve themselves. The modern world of technology results in conflict between the old and the new, ancient practices, customs, and conventions. (3)

In comparison to the characterization of other women, Sudha Murthy's female characters have a more positive outlook on life with more standardized modern Indian women. Rukhmini by Kamala Markandaya surrenders to fate. She is a destitute in the grip of cruel fate. Tanner transports her away from her old home. Her children abandoned her. She is mistreated by society. She takes it all in stride and doesn't complain. From the outside, she is ruled by powerful forces. Sudha Murthy's women characters like Anupama and Mridula from *Mahaswetha* (2000) and *House of cards* (2013), respectively, are in charge of their destiny. They find themselves liberated after the separation from their husbands and gain their own identity. They work to

bring a change in their external situation. Parvathi mentions in “In Quest for Self” (2008), writes that,

The characterization of Sudha Murthy lacks imagination. She struggles to dive deep into her character's psychological crises. Young boys and girls get married and start a relationship. The two do not have intimate outings which, is very odd. It is impossible to expect modern boys and girls with high academic credentials and knowledge to get into marital relations without wandering and dating. (3)

Sudha Murthy's art of characterization is simple and straightforward. Her books and short stories stand out as grand narratives because she is devoted to Indian tradition and culture with western influence. Govind in the article “Sudha Murthy's new book profiles” says that “This goes on to prove that India has evolved but that the Indians have not. . .” (11).

Sudha Murthy sets her novels by weaving the strings of customs and tradition in all her works. The settings of her novels are in towns and provincial impulses that exist in large urban groups. Her works indicate Indian life in general that it juxtaposes rural existence with cosmopolitan life in urban regions. The city-country conflict causes her to prolong the contradiction of the generation gap. Sudha Murthy demonstrates that simple words can effectively explain the thoughts and viewpoints of various people at different times. To illustrate the relevance of the literature, one does not always need to employ sophisticated terminology or phrases. Sudha Murthy's writings are so simple to comprehend that they attract readers of all ages. The connection between the audience and the tale is established. It resonates with the simple lives of the Indians. Sudha Murthy demonstrates the simple views, passion,

and regrets in her character's lives that establish her as the most influential Indian writer.

Sudha Murthy's *Mahashweta* (2000), is a narrative of a simple girl with a great passion for stage performance but lives in regrets till she decides to chase her dreams. Anupama has the qualities of a clear voice, acting abilities, and honest demeanor. Anand admires the beauty of Anupama and marries her after he overcomes the resistance of his possessive mother and sneaky relatives. Anupama tries every possible way to become the perfect daughter-in-law and win the affection of her mother-in-law. Her life turns upside down when white blotches, leukoderma that develops on her body. It creates an opportunity for her mother-in-law to withdraw Anupama from Anand's life. Anupama's husband and the family members are not sympathetic to her situation and holds her accountable for her past life's karma. Anupama is forced to leave Anand's house and lead a lonely life.

Anupama's self-assurance and willingness to tackle life's challenges spares her from the thoughts of committing suicide. She moves in as a paying guest at her friend, Dolly's house and secures a job as a Sanskrit lecturer at a university. She determines to stand on her own and make a new life. Anand recognizes his errors and regrets his actions. He seeks to correct them, so he sets out on a quest to track down Anupama and beg her forgiveness. Eventually, Anand comes to know about the death of Anupama's father. He feels guilty and decides to bring back Anupama to redeem himself from it. Anand meets Anupama and proposes to come back but, Anupama firmly refuses to accept his request.

Sudha Murthy exhibits Anupama as an independent woman, who rejects to forgive her husband for her self-respect. She says, "How can you possibly expect a burnt seed to grow into a tree? Husband, children, affection, love. . . they are all

irrelevant to me now” (148). Murthy, through the character of Anupama, demonstrates that society should not undermine women’s potential.

Sudha Murthy’s novel, *House of Cards* (2013), defines the desire of the protagonist, who has an urge for money, mainly about the damaging impact of cash on tight family relationships. Sanjay, the novel’s protagonist, is born in a lower-middle-class Indian family of a semi-urban area. Through his disabled, tireless efforts prominently makes him a recognized medical practitioner. He takes care of his patients and their relatives without expecting anything when he works as an apprentice in a Government medical college at Bangalore. He reasons that if he stays at the Government hospital, he will pass on his knowledge to the next generation. He recollects his father’s words; “Sanjay, the foremost duty of a doctor, is to take care of his patients. As a doctor, you should understand a patient’s sufferings and serve him the same way that you serve God. God doesn’t stay in just T. Narasipura’s temple. He also comes in the form of a patient” (101). He treats his patients in the public hospital with piety and is ever ready to serve them twenty-four hours a day, round the clock.

Sanjay is devoted to his beloved wife, Mridula, with whom he discusses every aspect of his personal and professional life. Initially, his universe consists of his wife and son. Sanjay’s simplicity, honesty, and integrity make Mridula fall in love despite his disability. Mridula knows life after marriage will be a struggle, so she is prepared to combat it with her beloved husband. In the beginning, Mridula and Sanjay’s relationship is built on mutual love and trust. They have a good understanding that weaves their fate into being interdependent on each other. It enables them to construct a luxurious home for themselves and helps them build a medical clinic. His innocence is tarnished by wealth, which drives Sanjay away from Mridula. He changes to capitalistic thinking and expresses himself as,

Nothing is black or white in this world. The cow gives milk to its calf. But we drink that milk. Isn't that wrong? Trees have life. But we cut them and use their wood. Isn't that wrong too? Mosquitoes and bugs are also creatures. Don't we kill them because they trouble us? Big fish always eats small fish. Is that wrong? (176)

Sanjay's variety of reasoning left Mridula speechless, forcing her to reconsider her opinion of him. He starts to hide a lot of financial details from Mridula on purpose. He figures out how to make money from every source. Money obliterates his awareness of the realities of personal decency. He begins to blame Mridula for her incompetence in living a rich life.

The changes in Sanjay's attitude and work are devastating to the innocent Mridula. She tries to reason his behaviour and activities. Inevitably it results in humiliating responses from Sanjay. He sneers at her out-of-date thinking and mocks her lack of knowledge about current events. She recognizes him to be incorrigible and decides to get away from him. The novel, *House of Cards* investigates the relationship between gender and social discrimination. It is found that women are physically and emotionally disturbed than men.

Being a woman, Sudha Murthy is well aware of women's emotions in their personal and professional lives. She expresses through her writings that women are emotionally manipulated and exploited by men and society for their own needs. The primary themes of the works, *House of Cards* and *Mahaswetha* are man-woman interaction, social acceptance, and estrangement in modern life. The female characters, Anupama and Mridula, experience brutality, denigration, and exploitation in their everyday life. They are depicted as simple, hardworking, and innocent women throughout the novel.

In contrast, the male characters, Sanjay and Anand, are heavily influenced by the power of money, luxury, comfort, and materialism without appreciating the value of family life. Sudha Murthy examines the process of gaining knowledge and intelligence in the modern world for material achievement. She says that, fame and wealth cannot make a person successful. Through her female characters, Sudha Murthy expresses women's nature of empathy towards the material outlook of life. To her, the success of women is not based on oppressing others but through persistent labour.

In the select novels, social and ethical principles define life as a journey filled with learning and unlearning events, as well as numerous hurdles and barriers that put one's fortitude and resolve to test. Through Sudha Murthy's narratives, the hurdles aid women in making decisions for betterment. The choices of Sudha Murthy's women characters are unique, and decisions are complex, but they summoned bravery, purpose, and meaning to forge a new path. They are in the trajectory of self-discovery that necessitates pain and knowledge. Women characters like Anupama and Mridula, firmly establish themselves in the middle of social realities and issues after their harrowing experiences of assault, denigration, and exploitation.

Sudha Murthy's work includes a diverse cast of characters, a variety of situations, various scenarios, and a more expansive form of characters depicting a realistic background, limited mindsets, stereotypical judgments, and stale expectations. All the novels revolve around the man-woman relationship, social acceptance, and estrangement in modern life. Sudha Murthy creates a prototype in each of her heroes, who triumph over all anxieties, conflicts, paradoxes, taboos, frustrations, and long-suffering endurance to emerge victorious as successful persons. She constitutes that there is a voice that has gone unheard behind the silence of every

woman. Her female protagonists are predisposed and vulnerable to society, that has been used her to maintain their status as a figurine, emotionless and vain, a mere example of beauty.

In the select works, Sudha Murthy addresses the family rivalry, the divide between in-law, lack of understanding, tradition vs. modern views, and the patriarchal dominance. These female characters have a lot of untapped potentials, but they are all under male domination and struggle to find their true potential. Murthy's works contain a wide range of scenarios with a more extensive cast of characters and their lives extracted from the authentic Indian society. The social and ethical ideals are outlined throughout the narration in the select texts for the study, *House of Cards* and *Mahaswetha*. Life is shown as a journey filled with numerous hurdles and barriers that test a person's fortitude and resolution. With the limitations in different life modules, Sudha Murthy presents resilience and focus on the theme of gender equality after all the disappointments and defeats that the women characters go through.

Sudha Murthy creates conflicts and regrets in the marital bond and the high expectations from the person they love. In these tales, insensitive male characters like Sanjay and Anand realize their mistakes after committing them. They start to see life from a different perspective, away from their self-centered perspective, and recognize their inaccuracies, especially how women have always been ignored or taken for granted. They realize they need care, partnership, and respect for the females, as the key ingredients in a happy marriage making the books a journey with a positive view.

Works of Sudha Murthy appeal to both the beginners and the expert readers in India and abroad. In Indian English literature, Murthy creates a substantial literary culture that assigns each character with prominent non-deviating distinctive aspects.

The characters overcome the traditional roles and make women's empowerment possible. The research tries to learn the process equipped by Sudha Murthy to fight the gender battle in making women fly with all their potential unleashed from patriarchy. The characterizations also develop towards the process that may help women endow from the assigned conventional roles and find liberty within the nominal construct of the society.

The first chapter entitled "Introduction" deals with the history of Indian English Literature, Women writers, life and works of Sudha Murthy, contemporary women writers and objectives of the study. The second chapter entitled "Beauty: An Unhealthy Effect on Marriage", deals with the novel *Mahaswetha* by Sudha Murthy, which analyzes the isolation and search for identity by the woman character in the novel. It reveals the superstitious beliefs of women in the Indian sub-continent and how women face such unreasonable accusations and hurdles. The third chapter entitled "Materialism: Distraction From Eternal Happiness", deals with the role of materialism, fragile domestic relationships and women's empowerment as represented in the novel, *House of Cards*. The fourth chapter entitled "Conclusion" includes the summation of the previous chapters.

The main objective of the study is to emphasise on women's emancipation from the bondage of patriarchy. It brings out the elements of subjugation and sufferings of women under physical and psychological isolation. It tells the mental turmoil that women face in society after the separation from her husband and the family members. The study elucidates the financial subjugation that prevents women from finding their true potential. It illuminates how Indian women seek self-fulfilment and reject the need to be defined or differentiated in their relationship with a male. The research analyses the process of women's empowerment from the methods used

by Sudha Murthy that combine different feminine roles in a long evolutionary process of emancipation.

Chapter II

Beauty: An Unhealthy Effect on Marriage

The novel, *Mahashweta* (2007) by Sudha Murthy deals with isolation, search for identity, domestic violence, and the role of women in the family and society. Her characters reveal her vision and perception of life and set out in quest for meaning. She is often seen as an experimenter, who deals with existentialistic problems and predicaments of women. Primarily interested in exploring the psychic depth of her female characters, Sudha Murthy may be said to be doing something unique among the contemporary Indian English fiction writers. Her novels, apart from focusing on the intricacies and complexities of human relationships, inevitably move around the theme of alienation and isolation.

The novel focuses on the domestic violence and the mental agony experienced by the protagonist Anupama, a middle-class educated woman. The plight of Anupama worsens when she is affected with the skin disease of leukoderma. She is abandoned by her husband, Anand, who regrets his actions at a later stage for isolating and rejecting her. Though it is a non-contagious and non-hereditary disease, she is humiliated and isolated from her family and the society. Sudha Murthy dedicates *Mahashweta* to all the women, who suffer in silence from the prejudice against various socio-cultural stigmas related to illness like leukoderma that affects Anupama. She elucidates on the reason for the isolation of both, women and men in the modern era with complications that are beyond human control, like the disease of leukoderma.

Sudha Murthy brings out the problems in marriage and family that prevails in the contemporary Indian society. She highlights the inner realities of women's personalities through Anupama's alienation in marital life. Anupama is crushed by social pressure which creates isolation, dislocation of her environment, and change of

reality. Society alienates Anupama and the deep feeling of isolation affects her emotionally. Anupama is denied the opportunity to voice out her problems and feels traumatized when the rapport and communication ruptures with her husband.

Anupama is a complex personality, who represents every woman stuck in the clutches of orthodox Indian society. Her life is full of boredom, sluggishness, and unfulfilled wishes. She undergoes a series of trauma in an utter maze of isolation from her family and surroundings. She symbolizes alienation and existential angst in the form of prejudices against physical appearances. Her life stands as a testimony to the eternal conflict enshrouding the individual's dogged fight with dominant forces of oppression. Anand on the other hand is in isolation through self-realization of his actions towards the feminine gender. The writer portrays the treatment of Anupama, which makes Anand to come out of his masculine standard to analyze and act on his mistakes. He journeys through the guilt and comes out as an educated man, who finally understands the real need of a woman and to respect them, but not in terms of beauty or wealth.

In the Indian society, family members compress girl child's abilities and mould them for their marriage. Anupama is the daughter of a schoolmaster, Shamanna, with a poor economic background. She is sent to her grandmother's house after the death of her mother. She is deserted by her father and her life goes in vain when her father marries another woman, Sabakka, who torments her: "The main reason was that Anupama was very good-looking and her stepsisters were plain. Sheer jealousy prompted them to taunt Anupama by saying that just because she could write a few lines she was too proud of herself" (67). The step-mother tells her husband that, "Let us not educate her [Anupama] further. It might become difficult to find a husband for her. Besides, she will not support us. She has to marry and go to

somebody else's house one day" (66). She enforces household chores on Anupama and categorically tries to stop her from pursuing education.

In order to escape the torment of loneliness, Anupama performs well in her studies to get a scholarship. Her life starts to change when she becomes a Sanskrit erudite and a talented artist with the gift of clear voice and acting abilities. She acts, directs, and translates Sanskrit plays and forges an honest professional demeanour during her college days but her talents are mocked and discouraged by her family members. Anand, a doctor, meets her in a gathering and gets impressed by her personality and are attracted to each other at their first meeting. On the persuasion of Dr. Desai, Dr. Anand buys tickets for the play '*Mahashweta*', where Anupama plays the role of a heroine. Her acting skills, mesmerising voice, and enchanting behaviour fascinates him.

In a patriarchal society, men are anxious about a woman's prolificacy, for which beauty and youth serve as compassionate cues. A man seeks a woman with high sexual attraction and extraordinary beauty. Dr. Anand is haunted by her memories for a long time after their first meeting. He is sensually smitten with Anupama, who looks like his dream girl. His hunt for a bride exposes his wish to marry a beautiful woman. The silhouette of a beautiful woman that had been hovering on the edges of Anand's dreams is unveiled. His mind is filled with the thoughts of Anupama, who infatuates him with her beauty and personality. He joins hand in harmony with Anupama, stunned by her startling beauty with large eyes, exquisite complexion, dimple cheeks, jet-black hair and talent as an actress.

For Anupama, marriage becomes the only option for a safe future in the absence of her parental support. The marriage with Anand could give her societal security and a respectable livelihood. She believed that marriage with Anand would

end all her sufferings, but she is unaware of the fact that he is concerned only with her physical appearance and not her inner beauty. After marriage, his love and care make her feel happy for a few months. She does not feel comfortable in Anand's house, because, she is insulted and treated as a stranger by her mother-in-law and Girija, her sister-in-law, as they were not happy with Anand's marriage with Anupama.

Anupama faces social disgrace right after she decides to marry him. The moment she sees her mother-in-law for the first time, she finds that, "There was no sign of happiness or warmth on Radhakka's face, but there was a knowing gleam in her eyes. For a moment, Anupama shivered" (75). Radhakka wants a wealthy daughter-in-law with lots of jewels and wishes the bride's family to organize a grand wedding ceremony. The expectations are shattered by Anand's decision to marry Anupama, who hails from a poor background.

Anand's domineering mother, Radhakka is a tough nut to crack. She does not like his choice of marrying a poor middle-class woman. She informs Anupama's father that a daughter should be married off amongst equals. They belong to a wealthy educated family which is not compatible with his economic and social status. She always wanted a match among equals but when she realises that Anand is enamoured and that Anupama is pretty to look at, she decides to neglect her economic background.

Radhakka, with many calculative ideas, reluctantly agrees to the marriage. She thinks that everyone will consider her a great person and they will talk about her generosity for accepting a girl from an economically weak background as her daughter-in-law. Her true feeling was that, when her son leaves for England, he will choose a white-skinned girl and reject Anupama. In addition, material pleasures, and

economic status make it more convenient for her to demean her daughter-in-law, Anupama, and remain the sole power of the household.

Anand, after the marriage, remains ambitious about his existence and is not agitated about his wife's plight. He says "Anu I am giving you my heart today, please keep it safe" (36) and imprisons her as a personal accessory to boastfully show before his friends, companions, and relatives as in his words, "Anupama was not just his wife, she was the index of his pride." (353). He seals her for life in the name of love, which is superficial. He treats Anupama as a commodity and a beautiful object that he possesses and flaunts.

Anupama identifies herself as a subordinate individual, as a mere instrument of Anand and his family, which reduces her level of self-confidence. Her roles in her newfound family begin to get stereotyped as she is labelled as a wife and daughter-in-law of the family. She always acquiesces to her husband's desires and learns how to behave in the upper-class social meetings. She changes her way of speech, dressing and smile to accommodate herself within the family. She begins to hide her real feelings and talents, which are suppressed in the name of dignity within the upper-class society, makes her a caged bird.

Two months into the marriage, Anand has to leave for England for further training. He wants to take Anupama along with him but Radhakka's prime motive for getting Anand married is that her daughter-in-law will be able perform the Lakshmi puja, which cannot be performed by her, as she is a widow. Radhakka compels Anupama to take part in the Lakshmi pooja to insult her family during the function amidst all the guests. In addition, Radhakka waits for her son to leave, so that she can avenge her for marrying her son.

The superstitious beliefs worsen the lives of many especially when it comes to a person affected by a disease like leukoderma. The disease is considered inauspicious and Anupama's life deteriorates when she notices a white patch on her foot. She consults a dermatologist and learns that she is affected by leukoderma, which makes her feel that, ". . . there was a sharp sword hanging over her head. She was haunted by the fear that someone would find out her secret; and the harder she tried to conceal her problem, the larger the web of deceit grew. And so did the patch" (147). She starts to ponder over all the possible means to hide the fact that she is affected by the skin disease for which,

She started wearing her sari much lower than before in order to hide the patch, and as a result at times even walking became difficult. Was she suffering now because of her karma, because of something she had done in her previous birth? Was her affliction the result of someone's curse? ... Her wretchedness made her oblivious to everything else. She felt as though she was walking through a dark tunnel that had no end in sight. (147)

Anupama is to keep her condition under wraps and find a way to leave the house unaccompanied in order to see a dermatologist: "Anupama had seen many people with leukoderma but had hardly given them a fleeting thought. However, things were different now. She asks God what sin she had committed to be punished so" (56). It is a sorry state where a woman like Anupama, who is accomplished in every sense of the word, has to keep a medical condition hidden from others. Her secret visit to the dermatologist provides necessary excuses for her to add fuel to the fire.

When the family members of Anand come to know that she has leukoderma, her mother-in-law makes use of it to exploit Anupama and mentions that it comes only to the people, who are not faithful to their partners, and treats her worse than a servant. Radhakka and Girija start to treat her as a person who is cursed. Anupama is compelled to compare her life with that of Girija, who leads a joyful life despite her secret relationship with another man. But it is a pity that Anupama's true love goes unrecognized. Radhakka looks victorious, "Take your daughter back with you; She need not come back until she's completely cured and my son returns and sends for her" (58). Radhakka uses the opportunity to throw her out of the house as well as from her son's life. She rejects Anupama and makes her feel isolated and supportless. She insults Anupama's father publicly for bringing shame into their family by raising a filthy daughter and marrying her off with the intention of monetary gain. She accuses Anupama's family of hiding the truth about the leukoderma. Her words strike Anupama psychologically and the insults make her disheartened, "The moment Radhakka finds out, she sent the daughter-in-law packing. Now she is searching for a new bride for Anand" (74). She misguides Anand with fabricated stories and creates frictions between the couple by continuously writing letters accusing Anupama. She succeeds in making him believe all the make-belief stories. As a husband, Anand should have protected his wife from all the hitches, but he fails and believes the false stories of his mother and sister without lending an ear to his wife.

Anupama turns for comfort towards her husband and takes up writing letters elucidating her plight stating that,

Please do not think that I hid this matter from you and your mother. I did not tell anyone about my condition because I was scared and apprehensive. But your mother thinks that I have had the patch since

before our marriage. She is convinced that I hid it from you and tricked you into marrying me. But you know that is not true. I was always aware of the differences between us before you erased them. Anand, you know I did not have the patch when we got married. Please tell your mother that I have not deceived you. (62, 63)

She writes several letters to Anand to which he remains mute. Anand listens to the words of his mother and rejects the letters of Anupama. He, being educated and socialized, must have analysed Anupama's state and rejected the superstitious beliefs his mother imposed on the situation. She has dedicated her, mind, body, and soul to him, respect him without reluctance, and in return he hurts her with harsh words, she gets hurt deeply by him.

As a doctor, he should have given courage to his wife and helped her with the treatment but he fails to treat Anupama either as his better-half or a patient. He never tries to give importance to her feelings nor does he pay attention to the pleas of Anupama. He does not care about the torments faced by his wife, when

A small white patches had appeared on her arm. It was the death knoll for her happiness; a sign that she should abandon all hopes of a cure. She felt as if she had caught a thief stealthily entering the house. The patches would spread rapidly over the rest of her body. . . and the doors of her mother-in-law's house would remain shut forever. (73)

Anand does not consider the pleas of Anupama and instantly breaks his ties with her. She is heartbroken as she expects him to stand on her side and argue with his mother against the allegations. A small white patch has spoiled her marital life. Anupama's mind is delimited with questions and further thinks that if Anand had leukoderma after their marriage, she would not have left him. She regrets her

marriage with Anand and laments that if she had known about his attitude before, she would have told him to marry someone else. Anupama points out that he did not worry about her future and never treated her like a human. Sudha Murthy portrays the soliloquies of Anupama and her husband. She has enacted many roles on stage,

She would get so immersed in the characters that, long after the plays had been staged, she would still remember the dialogues. But Anand, who had never been on stage, surpassed her in real life! Anand was a Doctor; he knew more about the ‘disease’ than most people. Then why was he behaving in such a manner? What would he have done if his mother or sister had fallen prey to the affliction? Would he have deserted them as he had her? He would probably have sympathized with them and taken care of them, but when it was his own wife, the woman he claimed to love, he had abandoned her. The rules were different. . . and society would not question his behaviour. . . They could not imagine the difficulties, the sorrow and the despair of someone in her position. (75)

Anand is aware of the attitude of both his mother and wife, but he remains indifferent and fails to support the truth. When he knows about his wife’s condition, he begins to avoid her. He believes that the disease would spread to his off-springs and fears that her beauty would deteriorate. Through Anupama, Sudha Murthy states the inner feeling of Anupama and points out that “I cannot help feeling sad for those women who are still at the mercy of their husbands and in-laws and are emotionally and economically dependent on them. What will their fate be if they are unfortunate enough to get this kind of disease?” (148)

Anand contemplates the fact that his family and friends avoid Anupama because of the general superstitious beliefs and the disease leukoderma being contagious. The traditional belief makes him fear of being treated as an outcast for having a diseased wife. He fears that there would be a change in his lifestyle if he accommodates Anupama with her lost beauty. He loves only her physical beauty and is not ready to accept her inner beauty. He reasons that, the love between them would eventually disappear, resulting in despair and heartache. Anand could have been an anchor but instead he turns out to be an unsympathetic husband. He convinces himself that, he is not doing anything wrong in abandoning his wife. He rationalizes his decision of not coming to Anupama's rescue, for not honouring his marital vows and for not being the better half that a woman expects.

Anand forgets the promises he made during their marriage before the sacred Agni-the fire God, to protect, support, and stand by his wife. In contrast, Anupama waits for her husband to unite with her, "Like Rohini to Chanda, like Lakshmi to Narayana, am I to him. Just as the creeper depends on a tree, I depend on him. I cannot live without him, and for his sake, I am ready to renounce everything. Let society say anything it wishes. I do not care..." (6). It exposes her strong love and disposition to detriment her life for him.

In disdain, Anupama returns to her village and faces several hardships and humiliations in her maternal home and social surroundings as leukoderma is considered a misfortune in society. Everyone looks down on Anupama and considers her condition as a social misfortune. Ignorant villagers circulate malicious rumours about her. The society sees her as a victim of leukoderma and points fingers towards her and not her educated husband, who is the real culprit in not accepting Anupama with her flaw despite knowing that her disease is harmless.

When a woman abandons her husband's house, she does not have a place to live. The violation of women's rights is seen through Anupama, who is enforced to flee from her husband's house, whereas Anand plunges himself into work, taking upon additional duties in the hospital. He forgets that there is a helpless young girl waiting for his decision, somewhere in village thousands of miles away.

A woman without her man has to handle disgrace in the society. Anupama becomes an unspeakable and untouchable person, who is taunted and insulted in various ways. Even the parents of the daughter would treat it as a bad sign that Anupama lives with them after her marriage. Anupama endures a lot because she resides in her stepmother's house. The stepmother taunts Anupama frequently and isolates her due to the skin condition thinking that it would spread to her step-sisters as well as would prevent the good marriage proposals for them.

The isolation of a woman, who is not responsible for the disease and the social disgrace play a prominent role in Anupam's life. She could not even attend her dearest friend, Sumithra's wedding as her presence on auspicious occasions is not acceptable in the society. Three years passed, but there is no change in her condition. She faces abandonment and indifference in every walk of life. She visits the village temple and pleads with God to help her in reconciliation with her husband and lead a respectable life. On the other hand, Anand disappoints her when he does not make an attempt to meet her during his visit to India.

Anupama gets frustrated and loses the hope of getting back with Anand. She does not want to stay either with her father or the family. The social stigma of a married woman living with her parents and her stepmother's repeated barbs and the exclusion that accompanies her skin condition obligates her to undergo distress. At

times, she wishes Mother Earth to open and swallow her just as she swallowed virtuous Sita.

The psychological violence faced by Anupama is the result of various adverse conditions against her. Her maladjustment in the male-dominated society and her fragmented relationship with her husband and his family leads her towards psychological trauma. The prohibitions of a prejudiced unconcerned society amalgamate to smash her soul, urging her to kill herself. She is depressed and left with no choice other than to commit suicide but realizes that none of it was her fault. She gains courage and confidence, gives up the cowardly thought of ending her own life: “Anupama climbed down the steps. Whatever the circumstances she found herself in, she would meet the challenge head-on, and win. She was now ready to face the world, determined to stand on her own feet and build a new life for herself” (89). She consoles herself that she has lived an exemplary life and decides to continue the same. Sudha Murthy brings out the brave and clear decision of Anupama, who breaks out of the isolation and comes out of her hard phase of life. She portrays how Anupama finds her identity by recognizing what she wants and does not want in her life. Anupama is determined to stand and build a new life of her own. Her life starts to evolve after moving to Bombay.

Anupama has started forming relationships of friendship and trust. She moves to her friend, Sumithra’s house in Bombay – “Everything was new for Anupama – the language, the people, the sultriness of the air...everything” (236), but she is determined to make her own identity in the new found place. With the help of Sumithra’s husband, Hari, Anupama finds a clerical job and starts to live with Sumithra. Sudha Murthy portrays women’s endless vexation and mortification, in

which patriarchy manifests itself. It is arduous for a woman to exist solitary in a male-dominated society.

Men with lustful eyes venture in this universe to grab the chastity of a woman. Hari tries to exploit and harass Anupama. He says that he could have an affair right under his wife's nose which shocks Anupama. To quote his words,

“I first saw you. All I see in my dreams you. Why are you waiting for your foolish husbands? Do you think he will ever come back to you? You are wasting your youth instead of enjoying it. Anu, we can be together without anyone ever coming to know about it. I will protect you, whatever the circumstances” (87).

Anupama smacks Hari and ridicules his edifying characteristics. She is shocked about her predicament and feels hurt of her status as a single-woman. These instances inevitably happen in the life of many women throughout the country.

Anupama feels disgusted. She does not feel it acceptable to burden Sumithra with the knowledge of Hari's evil designs. She decides to move out of their apartment under the pretence of having used their hospitality and kindness for far too long. She requests her friend, Dolly to arrange accommodation for her and moves to her friend's house as a paying guest. Self-realization plays a prominent role in Anupama's life when she realizes her need for living a life of her own. At times of distress, she waits for Anand's reply which does not happen.

Anupama breaks her isolation by engaging herself as a Sanskrit lecturer in a college. It was a passion for Anupama to enact the Sanskrit classics on stage and the new job as a Sanskrit lecturer made her “. . . confident and self-assured” (105). She is respected by her students and peers. She not only teaches but also directs the plays, starts to earn well, supports her father by sending him a steady amount every month.

The period in her life, when she becomes completely independent and confident, shows the true strength of her character. She looks after her family and is close to her friends despite suffering from leukoderma. Following her dreams with determination, she starts to lead her life happily, independently and introspects herself to find her true self.

Anupama leads her life on her own terms and identifies her capabilities and the needs of her life. She becomes important, when Sabbakka, who “. . . had taunted Anupama and made her cry” (326) asks for help. Anupama gets a chance to prove her worth to those who once looked down on her. To have a sentimental relief, she goes a step further, by sending Sabbakka the money, that she had asked for, but at the same time cuts down all ties with Sabakka and her daughters. As the years go by, Anupama’s popularity in the art circles raises. She directs award-winning Sanskrit plays and wins tributes and her students transform into stars. She does what she loves, she has unbroken acquaintances and a peer group, who support her. Vasant, the doctor, who treats Anupama, renders support by creating a chance to exhibit her artistic talents in an international conference of doctors held in Mumbai.

Anupama, who gains applause as a celebrated director of the play performed in Mumbai is excited to see Anand, who had also attended the conference. She stands speechless after seeing her husband. She finds that she has no expectations from him. There are so many things that she had once wished to tell Anand. Every minute brings the old wound raw, she remembers the helplessness and felt like an abandoned wife, who had been sent back to her father’s house. She also remembers the moment when she tries to commit suicide.

To Anand, finding Anupama brings joy and hope, as a way out of his lonely existence. He rushes to meet Anupama but is met with aversion. The waiting puts

Anand in disarray and makes him grieve over all his lost time. Anand could not believe his luck, for all he knows, he has lost Anupama forever but her presence in the conference makes him feel guilty of his actions and realizes that he has been unjust to his innocent wife. Anand is lonely and feels the pressure of alienation after he utterly cuts ties with Anupama. He understands the meaning of true love in her absence. He recollects Anupama's words in her introduction of the play that, "In any community, land or race, a woman always wants her husband to love only her." (144) and he thinks that he never loved her. He is the only one who is supposed to stand by her during her difficult times, but he had failed to support her.

Anand finds an invisible distance between him and Anupama. He finds her to be a woman, who is capable of leading her life without him. He says to Anupama that her play was great but Anupama politely rejects with thanks followed by 'Dr. Anand', which disappoints him. When he continues, she interrupts him after he reaches the point of his return from England. She politely tells him to sit down and seeks answers for all the time she had once loved and waited for him. She restates his forgiveness and asks,

Which mistake are you seeking forgiveness for? Please remember that saying the right thing at the right time is what makes a conversation meaningful. A language is a tool we use to express ourselves. It is what differentiates us from animals. Did you speak when you first got to know my condition? Was it my fault that I got this white patch? Is it my fault that I am a poor man's daughter? Now that you are here, answer me? (146)

Anand stands speechless. He is not able to answer any of Anupama's questions and could only ask to pardon him. Anupama for the first time in a long time

pours her heart out in anger and tells him that, when she was his wife, she felt lonely, scared, and depressed. All she wanted from him was to hear a few words, which strengthens her, but he never bothered to care or console her even once. Anupama continues to say that,

You knew that I did not have this disease before our marriage. You could have told your mother... but you didn't. You were scared that I would be disfigured because of this disease. Your mother and sister disliked me because I was from a poor family. They wanted an excuse to get rid of me and your silence provided them with the perfect cover. I ended up a victim because you choose to dishonour the vows you took. (147)

Anupama, who is met with a trauma almost immediately after her marriage, starts processing her thoughts, takes stock of things, pulls the strings, and achieves what she can, and satiates with it. She becomes a rounded personality with a balanced disposition that she talks to her husband decisively pinpointing his mistake when he approaches her proposing reunion.

Anand ponders over Anupama's conduct, which she conceals, and never talks or complaints anything bad about Radhakka or Girija. Anupama for the sake of the family reputation had concealed from everyone the affair of Girija with Vijay with the good intention not to escalate the family problem. Anand's conscience pricked him for not realising Anupama's good will and kind nature. He repents and ruminates stating, "Whatever I have done was wrong, but the time I have lost cannot be recovered. However, I must rectify the mistakes I have made and shape the future properly. I will beg Anupama to forgive me. She is far superior to anyone I know in morals, intellect, and conduct" (128).

Anand wants Anupama back in his life as his wife. First his plans to go to his father-in law's house and ". . . in person to apologize to Anupama. He was well aware that she might not forgive him immediately, but he was determined to persuade her to return home with him" (330). After a long search, he comes to know that Shamanna, Anupama's father had died of a shock due to his daughter's misfortune; his repentance escalates with fright, as he knows that he is responsible for his death. He wants to redeem himself of his guilty conscience by reconciling with Anupama and seeks for her forgiveness. He expresses that "To err is Human, to forgive divine, but have I erred beyond the point of forgiveness? I will plead with Anupama to forgive me. After all, we are all human and this is part of life" (134). There is no redemption for the immorality he has committed. He would never have peace of mind for as long as he lives. He feels sad, ashamed, guilty, and helpless. His male-dominant attitude makes him try and win her back as he once did to marry her.

Anand tells Anupama that he is there to honour all his marital vows that he failed to do years back. He asks her to think of moving back with him. All the hurt and dark days that Anupama endured, bubbles back in her answer:

How can you possibly expect a burnt seed to grow into a tree?

Husband, children, affection, love. . . they are all irrelevant to me now.

It is too late for us. I am no longer the naive 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)

Marriage as an institution maintains the relationship between the husband and wife. Anupama reevaluates her state of isolation. Her husband, family, and relatives had once made her stay alone. She remembers herself being the subject of criticism, hostility, and humiliation. She is not anxious about the throngs that tormented her but

the psychological crisis she underwent makes her life miserable. She also recollects the harsh treatment of her husband, whom she loved with all her heart and soul.

Anupama appraises men as the King of Kings and has an intense natural dependency on her husband. She once was ignorant of women's distinctive potential to gaze at the universal issues and is unwisely whimpering for a cold-hearted man. Now, exhausted by the torments she finds reasons to make decisions. To her, Anand, a doctor, knew leukoderma or vitiligo is not infectious or contagious, yet he leaves her to be a forsaken woman in robustness.

At the brim of her life, something awakens Anupama's deep soul and she recollects that the arousal of enlightened spirit has grown to be an independent strength within her. She emerges as a liberated woman with a perception of the meaning of life. She further calculates her state of economic and emotional empowerment. Her self-realization strengthens her inner soul to liberate herself from the shackles of her family life. It illuminates her soul to take a precise resolution in life to achieve her goal. She is intellectually not ready to reconcile with her man to re-join in harmony. She come in terms with herself and realized that it was her turn to make the decision and tells Anand that, "It would be better for us to part now and never communicate with each other again. We now and never communicate with each other again. We met accidentally, but we are not made for each other. Let us part with good grace" (149).

Anupama becomes part of the modern empowered women. All the violence, she suffered in the male-dominated society flash in her memories and the only reason she finds is, to be born as a female. Sudha Murthy in the opening lines says "Even though the female child is stronger than male child at birth as adults it is the man who becomes oppressor and woman who suffers" (1). She affirms that the psychological

state of society is the reason that makes everyone suffer from violence, especially those that are based on gender. Sudha Murthy tries to show that Anupama, the victim of the male-dominated acts of violence but has a chance to choose her path. Anupama sparkles with the same intense beauty as the initial introduction by Sudha Murthy. Anupama shuns the dependent human company and accepts herself as a free bird distant from the shackle of relationships. With elegance, grace, and confidence in her eyes, Anupama relishes and rejoices the loneliness with her final words to Anand stating, now she is a woman of her own name and a stranger to him.

Anand tries to convince her the other way but Anupama is firm in her decision and feels distressed and stigmatized when she hears the pleas of Anand. She chooses to be the person she has become. She had once been the 'moony-eyed teen' and adult who had believed in love and its power, but now, she has come out as a phenomenal woman, who is able to embrace herself and stand strong at whirlpool of problems. He knows that Anupama has found her way of living. He finds her eyes to sparkle with confidence and decisiveness that he has never seen in her.

Anupama develops her sense of equal rights which she does not spoil by overconfidence or conceit in her abilities. It is the impact of her life experiences. She puts Anand down respectfully and informs him to marry someone who can aid him in his mission to provide health services to the poor people in the rural areas, which is his dream for the future. Anupama does not want to complicate life with any other names. She does not prefer another man as she is aware that she has to face the same cycle of humiliation and torments that she underwent with Anand.

Anupama has no doubt on Vasant's dedication or love towards her but she has seen life too closely in all its ugliness and does not wish to succumb to that kind of treatment again. When Vasanth tries to explain to her the drawbacks of lonely old age,

Anupama gently disagrees stating that everyone has their own life to lead. She understands how societies operate and how to maintain a good relationship without hurting herself or anyone. She relates with friends, students and her audience emotionally; recognizes their point of view; and builds a genuine relationship devoid of superficial treatment of beauty.

Sudha Murthy insists on the role of inner beauty in empowering women. She delineates the character of Vasanth as a modern enlightened man, who voices a reformatory concept of beauty and womanhood, “One’s beauty is seen in one’s nature. A good human being who is compassionate to others, who tries to understand the other person’s difficulties and reach out to them in their hour of need has real beauty. Such people should always be cherished and honoured” (145). Sudha Murthy depicts Anupama to embrace isolation in silence and feels happy. Anupama enjoys the moments of the gentle breeze embracing her. She knits her thoughts with loneliness and silence to build the majestic award-winning story plot for her plays making the lonely movements magical. People love, admire, and respect Anupama for her qualities, and inner beauty shines over all other shortcomings.

Banabhatta’s Sanskrit romantic novel *Kadambari*, is another arena, which Sudha Murthy has equipped to analyse the power of isolation in classical and modern love. Sudha Murthy adopts the love story between the heroine Mahashweta and the hero Pundarika to emphasis the parallel life between Anupama and Anand. Princes Maha- Shweta meaning perfectly white, wears a white sari and garland, is alone in the deep forest on a serious penance mourning her love, and awaits the return of her dead husband. Similarly, Anupama turns white from leukoderma and is alone awaiting for her husband who abandoned her. The character, Kadamabri in the play is attributed to the isolation persuades Anupama to empower herself and lead a blissful life filled

with respect and honour. The struggles of Anupama give numerous reasons to dissuade her from waiting for the person who least cares for her. The climax is ironic as, unlike Mahaswetha, Anupama never resolves to accept Anand or any other man in her life.

Self-exploration of humans comes only after severe suffering. Sudha Murthy's portrayals of the contemplating reactions of Anupama are realistic. The social dogmas in India are presented with the conventional system of never-ending societal criticism of a lonely woman. These stereotypes leave a deep psychological trauma in Anupama like many women, in the society who are treated as sex objects by the dominant males. For too long, she had been a puppet in the hands of men throughout her life, beginning from her father, who left her for another wife and her husband, Anand, who abandoned her because of mere loss of beauty. Sudha Murthy questions all the women on their state of remaining subordinate after all the subjugation.

Anupama exemplifies her life and has risen above the social stigmas as a role model among young students to recognise the true beauty beyond skin deep. She reflects the social ostracism of married women. Sudha Murthy beautifully brings out the isolation of a woman from her family and society for the mistake which she is not responsible. She portrays how Anupama has isolated at a particular point. She brings out the problems of a woman who lives alone with no support.

Sudha Murthy critically analyzes how the protagonist rises in every bitter situation filled with pain, only to gather her composure and live a happy life. By the end Anupama turns out empowered by believing in her abilities. She is not cynical about the concept of love and sacrifice after what she had to go through in her life. She discovers serenity without a male figure in her life. She draws courage and finds solace from art, literature and books. She believes that the concept of marriage is not

flawed just because she did not have a fruitful marital relationship. Anupama not only conquers her deep sense of meaninglessness in her life but also encourages her friend to have a meaningful marital life.

The novel, *Mahashweta* is not only about the nostalgic love for the past but also about an enhancement and reformation towards a new life. Contemporary women have broken the walls of constraints and traditional distorts. Anupama epitomizes the life of modern women, though she faces misery and shame. She comes out of her fears and figures out a new life which gives real satisfaction as well as an individual identification.

Women acknowledge themselves as an asset and prove that they are not deserted and dependent. Their life does not terminate rather it starts off from their verdict. Education encourages them to make good decisions. A woman is more proficient than a man; it clearly states that in the present age women have to realize their capability. The oppressed protagonists get frustrated and try to prove themselves; in the process of undergoing a series of embarrassment, and betrayals to make their life elated.

Sudha Murthy's major concern is to depict the real condition of women through her works and has raised her voice to establish the importance of self-identity. She presents Anupama as a woman, who searches for her identity that is imprisoned in the so-called social bonds. Through the character of Anupama, Sudha Murthy presents the effect of family relations and the social bonds that affects the psyche of a woman and has given a voice to the silent sufferings of the protagonist, who faces psychological violence in her day-to-day life.

Anupama re-evaluates her conditions from the economic and social status of their family that has a huge difference which has not changed all these years but her

condition without Anand is getting worse. The absence of Anand and the domineering attitude of mother-in-law frustrates Anupama. She is lonely in the fight against her mother-in-law and when she is made to go back to her father's house in disgrace, the world closes down on her. Sudha Murthy, through the novel, reflects the realistic picture of the socio-economic and psychological problems faced by married Indian women. It reveals the innermost conflict of Anupama, who is in disaster with marital maladjustment and the resultant estrangement in the life of a neglected wife.

CHAPTER III

Chapter III

Materialism: Distraction from Eternal Happiness

Sudha Murthy has portrayed the novel, *House of Cards* (2013) with the reality of the whimsical and hypocritical chauvinistic attitude of men folks. *The House of Cards* is a small family drama which depicts the plainness of village life and the complications of city life and also the clash of cultures which creates mayhem in marriage. The novel presents the vicissitudes in the marital life of Mridula and Dr. Sanjay, the couple whose family life falls like a pack of cards unable to withstand the turmoil of everyday life.

Mridula is an idealistic and practical woman quite unlike Sanjay, who craves for power and money that ruins their marital life. She hails from a family that is content, not pretentious or money hungry and the most important thing she learns from her father is that, "Hiding is sin, and one must be open" (16) which forms the basis of the character of Mridula. She is fair, beautiful, intelligent, outgoing, genuine, full of affection and a helpful girl, who seems to be different from others. She has a passion for teaching and considered it to be a pious profession. She says, "I enjoy and respect my work. It is oxygen to me and not just a source of income" (141). She wanted to serve humanity for which she undergoes medical training to help the downtrodden villagers.

Mridula enters into a new life where she plays various roles like wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Marriage changes the life of a woman. In this new journey, she has to face many challenges and it depends upon her individual mental capacity and her inherent strength to emerge successfully. A woman has to adjust to the new surroundings and new family members and has to face problems with a positive frame of mind. It is not only the beginning of a new life for a woman but also for a man,

who has to take up various roles like husband, father and a dutiful son. Love, mutual understanding and trust coupled with give and take attitude, no personal ego clashes and unshared secrets form the solid base for a successful lifelong commitment.

Destiny plays an important role in the life of human beings. One does not know what fate has in store for a person, and the reason for life to be filled with surprises. It is due to destiny that Mridula met her future husband, Dr. Sanjay in her friend's wedding. Again, it is the same destiny which helps Mridula and Dr. Sanjay to meet in Bombay. Sanjay's physical deformity in his hand does not deter them from making up their mind to hold hands and walk the life's journey. Without much opposition from either side, they begin their marital life. Mridula comes from a wealthy background but Sanjay is from a poor background with only two people whom he could call as his family – his mother, Ratnamma and sister, Lakshmi. The couple settles down after marriage in Bangalore where Sanjay joins in a temporary job at Victoria hospital and Mridula gets a government job as a school teacher in Yelehanka.

Sanjay and Mridula are not very ambitious or avaricious during the initial stages of their married life. They start to face challenges in life. Just as any individual, who react differently under different circumstances depending on their capacity to handle the pressure, Mridula, is more pragmatic and matured enough to handle the crisis with a positive solution. She does not shy away from the challenges in her life. She always has a positive attitude and is confident enough that there is always a solution to endure the problems. It is possible because she is able to balance her emotions. It is this inherent quality of hers which gives her the strength to face the mental trauma she has to face later on in her life whereas, Sanjay is not able to manipulate situations with assertiveness.

Sanjay is well-supported by Mridula physically, mentally and financially leading a happy and a luxurious life in spite of the deformity in his hand. His wife quits her job to take care of the family and to help him in the hospital. Mridula tells her husband that, "...your satisfaction and joy in work is more important to me than my difficulties" (131). She loves Sanjay abundantly in all circumstances and walks with him on the thorny path to success. She mortgages her ornaments to provide her husband with the required monetary funds and even gets three lakhs from her father as a loan, faces difficulties to nurture their little son, Shishir, as it was difficult to find a baby sitter, takes care of the clinic as an administrator as well as a clerk till Sanjay settles himself in the private practice. She expresses that, "... as long as you earn money legally and ethically, I'm with you, I'll help you in your struggle. You can earn illegally too, but I'll never approve of that" (129).

Sanjay is a man of high morals, who wants to serve the human kind. He used to say that, "...my goal is to get a government job and teach, that will give me more happiness than private practice" (77), but grows restless at the turn of events. When Sanjay is in a dilemma to choose between the government job with no development and frequent transfers, his wife renders her support to opt for private practice which promises a better life. His friend Alex remarks that, "Money is a useful tool. It's like a knife you can either kill a person with it or you can cut an apple. It's up to you to decide how to use it" (109). Mridula optimistically encourages her husband Sanjay to agree to Dr. Alex's proposal to start a new private hospital as a partner. She gives him the rational support and encouragement saying that:

I know how difficult it is to stay in Bangalore even in my job. We aren't well sconnected people. My nature is different, and I don't take life so seriously. But you don't share your feelings with others, and

you take everything earnestly. So maybe you can resign and start something of your own. (109)

Every individual has an ambition and desire in their life. It is just the path they choose to accomplish and achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations without hurting others in their drive for success, especially their beloved ones. Sanjay, being a doctor, ought to have understood and realized that his prosperity and success is not just because of his commitment to his medical profession however it is mainly due to the sacrifices of the silent woman, Mridula, who is the pillar of support in his ups and downs. With success and progression of prosperity in life, comes the arrogance, superiority and corruption in Sanjay's life. He establishes himself in the private practice, gains fame as a reputed doctor and gradually turns to be capitalistic which invokes his monetary greed.

Sudha Murthy describes the pretentious insensibility of Sanjay, who adapts to the tide of capitalism and becomes a mercenary doctor. She focusses on the disposition of Sanjay when he earns a lot of money and the lust for money turns his profession from the attitude of servitude to business. He realizes that being honest would do him no good and thrives to become a businessman by establishing a hospital. He is a man who is entrapped to preserve his megalomaniacal path to power. He starts charging high, acclimates more money by prescribing a lot of medicines and performs surgeries unnecessarily to fill his ever-deep pockets.

Everything goes on well until Mridula finds Sanjay to be busy in checking the financial accounts rather than treating patients. He does not trust anybody with money matters and has accelerated himself into the corrupt practices. The honest nature of Sanjay which Mridula liked, diminishes day by day. It is money that has eventually changed the attitude and thoughts of Sanjay in the course of time. When Mridula

comes to know about true face of Sanjay, she feels that he is a deceitful and an unreliable person. Mridula loses all her confidence and is unable to accept and believe that her husband Sanjay has cheated her. Mridula saves and maintains the money for his PG degree and to construct his clinic. She lived with absolute faith, but for a short time, as the trust between them gets shattered. Mridula is worried about the relationship with her husband due to his greediness. She makes untiring efforts not to expend money as she needed her husband's contentment and wanted to live a financially secured and harmonious life in the future but Sanjay has used it in devious ways and cheats her. She feels that he has an excessive attraction towards money which is the consequence of dissonance in husband-wife relationship. Mridula tells her friend that,

Anita, it is not about money. Money can be earned and lost. It is about faith that a wife has in her husband. That's more valuable than money and gold. Faith sustains a marriage and brings joy to the family.

Without it we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith and trust I had in him? (186)

Once money begins to pour in, Sanjay starts to feel that Mridula, though intelligent is not as smart as his sister, Lakshmi. Sanjay is callous towards Mridula for he appreciates everyone except her. The discrimination of Mridula begins at home. Sanjay has more faith in his sister than his wife. He acts polished in front of others but in front of his wife he seems too much brutal. He criticizes her and finds fault with her. He is a dictator in formulating his opinions. He thought why he had to ask others to whom to give money and whom to not, after all, they are his mother and sister. The cardinal principle of life is thrashed by Sanjay. Mridula does not know that the real life consisted of selfish people. The hypocritical sister-in-law, Lakshmi never worries

about Mridula, she wants to talk about the business with her brother. Lakshmi's relationship with her brother is only money based and thinks of her comfort, power and material security by misleading his brother. She proves to be a great money master, who controls other people's wealth. Sanjay realizes that his sister is only interested in her new post as a director in his firm rather than her brother's pain. Both the women, Mridula and her sister-in-law, Lakshmi are totally different. Mridula knows the value of money while Lakshmi is a spendthrift. Lakshmi's husband, Shankar, too abuses Mridula and calls her a villager and a useless thing. These remarks about his wife hurts Sanjay, who comes to know about the thoughts and selfishness of his sister, Lakshmi and her husband Shankar.

Mridula tries to instill the practice of honesty and hard work to her son, gives lessons so as not to be like his father and argues with Sanjay that he should take efforts to tutor moral values to Shishir. Her upbringing is different from that of her husband and tells him that their son will go astray. Sanjay starts to disrespect his wife and finds fault in everything that Mridula does and feels that she is not fit for his present status as, "Mridula did not play an important role anywhere in Sanjay's life" (150). Sanjay always takes the side of his son and teaches Shishir, how to earn money and further tells that how money is the weakness of most people. This attitude of Sanjay is also a mislead to Shishir. Mridula becomes restless and extremely sensitive due to the provocative talk of both, Shishir and Sanjay. Shishir ignores his mother's advice and treats her as a stranger. He has started to rebel against his mother but not with his father. Sanjay pampers his son and supports him when he goes wrong.

Sanjay has a great influence over his son, Shishir, who gives importance to money and luxury. Mridula with high ideologies feels disappointed as, "Shishir looked like his mother but his voice, mannerisms and thinking were Sanjay's" (154).

The love of the husband and son towards Mridula keeps deteriorating as “She was extremely sensitive to their comments and their words hurt her terribly” (157). She is humiliated whenever she advises them on anything good for their well-being. The husband and wife stand as opposite poles in their idealism. Sudha Murthy’s concern is with human relationships and she also portrays how individuals suffer in the absence of meaningful relationship.

Sanjay learns a lot about money management and hides trivial matters from Mridula with a thought that she is an idealist. He believes that white lies are essential for the smooth pace of life, keeps his financial accounts secret from Mridula, who might not entertain his immoral acts. Sanjay possess both, black money and white. Without the knowledge of Mridula, Sanjay helps his sister to buy an apartment, gifts a car to his nephew, Anil and transfers ten lakh rupees to his mother. Sanjay hides the fact that he helps his mother and sister. Mridula is incognizant of her husband’s decisions but she discovers the fact and realizes that Sanjay has deceived her by keeping her away from confidential financial matters, it breaks the trust and the foundation of their married life. In any relationship, compassion binds people together, but the bond between Mridula and Sanjay shatters into pieces when there is deterioration in the foundation of trust.

Mridula feels that she has lost confidence in her husband, who has deceived her for five years. She has never hesitated from her duty as an obedient daughter-in-law or open-handed sister-in-law. She has always requested Sanjay to help both, his mother and his sister financially. Her first reaction is,

How can Sanjay open an account without telling me? The date of the first transaction is five years ago. I’ve been cheated for the last five years and I was not even aware of it. Isn’t this infidelity too? Alex

cheated on Anita in one way and Sanjay has cheated on me in another. He's the one who said, 'I don't want to handle money. You manage it and I'll manage the nursing home.' I guess the apple really doesn't fall far from the tree. When my mother-in-law is desirous of money even at this age, what else can I expect from her son? (183)

Sanjay has never approached Mridula with true feelings. He is a patriarchal man with an ego for success. His wife had supported him in all walks of life, but he indulges in emotional infidelity of cheating his wife in the financial matters. Sudha Murthy clearly portrays how the attitude changes when one becomes capitalized. Leigh K. Cunningham a lawyer and author of Australia illustrates: "Trust is something that is difficult to establish. It is very fragile that needs to be taken care of. Once trust breaks or shatters into pieces, it is very difficult to rebuild it." (n.p.).

Mridula comes to know that he is a frequent deceiver and is worried that she has been cheated for the past five years by Sanjay, a noxious invader, who hurts her emotionally. She is anxious that her own companion has deceived her. She thinks that she is trapped in marriage and defrauded by her husband. Sudha Murthy aptly remarks that, "Every girl dreams of a wonderful marriage but for most, that dream never becomes real. Life after marriage is a battle. Only a few are truly lucky" (207). The hypocrisy of men is well apparent when they have more money and it exposes the chicanery in the marital relationships. Stuart Y. Barbara in *Betrayal of Sacred trust: Living with an unfaithful husband* (2005), mentions that:

The success of a marriage depends on the effective working together of both husband and wife, because each has specific responsibilities set out by God for the permanence and quality of the marriage. Still, the factor of responsibility in the marriage for husband and wife must not

be interpreted as a gender-marked-role-identity. Rather, it is an integral aspect of the relationship mandated by God since creation, for harmony and stability in the home. (31)

Mridula loses all her confidence, feels aggrieved, shocked, annoyed and defrauded by her husband. She becomes a victim under her own circumstances and is unable to believe that her faithful husband, Sanjay has cheated her. She further tells Sanjay that he might have told her about his intentions instead of deceiving her.

Sanjay has inculcated restlessness in her. She has lived a life with complete belief and trusted him from the first day of the marriage but her husband condemned her belief. Sanjay has acted like an honest husband but he has back stabbed. There was excitement and exhilaration at the time of her marriage but Sanjay's act ruptures the most joyous marital bond. She comes to realize the selfishness and the materialistic qualities of her husband. Sanjay has not only upraised his family's socio-economic dignity but also eventually indulged himself in the wrong way of budgetary. The never-ending ambition, materialism, and corrupt practice gain momentum and the marital bond agonizes Mridula, which is evident from the novel:

Tears rolled down Mridula's cheeks. She thought how did I live with Sanjay for such a long time? Today he's given me money and position in society but he doesn't share my sorrows. I've held his hands and walked next to him on the thorny path to success. When a girl gets married, the extent of her happiness depends upon the husband's commitment and communication with her. A few kind words, a little appreciation and small gifts like flowers can make a girl feel special. But Sanjay just wanted to show that he was the boss. (208)

In search of his pride, Sanjay forgets to appreciate the sacrifices made by his wife. Mridula consoles herself, and tries to be happy. Most pathetically, all her sacrifices are neither realized nor valued by her better-half. No doubt Sanjay is cunning and his whereabouts has always been a secret to Mridula. Due to his dubious attitude, Mridula feels that it is better to be alone and happy than to be with someone who makes her feel inferior, undesirable and not good enough. The marital relationship of the Mridula is fragile and is easily destroyed by her traitor husband, who had cheated her. In addition, when the trust is broken, it is bound to have a negative impact and her suppressed emotions bursts like a volcano which results in disappointment of Mridula's marital life and later stages is filled only with deceit and misunderstanding between the estranged couple. The family and conjugal relationships at this point becomes meaningless and Mridula wants to be independent. In one's life money has the dexterity to actualize, ameliorate, glue people's lives and relationships, but it can also annihilate people's lives and relationships, as that happened with Mridula.

Mridula is more emotional and she needed more time to be conscious of the real world. She is depressed psychologically and affected by the happenings in her life. At this point, Mridula is forced to consult a psychiatrist, Dr. Rao, by her student named Vani, who requests her to visit him thrice a week. The doctor tries to explain and understand her problem. She shares her anxiety and trauma with the doctor and when she asks about the importance of money in life, Dr. Rao elucidates that:

Yes money is important in life. It's a change triggering catalyst.

Money brings power, status and confidence. Money brings out the best and the worst in the people. It's a magnifying glass. When a person becomes rich, his inner desires are free to come to the forefront. If a

selfish man becomes rich, he spends money on himself, but if a generous person becomes wealthy, he shares it with others. It's difficult to find people who aren't touched by money. (213)

Mridula confederated the relaxation technique classes of Dr. Rao, in which she finds the main reason for her unhappiness is disappointment. She becomes acquainted with the disappointment that disappears with detachment. Dr. Rao helps her to overcome her problems which are caused due to mental stress. He also consoles Mridula not to worry about her husband and the hindrance caused by materialism in her life.

Mridula leaves her home by saying that her duties as a mother, daughter-in-law and wife is meaningless. Her regret is revealed through her words that, "I've lived with complete belief and trust in him ever since we got married. How am I going to live with him for the rest of my life. When the foundation of the trust cracks, how can marriage remain the same" (181). She has stood by her husband in all the walks of life but when her husband broke the foundation of their marriage and the mutual trust, she was shattered and to save her self-respect, she decides to walk out leaving behind the twenty-five years of love and togetherness. A woman who had no help from either her parents or from her husband's family, has indeed taken a decision to be independent after accepting the reality. Mridula left Dr. Sanjay's house and procures a job as a school headmistress in Hubali. The fact that finally made Mridula to take the radical decision of abandoning her husband and her married life of twenty-five years is the point at which she overhears the conversation between her husband, Sanjay and his partner, Alex, who converse that,

No, I don't want to ask her. I've known her for almost twenty-five years. She doesn't cooperate with us. In fact, she'll create problems because she's an idealist. Instead of her, I want Lakshmi to be the

silent director. She doesn't understand all this anyway. We can just ask her to sign papers whenever we want and, in return, we can give her some money. (215)

The man with whom Mridula has lived for twenty-five years does not have any desire to share with her his own personal matters and since consider her to be an object of protest and obstacle to him. This to a certain extent helps Mridula to get back herself to gain self-assurance and to revive her life. She binds her 'self' with limitations from which she embarks on a journey that transcends and awakens herself to possibilities to realize her aspirations. She is able to take a vital decision about her future, which excludes her husband, Sanjay. This prompts her to leave him stranded, paralyzed, speechless and knocked out entirely when they are about to attain the silver jubilee of their married life. When Sanjay asks Mridula as to when she would be back after seeing her with a suitcase, she steadily answers 'Never'. Sanjay thinks that his wife will return in a month or two as no Indian women would like to stay away from her husband. When Mridula gives the purpose behind her decision, it is an answer for which Sanjay has no answer. She tells her husband that:

I've spent twenty- five of my most important years with you, and yet, I never felt 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. (218)

Indian women identify themselves as a subordinate individual, as a mere instrument of men, which reduces their confidence level. Their roles are stereotyped as an individual accepting themselves as the daughter, wife and mother images. They suppress their real feelings and it becomes difficult for them to untangle their true self from the existing social roles.

After realizing his mistake, Sanjay becomes mad and resentfully runs after her with a ray of hope to bring her back with all the respect that she deserved. But later he understands that money cannot buy everything and he interprets the nature of Mridula to be different from that of other women. Mridula's decision made Sanjay regret that he underestimated his wife and this event changed his chauvinistic mentality. For the first time, he feels that he has missed something valuable. Sanjay is discontent to watch Mridula pursue her path to happiness. He feels the emptiness without Mridula and understands the value of his wife. His life becomes very difficult in Mridula's absence; he seems to an orphan. Sudha Murthy denotes that "The attitude that money can buy everything may be appropriate in today's society. But the fact is that money can't really buy everything. Life is more than money. It's about having concern for one another. That gives a person more satisfaction and happiness" (220).

Mridula struggled with injustice and emotional problems. It happened due to the difference in genes, upbringings and the environment in which they were raised. The inculcated values, the different cultures and different economic status of their families was the cause of her sufferings at her husband's hand. More accumulation of material resources makes people selfish and results in destructive nature and betrayal of their close ones. Heartless judiciousness, manipulation and power destroy a marital relationship and the house built insubstantially gets collapsed.

Sudha Murthy in the novel elucidates on man-woman relationship, explains on the behavior of men towards women with three vivid distinctions. She writes that:

There are three types of men in this world. The majority of them belong to the first category where a man leads and thinks he's superior and makes his wife follow him. He's happy to look after her as long as she remains subordinate to him. He assumes that she's not as exposed to life as he is or as intelligent as he is. He makes decisions on her behalf. Most women accept this as a way of life and people who don't accept it or rebel against it have to suffer in society. 'The second category is of men who allow women to excel. They adjust their life according to the woman in their life and respect her as an individual rather than a wife. But there are very few people in this category. 'The third category is of men who treat their women as true and equal partners in life and walk side by side with them. I don't want the first category of men at all. (221)

Mridula's rapport with her husband patterns her mind to admit slavery and self-negation as customs of daily survival and considers herself as an unwanted personality. Mridula tries to save her marital relationship with Sanjay. She is well aware of the truth that she is better than Sanjay in her credentials, social prestige, competence and in all other respects. Yet in the deepest of her heart, she resists against it. She psychologically inherits the habit that it won't allow her to displease anyone. The exact essence of the novel lies in the psychological progression that the protagonist Mridula goes through during her apparently eventless existence at her natal home. She examines and discovers all the dark and shady corners of her own self. She introspects and judges her relationships.

Gender differences in financial inclusion have far-reaching effects on women's quality of life and autonomy, their families and their communities, putting them at risk of financial fragility and poverty, especially in times of crisis. The dubious nature of Sanjay, happens to break the sacred bondage and pollutes the holiness and pertinence. Sudha Murthy in the novel portrays the real-life experiences of female characters to manifest their pain, yearnings and sufferings in this hypocritical world, where there is gender discrimination and subordinate consideration of women in pecuniary phenomenon of life and also, juxtaposes the pretentiousness, insensibility, and greediness of the patriarchal world.

Marriages are made in heaven is an old dictum and it becomes a debatable subject. The rupture and parting of marital relationships is mushrooming day by day. It is to be understood that marriage is a delicate and an intricate bond between the two. Mridula tells her son that,

Things are different today. Girls are independent now. Their expectations from a partner are high. Boys have to change to adjust with girls now. Traditionally, only the woman was expected to adjust and change. But the modern world demands that boys change too. No modern girl will be happy only with money. Care, partnership and responsibility are the key ingredients of a modern marriage. (222)

False appearance of Sanjay has destroyed the trust in marriage. Trust is an indispensable requirement for any relationship. Dissimulation is incorrect and devastates trust and respect in the marital life. The novel is mainly concerned with the theme of disharmony between husband-wife relationship. The novel deals with the woman, who has to take a decision in life, whether to follow her passion or abide by the ties of a conservative family's restrictions. It helps a woman to discover herself

and overcome social fear and uncertainties. Sudha Murthy looks in to the reasons for marital discord and illustrates how such discord affects the family. Sometimes, the inability of an individual to be responsive to the behavior patterns of her partner leads to strain and tension in the relationship, while sometimes it is on account of varied levels of sensitivity that strained relationships occur. In this novel, Mridula and Sanjay have strained relationships because of their incompatible temperament. Mridula is dreamy, sensitive and emotional, while Sanjay is greedy, realistic, insensitive and irrational. Mridula is poetic and high-strung but Sanjay is detached, philosophical and remote. The matrimonial bonds that bind the two are very fragile and tenuous, the growing tension between them reaches its climax when Mridula leaves the home in search for peace with an implication that when there is no trust, relationships cannot exist.

Sudha Murthy gives the simple yet the most prominent solution to a happy marital life in the novel, *House of Cards*. She says that men are ignorant towards the needs and desires of their women that ruptures their relationship. She points that, “Every woman wants to change her life but no man understands how. He showers his wife with gifts that he likes but not with what she wants” (206). Sudha Murthy shares her view that the simple start of friendship binds two individuals harmoniously. The author notes that:

“Who is the best friend to a man and a woman?”

The answer is: “A wife to her husband and a husband to his wife.”

Now, I agree. A husband and wife must share everything with each other and sit and sort out conflicts. Otherwise, how can a relationship develop? How can a family be happy?” (185)

The novelist argues that development and changes are yet to take place in the growth of women. She advocates that, women should not be the sole bearer of the societal scrutiny and it is time for them to choose change from being the stepping stone of the patriarchy. She says the older generation need to understand the need for women to empower and suggests that:

The truth is that we're different. Your upbringing is different. More than that, your attitude towards life is different. Despite modern education, your mindset has not changed. You expect a woman to remain a subordinate. She should adjust under every circumstance. Her compromising nature is considered a virtue. I don't want to live like that. I don't want to be a doormat. Marriage is not the final destination for me. There are other ways that a woman can live her life.' (220)

The author exemplifies that, women are in need of better technique to mend their relationship with the male-counterparts. It is necessary for women to break the bondage of patriarchy and shine to empower their role in the society stepping into a better future. Sudha Murthy remarks that:

A husband must feel that his wife is delicate... You should never instantly say yes to whatever your husband says. If he finds out that his wife is obedient and a workaholic, then he'll give her more work. Then the wife will have to work in the office and at home. (86)

The author portrays that when a girl gets married, the extent of her happiness depends upon the husband's commitment and communication with her. Sincerity, understanding and affection including a few kind words, a little appreciation and small gifts to appreciate their sacrifices makes women feel special to sustain the marriage and it is important that there is effort from both, the husband and the wife to

continue the marital relationship. A successful marriage is like a good recipe that consists of love, commitment, concern and togetherness. The novel shows how money, fame and power play a vital role in the life of a man which blinds him to abide by the moral values and results in the failure of marriage.

Sudha Murthy deliberates on the patriarchal norms and the changing attitude of people with money in a vivid image. She points that the world is patriarchal where both the irrelevant and important decisions are made by men, that makes women to seek their freedom. She says that "...in a male-dominated society like ours, all the important decisions are made by a man, including choices about what his wife wants. Every woman values her freedom to choose— much more than her husband's money or position" (206).

Sudha Murthy delineates both social and ethical values in the novel through Mridula. Life is depicted as a journey with learning and unlearning experiences meeting with innumerable obstacles and barriers to test the grit and willpower of mankind. These obstacles help us to make a decision as seen in the women characters depicted by Sudha Murthy. Women's choices are hard yet, they gathered courage, purpose, and meaning to create a new horizon. Getting to know women's real worth is a relentless task which helps us to toughen the values. Self-discovery is not an easy ride and it requires pain and understanding. The women characters gather courage to face new challenges in their journey to uproot the age-old patriarchal tradition of submissiveness.

CONCLUSION

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Sudha Murthy is an eminent novelist in the contemporary Indian English Literature. She displays the concealed emotions of a woman to establish a stable identity in the society. The novelist concentrates on the suffering of women from cultural restrictions and gender discrimination especially in the institution of marriage. The select novels, *Mahaswetha* and *House of Cards*, show the weary path of women's self-exploration. Emotional trauma persists on the part of the protagonists, Anupama and Mridula, to refine themselves as individuals. Ideas in the novel mainly focusses on the issues like love, marriage, divorce, social taboos and inhibitions, indifference towards the victims of disease like leukoderma, problem of rehabilitation after being abandoned by the family, extent of growth and recognition as human beings and crisis of conscience after attaining wealth. Sudha Murthy speaks of liberation, from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion and from weakness to strength. She portrays her heroines as fearless women, who do not wish to be dependent on men but yearn for true love and equality.

Sudha Murthy brings out the day-to-day issues faced by women in reconciling themselves to play the dual roles in their lives serving as a wife and a mother. The status of women is inferior in the family and society. Women are discriminated due to their gender. Their positions decline due to the injustices shown towards them by their male counterparts – violence, abuse, social exploitation, poverty and distress. The freedom of women is restricted in the name of family welfare, social prestige, pride and religion that stops them from becoming successful.

Gender inequality has been a social issue for many centuries. In the Indian

patriarchal society, women are considered to be weak and docile. A woman in Indian society has been a victim of humiliation, torture and exploitation. Women form about half of the population of the country, but their situation is grimed. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied the opportunities for growth in the name of socio-cultural practices. Women suffer from the denial of freedom even in their home and also from repression, an unequal and inferior status, and rigid gender hierarchy. Religious tradition and social institutions have a deep bearing on the role and status of women. In recent times, though the society praises women in words, still their status remains pathetic.

Women are assigned the duty to nurture and take care of the family but they are not allowed to take any vital decisions. The society gives the task for women to maintain the family but provides them with the rights to involve themselves in the family matters. Women have their individual rights and position but the society never allows them to prove their potentials except to serve their families. The deprivation of women's rights exists in the society after all the revolutions and equal rights atoned in the modern age. The position of women is denigrated due to the unjust conducts of the patriarchal society.

In Indian society, women empowerment is restricted by discrimination, which destroys their basic rights from childhood. A girl child is still believed to be a burden of the family and is not at all appreciated. Many parents choose marriage as an option to lessen their burden and so the girl children are constantly reminded of their place in the family to be that of a guest. Parents decide to arrange the marriage for their daughters at a very young age, to reduce their burdens which stipulates women to suffer from a young age. The Indian families follow the age-old traditional norms and believe that male children are the only offspring, who would take over the family in

the future, whereas a girl has no right in her father's family after her marriage. In the novel, *Mahaswetha*, Anupama's parents find it hard to provide her with education. Anupama's father, Shammana, despite being a school teacher is reluctant to send his daughter to college owing to his low income. Her step mother, Sabakka warns Shammana that finding suitable groom for a highly educated girl is a costly issue and henceforth, they could not pursue their higher education. The parents start to search for grooms when their daughters are still in school.

Sudha Murthy emphasizes that education is the key for a woman to invade the portal of liberation and raise as empowered woman. Education contributes to the individual's emancipation and supports the person at crucial times. Maya Angelou in the book, *Graduation* divulges that the knowledge is the strength which has the ability to empower people to liberate their minds from ignorance. The same notion is expressed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (1985) as, "The greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well... Only the power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both" (4). The author through her educated protagonists, Anupama and Mridula conveys that the empowerment of a woman is through education which ordains to attain economic and emotional independence.

Marriage is one of the most important social institution for an individual becomes a hinderance in the life of a girl child as she is forced into the relationship without proper understanding of her place in the family. The concept of marriage in India is considered as an important event in the life of women and a sacred ritual for mankind, but the practice of inequality through patriarchal norms creates the worst scenario for women in the marital relationship. In the marital life, it becomes the bride's responsibility to make major adjustments in the family, especially with her

spouse. A girl should be prepared to make sacrifice in terms of their own needs and from the childhood they are taught to be modest, hardworking and should always contribute herself to the family. The society advises women to be docile and subservient. The state of being subservient leads wives to obey the orders of their husbands and the in-laws. The society teaches a wife to treat her husband as God and she should be loyal and obedient to him. In both the novels, *Mahaswetha* and *House of Cards*, the women protagonists, Anupama and Mridula, lead a life pertaining to the societal norms. As women, they blindly accept their submissive role without raising any questions since they believe that the patriarchal norms and practices of male domination cannot be altered. They remain supportive, compliant and subservient in their marital life as long as possible. They respect their husbands and obey all their orders without demanding a reason that makes them the perfect wife, daughter-in-law, mother and the perfect women according to the norms. Sudha Murthy depicts the plight of perfectly groomed women, who are put to test on their womanhood under the severe patriarchal clutches.

Women are held responsible for the livelihood of their husbands, parents-in-law and children, yet they are not given freedom of decision making, freedom of thought and speech. According to the society, a wife should not have any desires and needs. She should consider her husband's desires as hers' and serve him to make him happy. The society makes her to be quite and accept her husband's orders. Anupama and Mridula does not utter a word to their husbands though they want to accompany them in their careers. They are left astray when Anand decides to go abroad and Sanjay pursues his ambitions without acknowledging their wife's prominence or opinion.

Sudha Murthy notes that the purpose of marriage between a man and a woman is to complement each other and not to control one another. Both, wife and husband have to discuss and take decisions regarding their family matter as they have equal rights. The novelist says that men have failed to understand the need for equality in the marital roles. Men keep women in the status of subordination endangering the entire family setup. Through Mridula, the author points out that women are extremely capable of making decisions for the success of both, the family and herself. Mridula decides to support Sanjay on his dreams to success. She is employed and works for fulfilling all the needs of the household until Sanjay succeeds, which remains a fluctuating dream for a long time. Mridula shoulders the burdens of the family and society when Sanjay never performs any tasks at home, take care of the children or try to understand the multi-facet role of his wife in the family.

A woman, who finds a way to lead her life without her companion is considered as a disobedient and disloyal wife. In the case of Anupama, she finds herself in a situation where men try to take advantage of her, owing to the gender prejudice of the patriarchy. She is viewed as an object by her husband, Anand and her mother-in-law, Radhakka humiliates her when she is sent to her father's house. People criticizes her through speculative comments and mock her appearance and ambitions even after she succeeds. The novelist comments that being a human, everyone has a unique identity but the society never allows women to explore their talents. The society restricts women with the cultural norms and makes them dependent throughout their life. The identity of women disappears and they are treated as servants to serve their families. The article entitled "Hinduism, marriage and mental illness," in which the sociologist Susan Wadley says about the role of women in the society as,

After examining the identity of women in folklore, myths, and legends rooted in history, observed that the Indian woman is constantly made to adopt contradictory roles – the nurturing roles as daughters, mothers, wives, and as daughters-in-law, and the stereotyped role of a weak and helpless woman. The latter is fostered to ensure complete dependence on the male sex. Consequently, the constant movement from strength to passivity leads to enormous stress placing the woman's mental health under constant threat. (6)

Since, women are considered as a weaker sex when compared to men, they are treated as submissive and stamp their role as nurturing and maintaining the family.

Sudha Murthy emphasizes that women are not born only to do kitchen duties. They too have some responsibilities, rights and position in the family but the society never allows them to do their work except to serve their families. Women are not born to do the household chores but the society forces them. It leads women to believe that their role is confined to the kitchen. Anupama loses her self-esteem under constant accusations from everyone in her surroundings. Her roles are stereotyped to be an individual accepting to be dependent and submissive. She begins to suppress her real feelings and it becomes difficult for her to untangle her true self from the existing social roles.

Over a long period of time, women are excluded from all the social activities but their efficiency is weighed in terms of their capability to produce children and manage the household affairs. Thus, Anupama becomes a caged bird and finds herself in a state of depression leading to commit suicide when she finds herself abandoned by her husband. She is compelled to sacrifice her happiness, passion, strength and power under the burden of familial expectations.

Both, Anand and Sanjay are aloof and find themselves in the dominant role and believe that they are the rulers of the world. Like many men in the patriarchal society, they treat their wives as objects to do the household chores and consider them as an inanimate object, who do not have emotions. Sudha Murthy portrays that the patriarchy has made the society to think that men are always good at decision making and restricts women to take decision in their family matters related to their children. Mridula is time and again neglected by her son, Shisir, who adorned his father for providing him with a materialistic life. To him, the loving and obedient mother stands as a symbol of subservient maid whom he does not respect or care. The ethical values of the mother fail to take its place in the son's life as he is behind the material pursuits of his father, who uses unethical means to earn money. Both father and son, in *House of Cards*, disrespect Mridula, find themselves in an utter maze of despondence as they find their dependency on Mirdula only after she deserts them. Anand in *Mahaswetha*, regrets his abandonment of Anupama when he understands her nature and goes on a mission to find her.

In India, since ages women's role is listed as daughter, mother, and wife. In all these roles a girl is made to follow certain traditional norms. Women are expected to be dependent and subordinate to men in their lives. They use their silence as a weapon to overcome their sufferings. Sudha Murthy expresses the silent sufferings of women and subsequently defines the complex nature of their inner self that is at war to make space for itself in the male dominated society. The women protagonists, Mridula and Anupama accept the traditional norms amidst modernity but find it difficult to withstand the subjugation. Their marriage becomes the biggest obstacle in their path to find an identity when the male counterparts fail to understand their desires.

Sudha Murthy states that the society would never encourage a woman to succeed in any field and may never allow her to show the uniqueness. The fear of the patriarchal society is that women would not be under the control of men if they are allowed to be empowered. So, men keep ruling women by denying their rights. Men expect women not be independent but to be dependent on them. Women in the patriarchal set-up receive little attention and their experience is not considered by the society and the novelist states that they are oblivious to the benefits of individuality in the society. The select novels, *Mahaswetha* and *House of Cards* explicitly portray the patriarchy, that has for years socially constructed the system with males as the primary power only to find the best possible solutions for women. Sudha Murthy breaks the norms and enlightens the changing social scenario with Mridula and Anupama, who walk out of their marital bondage into the light of success with their education, values and struggles. They independently fight all the social stigmas to attain success and earn a name for themselves.

Anupama and Mridula are the new women depicted by Sudha Murthy who are hardworking, dedicated, delicate and docile at the time of marriage but the very essence of self-respect always remained with them, ultimately, forcing them to become rebellious in a subdued way. Sudha Murthy expresses that, Indian women have begun to identify themselves to be individuals with potentiality. She remarks that a woman is equally competent enough just like a man. Today a woman has become a financial contributor and she is not confined to domesticity. The novels show how women always gain self-esteem in facing the adversities of their lives, assert their individuality and aspire self-reliance through education. They are capable of being independent and leading lives on their own. In the end, Anupama and Mridula are changed women, who lead their life with pride. They are not insecure or

powerless as in their early phase of life but have transformed to be strong and courageous women. They are highly sensuous, matured and ethical for the physical world and portray their bravest act in the end to overshadow their urge to revolutionize the patriarchal norms.

Every individual has their own identity. In the patriarchal society women are not allowed to attain their dreams and talents. Women's talents are ridiculed by their husbands and other family members and their success is not acceptable by their husbands. Sudha Murthy breaking the stereotypes to re-vision the equations and relations of power is an attempt to realize the individuality of women. She provides instances for women to attain their self-esteem by achieving their self-identity. The protagonists of the select novels refuse to live their life in a servile manner. They decide to take the harness of their life into their own hands and are able to complete their journey towards self-realization. Anupama, the modern educated middle-class woman, suffers in the isolation as a deserted wife until she comes out of her isolation and moves to search for a new path without depending on others in her life. Mridula finds strength to liberate her inner soul from the shackles of her family life. They are contended with the unconditional adoration showered by their students and emerge as empowered women.

Sudha Murthy signifies that the male supremacy and the patriarchal mindset should vanish from the Indian society. Swami Vivekananda in his speech claims that "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing" (n.p.). Women have to break the oblivion of traditional norms and find their role with their dreams. They have to awaken from the slumber of subjugation and find their path in life. They have

to recognize their own 'self' to attain empowerment and strive towards self-fulfillment.

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