CONTEXTUALIZING INDIAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN SUDHA MURTHY’S MAHASHWETA

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ABSTRACT

Sudha Murthy, a leading writer of Indian English literature with admirable and unique sketch out of Indian consciousness accentuated from Indian life and culture. Her selected work, Mahashweta has been analyzed in this paper to endorse that the Indian consciousness.

KEYWORDS: Indian Life and Culture, Indian Consciousness, Endorse

INTRODUCTION

Sudha Murthy’s novels capitulate to the reflection of Indian consciousness that presented through legendary episodes, characters, their experiences and the related situations etc as a collection of procedure. Her acquaintance of feminine arena in India and its culture is splendidly dominated in Mahasweta facilitating to put across an abnormal standpoint of Indian Diaspora making a frank verbal paintings. The novel furnishes mixed and sundry ideas prevailed in orthodox Indian society and conscientious firmness of a modern Indian female.

The present paper Contextualizing Indian consciousness in Sudha Murthy’s Mahashweta is a serious and comprehensive attempt to investigate the Indian consciousness constructed in Sudha Murthy’s Mahasweta. The representation of the predicament and anguish of the women has become a moral responsibility both for writers and readers. This gender centric approach as a mechanism to expose the humiliation of humanity is helpful to expand the frontiers of human thought. The representation of women in regional writings for the constraint of language fails to draw the attention of a wide community of readers and social thinkers. In the present paper the efforts have been made to construct the voices of females with the canons of socio religious socio economic and socio psychological dimensions of feminine oriented social practices. The comprehensive study of the novel Mahasweta in English will be helpful to explore new dimensions of Indian literature in the post colonial argument.

The novel, I have selected here for our study, is one of the best works by Sudha Murthy which unlocks a chance for an analysis using Indian Consciousness in relation to the feminine issues. The theme of the novel may be too simple. The couple, both educated, is shown from a different viewpoint allowing the reader to brainstorm as he reads whose thoughts are having no structure. In the novel we find that the opening is all about their physical passion. The writer makes their first encounter pushing to a leap of thoughts. It is no doubt a strange episode between reality and fantasy experienced by the future couple and the reader. While deconstructing her themes, the paper looks at the traces and analyzes the various contradictions which rather demolish the traditional structures instead of holding them together in a single string. But the writer may have made it a spot of breakthrough to the flourishing ideas in reader’s mind, some of which may be identified and the rest may be unidentified.

The situations followed also refer to Indian sensibility. Sudha Murthy relates the legendary moment to the present moment in the novel. The depth and the potentiality of the protagonist is heightened through the mention to the Indian classics, who with her verve, accumulated through her traditional daily life. It generates a light of the reality that the writer might be communicating as the supremacy of an Indian female. The novel contains the very situations of paradox. In the
novel the protagonist is introduced as a brilliant actress and an outstanding student who even has familiarity in Hindustani classical music by Dr. Desai to Dr. Anand. She is well versed in Sanskrit novels written by the grand scholar Bana Bhatta. Those works are translated and dramatized by her. She even takes the front role in the play “Mahaswetha” because of which Dr. Anand is attracted to her good looks as well as capacity as an artiste. Everyone whoever watches her play is spellbound, likes her show extremely and admires her a lot. It is not an overstatement given by Dr. Desai in praise of her talent and that can be comprehended when the affluent bridegroom who happens to see Anupama’s play and is interested to wed her.

The superior manner and courage in the character of the protagonist is subsided once she marries to Dr. Anand and she merely lives for the love of her husband without considering anything about her career. The educated girl like her who wants support her father after getting her job and who even actively participates in fundraising programmes to help the poor and needy, merely resigns to a humble daughter-in-law of an affluent family with a domineering mother-in-law and an arrogant sister-in-law with an only intention to impress her in-laws family. In the story of Mahasweta the mother-in-law is shown as ruthless, authoritative and typical of Indian traditional sensibility. Thus the family which generally provides security and status to a girl after marriage is in very much contrast to the stark and painful misfortunes that Anupama experiences in the novel and that allows Sudha Murty to draw the attention of the reader to the suffering of the patient with a cosmetic disease named leukoderma while presenting her as a human being who torments herself to maintain her dignity. Dr. Anand’s reference in the novel is limited to an infatuated young man who marries a poor girl based on her bodily beauty but not the inner character of her.

The boldness he shows to marry a poor girl like Anupama misses in the course of time who even fails to find the whereabouts of her for almost three years immediately after a few month of their marriage. Absence of her husband, the domineering and superstitious mother-in-law and the white patch on her leg on the day of lakshmi puja ruin her life after marriage. When she knows that she has an attack of leukoderma, gets panicked and tries to get treatment secretly from a dermatologist, but it results in a futile effort. Anand’s deaf ear to her plight makes her lament endlessly. But Anupama never tries to approach and question him for his indifference towards her though she feels that marriage is a lifelong commitment. She realizes that Anand has a weakness for beauty and out of infatuation only he marries Anupama to exhibit her as the index of pride. Then only she moves to Mumbai and tries to find her own life. Dr. Desai, who is the friend of the protagonist father and a well wisher of Dr. Anand’s family is not shown anywhere in the novel taking any responsibility in rehabilitating their married life, though he is the main character in arranging the marriage.

As doctors by profession Dr. Anand and Dr. Desai may take major role in the life of the protagonist but is undermined in the novel from the very beginning itself. Through their characters Sudha Murthy may give some exposition to the fate and trauma of leukoderma patients at societal level. With the advancement and expansion of science and technology, ethical vigor of human society has not increased. It has indeed decreased. Man has conquered the outer world through study, experiments, job, quality life style but not the inner world. There is lot of variation shown in Anupama’s character in Mahaswetha that is shown as a typical of all the victims of leukoderma in Karnataka. It exposes many superstitious beliefs of people whose prejudices govern the society even today. But in Mumbai she is again emerges into a different individual who does not consider what people talk about her. The objective of the protagonist in the beginning i.e., to become matured educated individual is thus marred by her need to be accepted by her husband and family undermining the very character of Anupama, as a multifaceted character who deteriorates into an individual who suffers psychologically due her physical ailment as the novel progresses. At macro level there is no mention of any solution suggested to the victims of leukoderma in the society from the writer’s point of view though the individual suffering is
explored at micro level. The novel has an impact on the readers because the approach of the issues are Indian. We have our past glory, heritage, golden history and cultural achievement which have not been continuing up to contemporary time. We hardly realize our present barrenness. We have not carried forth the tradition to present time. We bask in our past achievements and do nothing. We have become stagnant the contemporary feature of India in each and every field against the backdrop of a large and glorious past. In the opening of the novel, there is an incident experienced by the future couple. The novel sets up as a classic and mythological episode throughout the work and the chief characters – Anupama, Anand - start revolving around it. The episode stresses the need to uphold truthfulness, honesty and faithfulness in their relation. All the claims seem to be fortunate, once the novel is understood from the point of view of the female protagonist who claims to have all the qualities required for any idealistic Indian lady. It seems that in Indian culture the bride has a restricted connotation, symbolizing modesty, subordination and the superiority of in laws is acknowledged communally; Therefore the theme can be stated as the opposition between reality and /or idealism and dissent of reality. To be precise the text criticizes submission to dishonesty and flattery in opposition to truth and reality.

This dominant ideology can be supported by the evidences we can find when studying the text. On the one hand, she maintains that she is not affected by any kind of feelings and yet remains a prey to the idealistic chains. This shows that she is defending its true and unaffected manifestation against the feminine world that is under the pressure of the masculine world and she is maintaining the male protagonist of being unkind, dishonest and unfaithful. On the other hand, the text reveals a woman who is not satisfied with the reality she finds and shows her qualities in comparison to the highness; she is honest and Godly but the woman is affected by the tragedy. Subsequently she reveals the tension existing between truth and dishonesty which is the main theme of the novel as well. However there are also some points that annul the priority of these privileged items of the binary opposites. First of all as mentioned earlier the supremacy of truth vs. dishonesty is acknowledged, however she continuously feels "agitated" and desperate; She has not the ability to accept the reality as it is, and the revelation of the reality is so tragic to her.

As a result there comes up a doubt about the benefit of reality over dishonesty. It seems that honesty that is considered a virtue is gaining negative dimensions therefore indeterminacy is aroused: is it better to reveal the truth and cause such disastrous effects on an individual or is it better to distort the reality and conceal it or at least reveal it in a milder way? It seems that in case the truth (either lack of beauty or reality) was revealed more mildly rather than "faithfully" it would have had better ends; maybe the lady would have been able to recover the truth in a gradual process later on, so could have been able to come along with it. Furthermore, because they do not disclose the reality but they rather make it softer and easier to accept; if this reality is truth, they show it in a way that is easier for the woman to accept and if this reality is beauty they help her look more beautiful, and consequently give her a better impression. So it seems the text itself deconstructs the supremacy of truth vs. dishonesty by discovering a new virtue that seems to be prior to the virtue of honesty that is saving an individual from absolute despair by revealing her a calm version of reality. In better words the text deconstructs itself through questioning the validity of moral standards in different contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

A reading of the novel, Mahaswetha shows human being’s self exploration comes only after a severe suffering but not as a normal individual. There is a lot experience of emotional trauma on the part of the protagonist to refine as an individual. Ideas in the novel mainly focus issues like love, marriage, divorce, social taboos and inhibitions, indifference towards the victims of disease like leukoderma, problem of rehabilitation after abandoned by the family, extent of growth and recognition as human beings and crisis of conscience and values by the fellow human beings.
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