

**HIDDEN EMBERS: EXPLORING SUDHA MURTHY'S
UNCONVENTIONAL WOMEN WITH REFERENCE TO *GENTLY
FALLS THE BAKULA, HOUSE OF CARDS AND THE MOTHER I
NEVER KNEW***

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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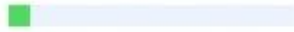
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Hidden Embers: Exploring Sudha Murthy's Unconventional Women with Reference to *Gently Falls the Bakula, House of Cards and The Mother I Never Knew*** is a bonafide record of research done by **Maya Unnikrishnan N U** (Register Number AIAWMEG017), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Among bees, the queen bees play a significant position as the mother of everyone. They are responsible to produce the next generation and make sure the comb's survival. If a queen fails in her duties or is unable to give raise to enough offspring, the hive has the right to put an end to her. So this natural phenomenon can shed light on problems faced by women on a daily basis, she was forced to fall behind societal expectations. There are many metaphors in nature that serve as an example of women's life. There are many discussions regarding feminist views in Sudha Murthy's work but I could not find many discussions on radical feminism in it. So the goal of this paper is to disclose the male chauvinism in the Indian community.

To attain this goal, I have selected the three works of Sudha Murthy namely *Gently falls the Bakula*, *House of Cards* and *The Mother I Never Knew*. In the first chapter, I discuss the subjugation faced by women after marriage, the novel shows the cruel side of love marriage and oppressions. The second chapter shows men's craze for money and thereby how men unvalued his wife. The third chapter focuses on the negligence done to motherhood. Literature is considered as the reflection of our society, so it contains different stories, poems, myths regarding our society. In earlier times women were not able to write but they have written with male pseudonyms because over that period women are considered to be inferior and only men had the right to express their freedom. Now the society has undergone changes and there are many women writers who through their works show the subjugations faced by them in society. For them, literature is a powerful tool to show the problems to the entire society.

Sudha Murthy is a prolific writer in India. She was an engineering teacher who later shines as a writer and is known for her charitable works. She is the chairperson of Infosys Foundation and is the wife of Narayana Murthy, co-founder of Infosys Foundation. She is celebrated for her contribution in both English and Kannada literature. On International Women's Day she was nominated to Rajya Sabha. She is not only known as a writer but a social activist too. *Three Thousand Stitches* is one of her works and this title signifies that she had helped three thousand prostitutes and had given a new life. Also founded a Public Charitable Trust in 1996 which has built 2,300 houses in flood affected areas. She has also provided libraries in each school and thereby she has contributed 70,000 libraries. Around 16,000 public toilets were built by her organisation. Her contribution to the literary field was also great. She has written many short stories, fiction, novels, travelogues and memoirs. Her important works are *Mahasweta*, *Three Thousand Stitches*, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, *Dollar Bahu*, *Wise and Otherwise*, *House of Cards*, *The Mother I Never Knew* etc.

Sudha Murthy has won Padma Shri for her social service in 2006, India's fourth highest civilian award and Padma Bhushan in 2023. She has also awarded as the Best Teacher by Rotary Club Karnataka, for her social service she has won National award from Public Relation Society of India, Ojaswini Award in 2001, Attimabbe Award for her technical book, Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar. So she was one of the famous figures along with Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Chitra Banerjee, Anita Nair and Meena Kandaswamy. Sudha Murthy is a pioneering writer in children's literature. This literature helps teens for their overall development and children start to imagine about the things and thus enrich their creativity. Also reading these books help them to learn language and vocabulary. Some of her books related to

children's literature are *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*, *The Bird with Golden Wings*, *The Man from the Egg* etc.

She used to write in simple language but it is very powerful and this will help all ranges of people to understand. All her works goes deep into Indian culture and society and also deals with the life of rustic people, problems of women, subjugated groups, power of education etc. In an interview Sudha Murthy says that she has started with travelogues and wrote it in Kannada for the first time and after that she has started writing in English. She says that she enjoys writing because it is like an expression of particular feelings. Her other books which come with the same themes are *Mahasweta*, *Dollar Bahu*.

Mahasweta is the story of Anupama, a teacher who is married to Dr Anand, a representative of patriarchal society. Anand falls for her beauty like love at first sight. Very soon they got married and he left for England to continuing studies. Anupama feels loneliness and once she discovers a white patch on her body. The family starts to blame her, especially her mother-in-law. They consider this patch as a bad omen and this leads her to leave this house. Anand also joins with her mother, he also starts to neglect her. She even thought of committing suicide but her inner strength holds her and opened a new life. She is described as a strong woman rather than a coward. Sudha Murthy has shown her transformation and later she became a lecturer in Mumbai. By the end of the novel we could see Anand comes near her to call back but she never wants to live with a person who had once neglected her. So we can see the quest for self in this novel.

The central characters in the novel *Dollar Bahu* are Vinuta, Girish, Chandru, Gouramma, Jamuna. The novel clearly shows the lives of a middle class family who yearns for a better life. The novel can be regarded as a women centred novel where it

explores the need for self-identity. Vinuta is the daughter in law of Gouramma who is a typical village girl working as a teacher and Jamuna is the other daughter in law and is the spouse of Chandru depicted as an American lady. In a patriarchal society, the husband's mother also plays an important role. She has a tendency to keep the daughter in law under her feet. So here Gouramma doesn't like Vinuta and she never values her and her job. She prefers Jamuna who is rich with plenty of American dollars but very soon she comes to understand that the real gold was there in her home, that is Vinuta. So Vinuta is that lady who has to suffer a lot in her husband's home but she never valued those harsh words of all. She stills continues in her job, that means she was on the right track. There are certain ladies who support patriarchy. Gouramma is such a character, she also stands as a representative of male domination.

I have used the analytical method to prove the feminist elements in Sudha Murthy's works. *Gently Falls the Bakula* is the first novel written in Kannada language. It discloses the challenges faced by the central character Shrimati Deshpande, who breaks all the patriarchal customs. The novel shows the conflicts in relationships. Shrimati was a very ambitious lady but after the marriage her life turned upside down. She got married to Shrikant, an IT professional, and very soon he starts to grow in his profession but Shrimati leaves her dreams behind to become a shadow to fulfil her husband's wishes. Slowly their life changes and Shrikant starts to ignore her, he never cares for her. Writer has used bakula flowers to show their love had unfortunately fallen. Communication is very important in a relationship if it lacks that means they lost their truth in the relationship. She understands his rude behaviour and slowly keeps away. It was her dream to get a doctorate in History, so she takes this as a chance to fulfil it. So we could find a theme of quest for identity. If the partner never

needs his/her beloved it is better to leave from that relationship, that's what Shrimati did here. She starts to fly again.

The novel *House of Cards* deals with the story of the power of money and how it destroys the relationship. Mridula, Sanjay and Sishir are main characters in the novel. Writer had depicted women as an energetic lady who had married a Dr Sanjay. Like every woman she too thinks about a beautiful life but her is a disastrous one. She had to suffer from both husband and son. Along with his friend Sanjay started a private nursing home which led him to get more money. He starts to fall for the money and slowly ignores his relations and also teaches his son to make more money without showing sentiments. He feels Mridula's job as a teacher is inferior to his. He forgets about Mridula who had left her wishes to support him and also this teaching job which had helped Sanjay to reach on the heights. Sishir also hates his mother, he has been shown as a representative of the modern world who never cares about relations, traditions. Mridula feels that she is nothing in that home and leaves from there. She feels like it's better to find a new life. She found a world of her own where there is nobody to oppress her and free from all customs.

The Mother I Never Knew consists of two novellas dealing with the story of Venkatesh and Mukesh. The major theme employed in the novel is abandonment. The novels show the stories of many mothers who were the victims of patriarchal rule. The novella had clearly shown the Indian culture and traditions existed in our society. Bhagavva, Nirmala Kumari, Rupinder, Sumati are the mothers shown in the novel. The first novella deals with the story of Venkatesh, a Bank Manager who feels troubled by seeing an "exact replica of himself" (MINK 45). So it's about searching about his father's past. The second novella deals with the story of Mukesh, a businessman who comes to know that he was adopted by that family. So it's about

searching for his biological parents. Marriage opens up into a new life but there are dangers hiding behind it. Men are using women for their purposes and after that they throw them as a waste. They just consider women as mere objects, that is what we call abandonment. So this novella is about abandoning mothers.

I have used radical feminism to prove the works of Sudha Murthy. Radical feminism is a perspective within the umbrella term feminism. Feminism is an economic, cultural and political movement that focuses on the equality of all sexes. There are many rumours in our society that feminism is related to women only but it is completely wrong, the term feminism means creating equality and protection to all genders. The word Feminism comes from the French word Feminisme, which was stamped out by an utopian socialist, Charles Fourier in 1837. This consists of different types of ideologies related to gender issues. Feminism as a theory became widespread in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Feminist activism was concerned with women's suffrage (right to vote); legal rights (rights of contract, property rights); right to body (abortion and contraceptive rights); right to protection (from domestic and work place violence, sexual harassment and rape) economic and work rights (maternity leave and equal pay, equal leisure), social rights (against misogyny and gender specific discrimination). (Pradeepkumar 83)

Bread and Peace strike of Russian women, Garment workers strike in New York etc are few strikes that had given strength to feminist movement. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* authored by Mary Wollstonecraft is considered as the core text of feminism. There are three waves in feminism. The first wave of feminism referred as an extended period from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century which discusses the rights of women, especially the right to vote and right to education. The

second wave starts in the early 1960's in the US and spread all over the world. This deals with the problems of equality and discrimination. This period was marked with a political campaign called The Women Liberation Movement. *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir is the text influenced by this movement. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is also considered as an important text. The third wave of feminism began in the 1990's and extended to the 21st century. Third wave feminism focused on reproductive rights of women.

Patriarchy is a key theme in feminist writings, it is defined as a system that oppress and rule over the women. In this system men have the power whereas women remain as a subordinate. Board game can be compared to patriarchy where only one player has the right to take decisions, to control everything and options are limited to the other players in the game, that is they are just observers. So in a male controlled culture, men have the power but women are like spectators, who have to fall under their feet. Even till women suffer from all these issues, earlier women had no right to education but now the society underwent major changes and as part of it women hold higher positions. There are different types of feminism including French Feminism, Marxist Feminism, Lesbian Feminism, Dalit Feminism, Black Feminism etc.

Sexual Politics by Kate Millet is the core text of radical feminism. "Radical feminism emerged first in the US and then in England during the second wave" (Pradeepkumar 93). They are against liberal feminist because they never tried to find the main cause of women's oppression. *Sexual Politics* is seen by Kate Millet as an "attempt to prove that sex is a status category with political implications", making it "something of a pioneering effort, (...) both tentative and imperfect" (Bergfalk 2).

Sexual Politics was at once the result as well as the cause of the radical turn in feminist theory and praxis. By positing sex as a status category, she argues that

the power relationships therein are structured. Like in class, race and caste, in sex too, one section dominant and others are marginalized. In other words, the sexual practice in patriarchy is politicised to subordinate women. She locates patriarchy as omnipresent in history. (Pradeepkumar 93)

The one gender remains as dominant and the other one as inferior. Radical feminism says that men or patriarchy is behind the ill-treatment of women. Radical feminists try to put an end to patriarchy to free women from prejudiced society by stimulating the norms and practices. We need a world of equality and freedom and there won't be someone who is superior and inferior. Everyone is equal in front of god. So the paper aims to prove the elements of radical feminism in selected works of Sudha Murthy.

Chapter II

Daffodils

Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls the Bakula* is generally labelled as a feminist novel analysing the strong woman character Shrimati Deshpande, who breaks all the conventions of society for achieving her dream. This paper discloses the marginalisation faced by women in postcolonial Indian society. The novel shows the other side of love marriage and the oppressions faced by a woman. In some cases marriage gives an end to a woman's freedom. Marriage is an institution that happens in Indian society where it binds two different people into one. It can interpret as an end to a girl's freedom even in this modern India. There are many critics who states that women are empowered in this modern era but it's not completely true. They are still experiencing the oppressions from the male dominated society. Marriage can be one among the oppressions from the community. There are certain laws for women to live in a society but for men it doesn't matter, they walk as a superior figure.

The bakula tree plays an important role in the novel and it is a metaphor for a women's life. It is like a neem tree and has a lovely awning of dark green leaves. The tree lives for a hundred years and the more it rains, it produces lots of flowers. It is shaped like a crown. It has a divine fragrance, enchanting aroma. The smell remains even after the blossoms have dried and become brown. The flowers form a carpet on the ground, it's favourite of gods too. It is the metaphor of Shrimati, for the sake of her beloved she holds her career. She is like a lamp that glows brightly for the family.

Shrimati only realises her mistake by the end and she is getting ready to face all the societal words. She is ready to achieve her dream to pursue a PhD in History. "It was a purely patriarchal society where the head of the family decided everything- be it arranging a marriage, making a donation to a temple or an ordinary household

matter. The women were always in the background, suppressed, and subservient, irrespective of their age" (Murthy 12). The role of a woman in a society is to be a good wife and good mother. From early days, women are trained to live as per the male dominated society. This creates an issue or confusion in their own identity. Finally, without knowing they fall into societal concepts. Women who knew about this can't get out but many women have the courage to break it.

The novel deals with the struggle of the protagonist Shrimati who is obsessed with her husband and fails to hold her career. The setting of the novel is in Hubli and Bombay. They were neighbours but rivals too. Shrimati was fond of history and she was pursuing MA in History and Shrikant had joined IIT in Bombay. "Though they were neighbours, their forefathers are like cats and dogs, at the slightest provocation. Actually it was their mountain like egos that was responsible for the continued enmity" (Murthy 13) also they worshipped different deities, one worshipped Shiva and are called Smartha and the other worshipped Vishnu and hence, Vaishnava. Shrimati and a Shrikant studied in the same school and from the time onwards their friends used to call Shrimati as Shrimati Shrikant Deshpande. And this coinage turns out to be real in their life. The author has given a detailed description on our protagonist Shrimati Deshpande. "Ms Shrimati Deshpande was a slim, tall girl with a wheatish complexion and good clear features. She always wore a string of bakula flowers in her hair. She was one of the brightest student in her class" (Murthy 4). This shows the racial issues remaining in our society and their interrelation with the bakula flowers.

Women were raised under the chauvinistic norms and customs, and the family will never take care of a girl's dreams. They cannot speak anything in a crowd, they cannot stand even for themselves, all these are considered to be a crime or violence in

society while men are not affected by these customs and norms. In the novel, there is a competition among Shrimati and Shrikant. Shrikant and his friends used to make fun of Shrimathi, but she gave her answer in the form of her result by holding first rank and made a strong decision to go after her wish to study history. Shrikant feels very jealous and upset at Shrimati's result, this can be taken as an example of male dominated society, where men place them as superior. There is a superior feeling that they can only reach heights.

Earlier women can't even face and talk to men, they used to bow their heads and speak. Both Shrimati and Shrikant met in a train, but their ego never allowed them to speak. "Neither Shrimati nor Shrikant never congratulated each other, but Shrimati tried once or twice, Shrikant didn't respond. He was still too hurt. So Shrimati withdrew. It was not proper for a girl to push too much. In a place like Hubli, such things mattered a lot. Girls were not supposed to even talk to boys in public" (Murthy 24). "Suddenly he remembered he had not congratulated her, so he extended his hand and said, 'Congratulations'. Shrimati was confused for a moment. A gesture, like shaking hands with a man, was not common in the society of that time" (Murthy 26) when we look into these matters it is mostly followed by the remote villages, they even consider men or their husbands as gods. Because the setting they were born and raise under was such customs, while men are not affected by these customs and norms.

The novel represents a unhappy marriage that pull down the single identity of the female character. Only by the middle of the novel Shrimati comes to understand that she is living with an uncomfortable and dissatisfied atmosphere. "For two things in life it is very important for us to make our own decisions. One is education. I believe we must study only that subject which we like. The other one is marriage,

because partners remain with each other forever in life" (Murthy 27). At first Shrikant loves her so much but later it turns to fulfill his desires. By holding her career she take care for helping in his dreams by that way he lifts his position as general manager. Shrimati wishes to have a baby because then only she will complete her womanhood. But Shrikant never shows interest for a baby, because of his decision Shrimati had to face blames from Gangakka, Shrikant's mother. Mother-in-law is another character in every woman's life who will always blame their daughter-in-law. Gangakka is such a figure who doesn't like Shrimati. She was not even interested in this marriage but because of her son wish she agreed. "In our society, you marry not only an individual, but also his family" (Murthy 53). Being a neighbour Gangakka never loved Shrimati, she looked for a daughter-in-law who brings lots of wealth to the family. When Shrikant married Shrimati, Gangakka's all hopes came to an end. She always ignores Shrimati, she feels hurt. Mother-in-law also took part in patriarchal norms. There is an instance in the novel that Gangakka scolds her for calling Shrikant's first name. "I really don't understand your customs. You call Shrikant by his first name and that too in short form. We believe that if you address your husband by his name, you shorten his lifespan" (Murthy 71). She has never got a token of affection from Gangakka. The only support and care she got from Shrikant. She never thinks that one day Shrikant will ignore her. Towards the end she came to understand the man inside Shrikant who takes care of himself and his career. He can be given a title as narcissist because he is slightly linked with that title.

Giving priority to a woman's dream is very important in life. Shrimati wants to go on with her studies and Shrikant welcomes that idea. Being in Bombay, their life turns out to be a completely busy one. "But letter from Gangakka jeopardised everything" (Murthy 75). She had taken a loan for Shrikant's studies and now it is the

time to refund it. This was Gangakka's move against Shrimati. Shrimati feels a little irritated because to pay this loan back she has to work but her idea of continuing study turns to flop again. Shrikant was also allowed to go to work but this time he never thought of Shrimati's studies and had given priority to his mother's wish. And he had made his first take against Shrimati's wish that "you may get one, but not in any history department, where you will be paid little" (Murthy 77). Shrimati simply smiled and said that "when you are mine, your loan is also mine" (Murthy 77). Shrikant gets hurt because she had to work for more than one year and postpone her PhD. But this can be his acting in front of Shrimati. Neither Gangakka and Rama (Shrikant's sister) ever think of this money as the cost of Shrimati's future. Shrimati feels resigned from this job. Nalini, a friend in her office, motivated "Shrimati, you must always earn your own money, irrespective of your husband's income. His money can't be yours. A day could come when he may say that this is my money and I will spend it the way I want and suppose you want to spend something, you will be at his mercy" (Murthy 79). This is the real truth but Shrimati doesn't give importance to Nalini's words, because she thinks that Shrikant never did such things to her. She trusted her beloved, but was unaware of his betrayal.

Discovery of self is an important feature in feminist novels. Shrimati comes to understand that she was slowly finding the life she wants, which is free from all societal boundaries. She slowly thinks about her career which she was holding for her husband. Women are strong in nature. Shrimati's loyalty and contribution towards her beloved were not noticed by Shrikant and people within family and outwards watch her as a "the lady who carries a torch and removes all the obstacles on the road to success for her husband" (Murthy 108). Shrimati narrates the story of Bhamati who had sacrificed life for her beloved. She is responsible for her husband's growth and

says there will be a woman behind a man's success. So here "Bhamati signifies all those women who sacrifice their youth for the betterment of their husbands. Nobody remember that sage's name but Bhamati stands out" (Murthy 83). Shrimati's second step for continuing her studies also gets out. She needs to go with Shrikant to Delhi. In conclusion she comes to know that Shrikant never gave importance to her ambitions and life. "The love, affection, and sharing of ideas and dreams had disappeared" (Murthy 117). All these are very necessary in a relationship. For him she had to face a lot of criticism from relatives. "This Shrikant Deshpande was only interested in name, fame, position and status" (Murthy 118). Now she is very bold and strong to face all negatives from outside and moves forward.

Perseverance helps one to attain their dreams in life. When Shrimati was completely ignored by her husband she felt depressed. "My loneliness, sometimes, it is very depressing" (Murthy 112). But her taste of history remains in her. Professor Collins had helped Shrimati to bring back her confidence and he encouraged for continue her studies. There will be a person in everybody's life to make us aware about our goal. When the novel proceeds we can see Shrikant's attack on her freedom. "Don't talk about your worthless history. The world of business is so different from yours. History cannot feed you" (Murthy 125). All those sharp words chopped the branches of their relationship. Shrimati felt angry and said "Do you mean history is a subject of the dead, the lost and defeated? Does the past not have any relevance to the present, according to you?" (Murthy 126). This statement connects T. S Eliot's historical sense in *Traditional and the Individual Talent*, past has a relevance to present. Historical sense allows the writers as well as poets to find not only "pastness of past, but its presence". Eliot describes that past and present have a relationship, where present changes the past and past escorts the present. So the writers and the

poets are living in the present moment of past. Both past and present plays a major role, they are interlinked. So Shrimati replied "A company's past can say what a company's future can be..." (Murthy127).

The writer had used koel as an important symbol to show the development of Shrimati. The image of flying shows the emotions and her journey towards freedom. One day Shrimati got a letter from Professor Collins stating that he is coming to India for three months. He needs to visit more places. Shrimati feels very happy to receive him, "probably he was the only foreign guest whose company she enjoyed" (Murthy 109). Shrikant didn't feel anything for her subject rather he made fun of her. Professor's arrival made her think that she had got wings to fly. Professor was a strong person who made Shrimati think of continuing her studies. So she felt very happy to join him. "Suddenly she felt she had grown wings to fly. her spirits soared and she felt like singing with the koel in springtime" (Murthy 110). Professor made her fly high beyond all the boundaries of society.

Shrimati looked at the sea with sorrow and bewilderment. The grief that was in her heart was as deep as the ocean. Despite her arguments and her tears he had not listened to her. She sat on a chair and felt as if all her energy had drained out. What had she achieved in her life, she asked herself. She had done everything for Shrikant but he had not noticed her sincerity; he did not value her sacrifices for him. She had to live like his shadow all the time. She wouldn't have any identity of her own. Her life would be that of a planet which shines with reflected light, rather than that of a star which radiates its own light. (Murthy 150)

Chopkin writes "The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude;

to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation" (Chopkin 34) by showing ocean as a sign of liberty and escape. Shrimati sat by watching the ocean for long hours. She feels so much water in the sea and in clouds but she feels thirsty. She needs to have kind words from husband to snuff out her thirst. But her visit to the sea made her think about her past days which helped her to purge feelings. Past memories always create joy in life. All this helped her to think about her career and she is ready to apply for a doctoral degree. "Still she wanted to put her demand forward, to let him know that she didn't want to be the lowest priority any more" (Murthy 147). Shrikant was only living for his career, there "she felt like a tired traveller in a desert, looking for an oasis" (Murthy 147).

At first she had rejected going abroad to pursue studies because she was in deep affection with Shrikant. Now she throws away all the threads of a relationship for a dream. There is a Malayalam movie titled *The Great Indian Kitchen*, a powerful movie on patriarchy, where the nameless protagonist has to do all the household chores and nobody values her career. Whenever she gets a chance as a dance teacher, her husband never allows to go. She had suffered both physically and mentally over those four walls but she ended up doing all jobs and breaking all the traditional practices and went out to achieve her ambitions. She gets self-liberated and finally there is a powerful scene that dumping waste water of kitchen to her husband's face. There is a purgation of feelings. In our novel, Shrimati gets self-liberated from all the ties. She says "I want to do my doctorate" (Murthy 153).

A home is a place of love and affection, when it lacks it is better to get out of it. Sudha Murthy reminds us of the poem *Home* by Arundhati Subramaniam.

Nobody leaves the home, because it is a place of safe, care and love, but they are forced out by the situation. According to Arundhati Subramaniam, the poem *Home* says

Give me a home
that isn't mine,
where I can slip in and out of rooms
without a trace,
never worrying
about the plumbing,
the colour of the curtains'
the cacophony of books by the bedside. (lines 1—8)

The woman who is considered as have not in a society have to leave home for their liberation from sufferings. In our novel, Professor Collins says that “One who has a thirst for knowledge is a true student” (Murthy 155). Shrimati felt like she had opened her mind to a new life. After taking this decision she become little worried about her beloved, she even had a love for Shrikant but now it is better for her to forget him for her bright future. She needs to get the same freedom that Shrikant enjoys in career. It doesn't mean to earn money but to find her own identity.

Shrimati's grandfather was also a patriarch. He doesn't believe that women are able to make decisions. “He never gave women any freedom” (Murthy 156). At that period Rindakka (Shrimati's grandmother) was not economically stable, so she had stayed back and hear husband's words. Shrimati's mother is married to a worthless man, but she shows respect to him. She had also face ignorance from him but she stayed back. Because they believed that “a women should stay with her husband,

irrespective of what he was” (Murthy 157). Shrimati never agreed to those beliefs, now she believes in her own liberation.

Communication is very important between partners, if it doesn't happen it creates a gap in between them. When Shrikant was holding different positions in career he never spoke with his wife. Finally he had achieved his dream by becoming the Managing Director of the company. Shrimati answers that “In achieving your position, you have lost your Shrimati” (Murthy 161). She feels angry to him for destroying her career and now she needs some fresh air. And she never wants to be the shadow of someone rather needs happiness. Shrimati is very clear about her goal and ready to achieve it. “A running man cannot change his directions all of a sudden. In physics, you call that is inertia” (Murthy 162). She is very clear that what society will talk about her, but now she doesn't worry about it. When someone wants to achieve her goal needs to walk through stones and thorns but it never pains because it is for their individual freedom. Shrimati left her home without giving a look at Shrikant, because sometimes her love made her stand there. That much she loved him, her love was pure.

After Shrimati left, Shrikant thinks about their life, their college days and their gatherings under the bakula shade. He thinks about the story of Bhamati once Shrimati tells him and he comes to understand how cruel he was. Slowly he realises that he is alone in that apartment. But nobody can stop Shrimati, she has already started to fly. Everything starts to hurt him now. He was treating her just like an assistant, never showing any care and space for her. In our mythology during the churning of the sea, the poison haalahala came out. Nobody dared to drink it for the protection of mankind, but Lord Shiva drank it. Shrimati can be a symbol of love who had swallowed the poisonous abuse to keep her husband happy. Shrikant was a

sufferer of power, status etc. Shrikant comes to realise her mistakes but time has already passed. As he talked “he heard a plane flying over Bandra, and he forgot what he was saying. The receiver was in his hand but he was looking at the sky. He saw the red tail lamp of the plane in the dark sky. Shrimati, who had walked with him side by side in the same Shravan rain for ten years had now left him all alone” (Murthy 169).

Women and girls are still facing violence, marginalisation and injustices from society. In a male dominated society men are considered to be have's and women as have not's, they have failed to achieve their position as women in society. The recent issue reported in Kerala for kidnapping a five year old girl, who was brutally murdered and dumped in a canal. This can be taken as an example, where the life of both women and children are not safe. They were exploited by men. There are many such issues, such as in Manipur where dalit women are raped and kept walking through roads naked. So society always considers women to live inside four walls, they don't allow them to pursue their ambition and at the same instant women have to face physical abuse from men. In reality they are denied all those rights. So in India empowering women is a long distant dream.

Chapter III

Silver Wattle

House of Cards is a novel that deals with the life of Indian women who yearn for respect and love from their family. Women are termed to be silent creatures, and accept all kinds of oppression from men. But there is a flame inside them which helps to wake up from the ties of relationships. The novel starts by saying that it is dedicated to the women who suffer silently. The novel takes a look at Mridula's life, a bold character who tries to create her own track in life. The novel mainly focuses on feministic and eco feministic ideas, where the central character Mridula is being subjugated by the male dominated society. Sudha Murthy being an Indian woman, raised the voice against patriarchal norms that prevailed in our society through her works. Even after independence, women never achieved their rights. They still have to fight for creating a place or a room of their own. Meanwhile men enjoy their full freedom. The novel represents the character Sanjay who is obsessed with money and never gives any value to his wife. The paper aims to show the hegemony as a dictatorial system of the Indian community in *House of Cards*.

Mridula, who was born in a middle class family who was not like everybody, she was a very different girl. "She had enormous enthusiasm for life and unlimited energy for reading, cooking and sketching. She wanted to spend every minute of the day fruitfully. It seemed that the sun rose for her and rainbow colours were meant only for her" (HOC 2). Her father never forced her to do as per his wish, but her mother was a little bit rude. Bheemanna, Mridula's father who advised her mother by saying that "Times have changed. Education and marriage should be according to our children's wishes because these are forever" (HOC 3), because it is their life and they have to make decisions by themselves. Mridula's father was a good minded man so he

cannot be included in the category of male domination. He teaches Mridula to be open in life because hiding is equal to doing a sin. Mridula met Sanjay in a wedding and they come to see each other in different instances and become infatuated with each other. Sanjay was a doctor who was very passionate about his work.

A woman's life is very crucial. She is deep rooted in her family but after many years she is shifted to another house where they cannot predict the future. Living with a stranger and his family is a little bit difficult for everyone, moreover a woman will have many queries while entering into a new life. She doesn't know whether she achieves the respect or is able to continue her studies or her works. When the author describes Mridula's friend Surekha, it clearly shows her anguish towards a new life. "She was feeling very low. She had lived in the secure arms of her loving family till today but now, she had to step into the outside world with an unknown man. Her eyes were moist just like the clouds- ready to burst into tears at any moment" (HOC 13). Through these lines it is very clear about a woman's tension while having a rebirth.

In the case of marriage, women in India prefer her father's decision, he will be the last and final word of the family. When a boy proposes to a girl, she doesn't make any move. "If the girl wants to say yes, she won't agree immediately. She may say that I'll let you know or I'll talk to my father" (HOC 31). So all these roles are given by the society. But this is the situation of the early 90s, today a girl doesn't need to ask for the word, she will openly say yes. Writer describes Sanjay's first meeting with Mridula as "beautiful and blooming flower that swayed freely with the wind. She was genuine and full of affection" (HOC 37). By listening to the words of Mridula, her parents are ready for an alliance with Sanjay and they get married. Mridula is a school teacher, and she earns more than Sanjay. Despite being a doctor, he was not very famous. Money doesn't matter, they have a happy life. Mridula was a good hearted

person, she had a mind for helping others. Once she had given some money to a woman who sits near the temple for food. She also supports her husband in difficult situations.

After marriage what a woman hopes from a husband is pure love. Mridula also expects it from Sanjay. When Sanjay needed to take a post graduation course, it was Mridula who helped him, because she had an income from her job. When Sanjay had a confusion in selecting a government job or as a private practitioner, Mridula made him move as per his wish. Soon he had started a private nursing home.

Very fast their life changes by the power of money. They had a luxurious life, it was Sanjay who fell for money. His eyes turn yellow while seeing money. This causes a breakdown in their relationship. He starts to criticise her job as a teacher without thinking that this job helped improve his career. In between all the they had a boy named Sishir. After his birth, Mridula's life changed fully. She needs someone to look after Sishir because she can't lose her job. When Kantamma, Mridula's teacher's wife who says she is ready, Mridula feels happy and she also asks permission from Sanjay. Without any objection he agrees, actually he was thinking about something and nowadays he doesn't give importance to Mridula's words. He never shares anything with her. He turns into his life and what is important to him is his career. "Now, Mridula realised that Sanjay was not listening to her" (HOC 98).

This novel shows the women character's quest for love and care from their husband. Money plays an important role in everyone's life. Without money people can't survive. But this money can bring unhappiness in the family. This is what happens in the lives of Anita and Alex. Alex, who is the friend of Sanjay, was also a medical practitioner. Alex practises many offences in the medical field for money and that creates a breakdown in their life. They enjoyed a happy life before Alex had

started his unfair activities. Obviously he has forgotten to give heartfelt love for Anita and had many bad or illicit relationships. All these lead Anita to lose her interest in him. Anita shares her worries to Mridula, who can make her comfortable. "Mridula was good at converting every negative to a positive" (HOC 118). Anita comes to see condoms in Alex's drawer and she understands that he was cheating her. "Anita continued, 'Mridula, do you know that when men get more money than they need, their wife starts looking ugly to them? They think that they could have done better. They forget that they were nothing when their wife married them and that she stayed loyal to them through their ups and downs'" (HOC 148). Through these lines the author shows that when men come to have more money they will not give importance to life. They break all the relationships and go back to the sources where they get money.

The most important thing in the relationship is open mindedness. Both the couples should share all matters for their long life relationship. When it takes a break, it will create a lot of issues. Sanjay had many money dealings with his sister Lakshmi, which he never disclosed to Mridula. Mridula feels so sad about this matter and if she comes to know about this she will never say a word against it, because for her family relationships are very important. Sanjay has been influenced by the patriarchal society, which makes him subjugate his wife. This influence of male domination can be seen in his arrogant thoughts.

Mridula will complain that I didn't tell her. But why should I tell her everything? She'll say that everybody should earn his or her own money. But that's her theory, not mine. I am Dr Sanjay, Bangalore's most successful doctor and I've made the money of my own. I don't have to explain it to

anyone. I'm not responsible for Mridula being upset. She's not short of money either. I have the right to decide what to do with my money. (HOC 185)

Sanjay had no right to speak against her because she helped him both mentally and physically for building his career. But he never shows anything back and is unthankful to her. This shows the domination of men in a society which doesn't allow him to receive assistance from his wife. He also tries to ignore her. Mridula can't believe this change in him, she feels heartbroken and she says "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? I don't know what to do" (HOC 184). Mridula lost her trust in him. She starts to feel exhausted with this life. Mridula never ignored him, her world was Sanjay. As a teacher she learned to be wise and always thinks and considers others. Mridula was not influenced by Sanjay's career, instead she liked his plainness. When Mridula's father objects her alliance with Sanjay because of his hand deformity, she replied as "If Sanjay met with an accident that left him handicapped after we got married, then you wouldn't hold that against him. So I don't have any objection to the alliance if both of you are okay with it" (HOC 43). So Mridula selects Sanjay regardless of his short arm. Money never becomes a part of her relationship with Sanjay.

No man in our society tries to understand the emotions and struggles of women. Kantamma has such experience in her life. Even though her husband was a Principal, he was very strict in the family too. He doesn't value his wife. She shares all her pains with Mridula, because she has a mind of consoling others. "You know how my husband is. He was a principal for a long time and was strict at home too. My children never cared. But I had to obey him no matter what" (HOC 188). Mridula is blessed with a beautiful life, but the real gold she wants is a consideration from her

husband. But in Sanjay's words, he says Mridula has everything in this home like plenty of money, good son, big house, servants and a well known husband. So why can't she enjoy this life? Mridula feels depressed because she never expected Sanjay to be like this. She comes to meet a psychologist named Dr Rao, who has helped her to build a strong mind. Mridula openly says all her problems and she needs to escape from this life. Sanjay was busy making life more luxurious, so he ordered a new car, a Siemens phone. He needs to go on with the latest technology. "Mridula had lost her patience and snapped, 'Is our house a laboratory that you want to keep getting new things and experimenting with them?'" Sanjay replied in a chauvinistic tone "You can think whatever you want. This is my home and my decision is final" (HOC 212).

After disseminating her tale,

Dr Rao said, 'Mridula, 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. When I look at your life, you've been brought up in a progressive family but then you got married into a family with a different culture and economic status. That's also one of the reasons for your problems'.
(HOC 212)

These lines show the superiority complex in male.

Vani was the former student of Mridula who came to invite her for the marriage. For Vani, Mridula was like a "mother figure and a mentor" (HOC 205). It was Mridula's decision to join her to MBBS, and now she became a doctor. It was Vani who recommended consulting a psychiatrist by seeing the situation of Mridula. After Vani left, Mridula thought about her life because she was already trapped in it. She prayed for a good life. "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. Please let Vani be happy” (HOC 207). As per her wish Mridula consulted Dr Rao. He finds all her problems and asks to bring her husband. Mridula fears to tell the matter to Sanjay. But she opens up. Sanjay shows disinterest to come, because people over there will recognise him and will spread any nuisances in society. This will affect his profession. From these lines it is clear that he had never given value to Mridula. “The rules of family is different from the rules for business. One shouldn't measure these two with the same yardstick. Softness is essential for a happy family. But a competitive attitude destroys a family. Statistics show that men are successful in business in the long term only if they have their family support” (HOC 210). Mridula said that she had always supported him, but he never understands what his beloved needs.

Dr Rao says that “In most of the marriages, women don't know what they want and men don't try to understand. The reverse is also true” (HOC 210). Doctor narrates a story of a handsome prince who was defeated in a battle and his land was conquered by an emperor. Emperor thinks to kill this young prince but he changed his thought and had given an option to him. The Emperor needs to answer his question “What does a woman want from a man?” (HOC 212). The young prince wanders around and finally he meets a sorcerer who can help him. For the answer the witch needs to get married to this young prince, he agreed to marry. The witch utters, “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” (HOC 212). Young prince had said the answer to the emperor and took back his kingdom. But he married this old witch. He is scared to sit with her and the witch gives a question to answer. She had the power to continue to exist as a charming woman either throughout the day or during the night.

“Which would you prefer” (HOC 211). The prince couldn't find the answer but now he came to understand what a woman needs in her life. The prince says “You can choose whichever you want” (HOC 211). And she decides to remain attractive all the time. So a man should understand what a woman needs or should give respect to her decisions.

Author has clearly shown the patriarchal domination in Mridula's son, Sishir because he had grown up by seeing his father. For him, the ideal person in life is the father and he doesn't give much care to the mother. He criticises her job and her traditional practices. When he joined Delhi for studies, he came to meet a girl named Neha and he felt love for her. Neha feels Sishir as a bosom buddy but she doesn't like his egoistic manner and his facial cover of having money. When he states about her future wife as “I want a girl who won't argue with me and who'll adjust to any situation” (HOC 224). Sishir calls her for a date, but she avoids his offer. She openly opposed his ideas about how women should live as per their husband's wish. He feels angry for her rejection. He has developed an ego because children learn what they see in front of them. Sishir has seen his father's attitude towards the mother. Also he has grown up without knowing the importance and value of money. He thinks that he can conquer this world with money. His hegemony can be seen in these lines ““How can anyone say no to me?” he thought. ‘I'm handsome, rich, intelligent and have achieved a lot. My father's a big man. He owns a nursing home. We have great prestige in society. What else does a girl want?’” (HOC 225—26). Neha says,

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 be a doormat. Marriage is not the final destination for me. There are other ways that a woman can live her life.

(HOC 227)

Neha needs a man who respects a woman. For her money and his job doesn't matter but she needs a good human being who considers others. She openly says “no” (HOC 226) to Sishir, like Neha every woman should say no to their partner if they try to make a living under them. Neha is aware about her privileges and freedom. So a woman like her will not be enslaved by the patriarchal society and will always raise her voice against this system.

Money can't buy relationships. “Life is more than money. It's about having concern for one another. That gives a person more satisfaction and happiness” (HOC 227). She classified men into three categories. The first category is very crucial, they think they are superior and make his wives follow their orders. They make their own decisions to follow and never give any space for women. “Most of the women accept this as a way of life and people who don't accept it or rebel against it have to suffer in society” (HOC 227). For Mridula "Love is blind and that's why I never understood his true nature" (HOC 226). She trusts her husband's love, she feels bad that her husband showed more faith in his sister and had many money transactions. Everybody in his family was cheating Mridula.

Sanjay did not want to deal with a sobbing wife and left the room. Suddenly, Mridula felt that there was an intense vacuum in her life. The huge nursing home, this big house and its servants were of no consequence to her. Money had taken away his happiness. She could not even raise her son the way she wanted to. Her husband did not understand her. What was the use of this life?

(HOC 170)

Sudha Murthy writes, "Rain brings different emotions to different people. For Mridula, the rain was synonymous with joy-it was nature's gift. She thought, 'The earth is full of dust and is dry in the summer. Rain settles the dust, washes away the dirt and makes the world green. It inspires creativity in poets and artists' " (HOC 13), by showing rain as a metaphor of rebirth and resumption. It shows the developments in humans, it acts as a cleansing agent and washes away the negative mood in the living beings. In the evening of Surekha's wedding, the clouds were dark and prepared to pour down. In the case of marriage it shows the birth of a new life and also the inner conflict of a woman who is plucked away from the loving family. Many writers use weather with different interpretations as addition of feelings of characters in the story. The dark clouds symbolise the dark horrors in life. In the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, heavy rain and storm shows the problems faced by the characters and their inability to come out from it. The rain stands as a metaphor in different situations.

Women are considered as the objects of enchantment in the society especially for men. This idea can be seen in the words of Sishir that Mridula looked so beautiful when she was young and if she tries, she can set foot in Miss India Pageant. And he says if he was in her position he would enter into the modelling field and make more money. So here Sishir considers his mother as a mere object for money and beauty to be sold. Even Sanjay fell for her beauty, but he was exploiting her life. Sishir was the representative of the new generation, he never followed his mother and her ideas. "He did not care for his mother's words, when she told him that he should go to bed early and wake up early too. Instead, he got irritated and said, Amma, stop it. You and I have different opinions" (HOC 156). He never values her. He thinks about making money like his father. "Sishir told his father and friends, 'My mother's like a broken

record. She keeps repeating the same things over and over' " (HOC 156). So in a relationship, partners should share all things otherwise life won't be happy. "A husband and wife must share everything with each other and sit and sort out conflicts" (HOC 190).

Mridula stopped doing household chores and tries to keep away from this family for her happy life. "She was under the illusion that she was managing all the financial transactions. But in reality, Sanjay was maintaining parallel transactions elsewhere. He acted like a honest husband but he had stabbed her in the back. She felt trapped in her marriage" (HOC 191). When a woman got married, her happiness is depending upon husband's commitment. But here Sanjay was acting like a boss, that breaks their relationship. Mridula needs a world of her own, and she starts a journey in the search of self-identity. "I have to live on my terms if I want to be happy" (HOC 216). One day she left this house of cards, and Sanjay came to understand that she had lost faith in him. He felt ignorance or the loss of something pure, the real gold from his hand. "He believed that he could buy anything and anyone with money. But today, even with all his riches, he felt like a begger" (HOC 219). He also comes to understand that his sister Lakshmi was not interested to look into his personal matters rather than focus on new seats and greater positions. Sudha Murthy ends the novels by giving an image of the arrival of the summer season which brings happiness to every being. Mridula sitting under a tree near Hanuman temple, feels very happy. It was the month of harvest festival, Ugadi. The mango trees started to bear new reddish-green leaves, and cuckoos were making their music. This shows the new life of Mridula, she started to enjoy her new life in her own favourite place Aladahalli. She feels like everything is connected to each other in this world. New life opened her a new way, and she starts to follow her own rules but someone was holding the swing, it was

Sanjay. What is the purpose of Sanjay's arrival? Will Mridula change her decision to be alone? The novel ends up in such confusions but I'm sure that she will go through the way of her own, a journey into the world of her ambitions without any bondage. Thus the novel reveals the disastrous effect of money.

Chapter IV

Queen Balling

The work *The Mother I Never Knew* consists of two novellas which deals with the story of two different characters Venkatesh and Mukesh who are in a search for the mothers who they never had seen. The novella is written in the male perspective but it clearly depicts the injustices done to the mothers in the Indian community.

Sudha Murthy had shown extreme care in writings like the famous writers Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Her language is very simple and informal which helps the ordinary people to understand. She is criticising the male dominated society indirectly through different characters. This study aims to prove the injustices done to motherhood. In the first novella, Venkatesh is the protagonist and through his point of view the story goes on. He is working as a Bank Manager, once he finds a person who looks alike and he digs up his father's past and finds a forsaken wife and a child.

Second novella deals with the story of a young man, Mukesh who realises that he was adopted after his father's death. He starts off to find his real mother but this leads him to hear the stories of different mothers. The novella stretches out deep into the human heart to disclose what we think regarding those who are nearest or closest to us.

Abandonment is the major theme employed in this novel. Sudha Murthy gives a pleasant feeling to the readers while reading her work. She clearly pictures the Indian culture and traditions that existed in our society. In this novel too we could find the variety of dishes eaten by Karnataka people like chakkali, ranjaka, baingan bhaji, besan laddu etc. Venkatesh also becomes the part of different festivals in Karnataka like Dussehra, Ganesh Chaturthi, Ugadi, Rajyotsav there by creating joy in the mind of readers and shows the importance of Indian culture. Also the writer describes the thread ceremony in Shiggaon and Venkatesh had eaten delicious food in banana leaf.

The writer had also portrayed the real beauty of nature. When Venkatesh along with Anant Patil reached Shiggaon, "the pond outside the village was filled with water and there was greenery all around" (MINK 32). Also there is a description of bakula flowers and elaichi bananas in Yellapura, and the Marikamba temple. "There was lush green everywhere and they stopped to see the bakula flowers, elaichi bananas in Yellapura, and the Marikamba Temple in Sirsi" (MINK 40). The daughters of Shankar Master were named Manadakini, Alakananda, and Sarayu, these are the names of rivers in India. So the writer has given a clear picture on the scenic beauty of mother nature and their state.

When Venkatesh finds a person looks alike, he feels certain doubts regarding his father. He starts a journey into his father's past and finds a wife who was abandoned by himself after hearing the words of his mother Champakka, Venkatesh starts his journey to find that lady. He also gets support from his daughter Gauri, who was the only member in the family who supports him. "Gauri was an eternal optimist; she could make anyone feel better" (MINK 5). He starts in search of Shankar Master, the person who looks like Venkatesh and speaks about the doubts. He finds that they are living at Shisunal. When he reached the house, he could find the signs of poverty everywhere. The author had given the clear picture of their home as,

He pushed the door open and walked through a small veranda leading to a main hall. Venkatesh sat down and looked around. The only other room was a kitchen. There were unmistakable signs of poverty everywhere--minimal cheap furniture and faded photographs of children were displayed in broken photo-frames. His eyes wandered to Shankar Master's wedding picture; his own photo at that age was identical. (MINK 43)

The door was opened by Shankar Master and Venkatesh was fascinated too, he had seen an "exact replica of himself" (MINK 45). Venkatesh speaks about all the doubts and he comes to know Setu Rao is Shankar's father and Bhagavva is his mother, but he insists to see the mother. He goes to see his mother and the door is opened by a widow. "Venkatesh came face-to-face with an old Brahmin widow. She appeared strong even though she was very thin. She was wearing a torn white saree with pallu over her clean-shaven head" (MINK 53). These lines show the customs that existed in the Indian community that whenever a woman becomes a widow, she should wear the white clothes and shave the hair, they can't even participate in any festivals too. There is a Hindi serial named Barrister Babu, which clearly pictures the toiled life of a widow, also the problems faced by women in Indian society and it is the must watch serial because it helps us to understand how pre-independent India was. The worst patriarchal rules are put upon them, this shows the end of their colorful life. They will be completely neglected or abandoned by society.

When Venkatesh came near Bhagavva, he had brought some fruits to her and also he seeks blessings from her, through this act he showed his respect towards the elder people. They are performing the shraddha of his father. Mantras were chanting during this time and it is believed that the soul of dead people appears as a crow and have the prasada they had offered. So during the time of chanting mantras they had said the names of forefathers and Venkatesh heard those names which are the names of his forefathers too, only the name of his father is different. "Like a flash of lightning, it all became suddenly clear to him. The mantras had exposed the truth about Shankar and Venkatesh" (MINK 57). All after that Shankar Master who left his school to complete works and this time Venkatesh sees Bhagavva. The narrative shifts to the past. So she was living with her uncle and aunt because she had lost her parents at a

young age. So she never had enjoyed parental love and care. She was very beautiful in her youth but now "she looks burdened with poverty, widowhood, and a tough life" (MINK 61). She starts to reveal the things happened in her life.

Education was denied to women during early times but men were given full freedom. So because of this Bhagavva had stopped her studies in fourth standard. "She was not allowed to study further because there was no middle or high school in the village. She didn't ask to study more either—higher education for girls was unheard of in those days and she had to help at home" (MINK 64). People believed that when a woman gets educated she will definitely question the society, so parents never allowed women to study during that time. In the case of Gauri, Venkatesh's daughter the writer shows the modern world where women are privileged. She is studying MBBS and has her own freedom in the life. Bhagavva was considered as a worst figure and she was denied her rights. "She was fair and attractive and had long, black hair. Many women were jealous of her" (MINK 64). She was living with her uncle Gopal; he had decided her marriage with Setu, a neighbour's relative. Even though the family never asked her permission for marriage. Permission seeking from a women is very important because it is her life and future. It is compulsory to ask her.

Soon her marriage had finished with him. Setu was working as a cook in Matunga and studies at Mumbai. "Bhagirathi discovered that Setu was young, intelligent and very handsome. She liked him. And in turn, he loved her youth, beauty and vivacity" (MINK 66). Within those days it was an end for her marital life and Champakka, his mother had made condition that Setu should continue his studies so the presence of Bhagavva will disturb him. So she says Bhagavva to stay there itself and after his studies he will take her to Mumbai. Champakka has taken this decision without asking Setu. Then had gone back to Mumbai. Next month Bhagavva missed

her periods and it is confirmed that she is pregnant. On sixth month Champakka come for seemantham and heard miswhispered that Bhagavva had contact with Hanuma, Gopal's son and she thinks that it was Hanuma's child was in her belly. She goes back and writes a letter that "We don't want your niece. You can keep her. The baby is Hanuma's and not my son's. We will not take her back" (MINK 70). On hearing this news Bhagavva collapsed in grief and she requested Hanuma to convince the mother-in-law. "Tell them Bhagirathi is as pure as Sita" (MINK 71). The cruel Champakka never trusted her. Even though Setu also never cares about Bhagavva's life, by hearing his mother's words he completely abandons her. The theme of abandonment is reflected through her story.

Marriage is considered as a holy relationship between two different sexes but the breakdown is very dangerous. Soon Bhagavva comes to know Setu had died in a train accident. She lost her control over the life because they had never lived happily. Writer describes Bhagavva as a curse to her family. Soon her uncle starts to criticize her and the entire community has neglected. It was the time of festivals and as a widow she can't participate and considered as an ill omen. "Everyone avoided her like a plague" (MINK 76). She had thought about committing suicide with her baby rather than living in this world. "Setu had come into her life like a ray of a sunshine, but he had left her alone in darkness and an unending ocean of misery" (MINK 76-77). The real truth is that Setu had never died, he never tries to search about Bhagavva and baby, just hear the mother's words and married the other one, who is the mother of Venkatesh. "I am an unfortunate orphan, Krishna you are my mother and I'm coming to be with you forever. You know the truth about me—I'm coming to be with you forever. You know the truth about me—I'm pure. Take me into my arms and rid my baby and me of this disgraceful life" (MINK 77). Bhagavva and the baby had

drowned in the water but she was helped by a fisherman named Chouda. From that point she realises the value of life. Soon she leaves the place and starts to find herself, she has worked hard for survival and the baby becomes a school master, Shankar. This shows that however the society criticises a woman, with her will power and confidence can create a new world of her own. So the story of Bhagavva ends here.

The second story is about a businessman, named Mukesh who identifies that he was adopted by this family. In this story we could find the journey of Mukesh from one mother to the other. He was born as an illegitimate son of Nirmala and then he was adopted by Rupinder and finally to Sumati. So we can find a story within the story like play within a play in Ham. by Shakespeare. The stories of Nirmala, Rupinder and Sumati are depicted in the novel. In this session Sudha Murthy clearly shows the male dominated world. Vasanthi is the Mukesh's partner and the writer portrays her as a bold lady. She always supports Mukesh and through this character writer shows the modern world where women are capable of standing with men. They are living in London but Vasanthi never forgets her culture. "Her love for language and the religious rituals was never in question. She had converted their storeroom to a puja room and prayed everyday just like she used to do in Mysore" (MINK 121). Through Mukesh and Vasanthi the writer shows the pure relationship. In our patriarchal society, there is a tradition that men will keep women under their feet as slaves but here both characters are given equal importance. Both are living as per their own wishes. When she realises about his father's death, she immediately tells him to get back to Bangalore because she knows that his presence can console the mother and those words help Mukesh to regain his confidence and energy in that moment. "Her words gave him encouragement and reassurance" (MINK 126).

Nirmala Kumari is another victim of this patriarchal society. The theme of child marriage can be reflected in the tale of Nirmala and Rupinder. Nirmala was a tenth standard student, her father was a zamindar who wanted her to marry a boy from an influential family, but she gets in love with a man named Anand, who is from an economically challenged family, "young and handsome college student came to study the old monuments on the outskirts of the village for a history project" (MINK 182). Later he became an English tutor for Nirmala. When he got injured she started to help him and very soon they started to love and this love led them to do an immoral act. So when we get into a relationship, people never care about their beliefs, religion, or their backgrounds. That's what happened to Nirmala. She missed her periods and very soon came to know that she was pregnant. The news reached her father and he beat her for destroying his reputation. He has created a plan that Nirmala should leave the house and after delivery she should throw the baby somewhere else.

As per her father's wish she lived in a farmhouse and they lie to everyone that Nirmala is suffering from TB to cover the real truth. In that place Nirmala gets company with Rupinder. She tells the story to her. It was the mistake of both Nirmala and Anand, in the flow of love they had never cared. By hearing this news, Anand flew away, so he had completely abandoned her. Later she delivered a baby but it was very painful for a mother to throw away her child. Her father had taken this decision because he wanted her to marry the son of Lalmohan, a wealthy zamindar and through this marriage he can earn many things. So he is actually doing a child marriage through his own daughter for his benefits. He never asked her permission. So Nirmala's father was an arrogant man, he never cared about his daughters' wishes. Both father and Anand are the representatives of male patriarchs.

The novel also shows the life of Rupinder, a punjabi girl who was married to Surinder, a short tempered man. Rupinder was a childless mother, it was her plan to drop the child in the temple because she needs a motherly love. Nirmala put the baby in the temple and left. When people gathered around the baby, Rupinder said that she was interested in caring for the baby. She was also married to Surinder at an early age. "Her parents and brothers were labourers in a zamindar's house" (MINK 178). Like every girl she also thinks about a beautiful life with her partner, but her life turns to an utter failure. She has to work all the time. Through Rupinder the writer shows the life of women under men.

In reality, her husband's family was not rich at all and she had to work all the time in their home—almost like an unpaid maid. Her mother-in-law dominated her and Surinder just watched from the sidelines. Soon, she became very lonely. At least she had had freedom in her village back home. Here, she had lost even that. She missed the fresh air, her she-buffalo, and her relatives and friends. (MINK 179)

"Her attempts to become pregnant over two years failed" (MINK 179). So the mother in law taunted her and once said "'We can't look after you over here. You're only giving us more headaches. Go to your parents' village and come back after your delivery'" (MINK 179). She lost the baby that's why she had shown interest in adopting Nirmala's baby. Rupinder had never enjoyed that life, for her the life was hectic and suffocating. Munna was the name of the baby, but Surinder and his family never considered him. They consider Munna as a bad omen because of his black patch. "Her mother-in-law blamed Munna's dark patch for the loss in the family's business and started treating him badly" (MINK 191). Through this the writer shows the superstitious beliefs in Indian society. In spite of everything there are persons who

still believe all this. By hearing all these stories "Mukesh felt like he was in a nightmare" (MINK 192) because this child is himself.

Surinder and his family are thinking of moving from this place. So the family never needs Munna with them. The only way in Rupinder is to give this baby to her friend Sumati. When she tells about her issues Sumati and her husband are willing to care for him because they love boys. Later Krishna Rao and Sumati became the parents of Munna. In the end of the novel there are Nirmala's words "Giving birth is simply biological event but parents must move mountains to raise a child to be a good human being. I salute the mother who made you what you are" (MINK 202). Mukesh had grown under these three mothers. Life under this mothers was a fruitful one.

So the novel depicts the life of different mothers and it clearly portrays the abandoned life. Even in this independant era women are still inferior. Bhagavva, Nirmala, Rupinder, Sumati are not only powerful women but also charming mothers who are suppressed by the male patriarchy. The writer has used a non linear narrative method where the story shifts from one to another and there is also a mixing up of past and present. The story has a touch with Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* where it depicts the life of five different women who lost their happy life because of male dominated world. We cannot completely say women are still slaves of men, they are educated and they started to work. Swami Vivekananda was a powerful man who worked for the progress of women in India. We actually need certain personalities to make women aware of their rights.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The selected novels of Sudha Murthy give us an analytical study of issues faced by women in our society. Through her works she sheds light on challenges faced by women in different sections of life. Each novel marks the male patriarchy, and how they treat women as an object to fulfil their dreams and lust. The novel discusses a space for women that is the need for individual freedom. In the first novel *Gently Falls the Bakula*, the writer shows the woman who had travelled very difficult in her life but she had reborn into a strong character by challenging the notions in our society. Similarly, in *House of Cards*, Murthy shows the struggles faced by women because of the effect of money and patriarchy. In *The Mother I Never Knew*, the author deals with the abandoning of mothers.

Shrimati, Mridula, Bhagavva, Nirmala Kumari, Rupinder etc are some characters who had travelled in a difficult way because from the day of birth the family teaches them how to be good wives. It is the rule in our society to fall under their customs and traditions. So it wasn't easy for women to break all the cultural barriers or the cage built for them by society. It was society's concept that if a girl was born she is totally a property of men and they have the control over them. Poor women fail to understand the ill treatment because they were treated like that from early days. They were oppressed both mentally and physically, this led them to fall under them because there is no voice for them. The writer had used many similar ideas in these three novels which had given a space for comparison.

The writer had shown Shrimati as a metaphor of pure love. She had loved her husband very much and for him she had forgotten about her dreams and career. Both of them loved and got married but it was a toxic life. Slowly he had started to ignore

her after fulfilling his desires. Shrimati's pure love towards him makes unaware about her dream to fulfil PhD. Slowly there comes the lack of communication. He had reached a higher position and this superiority created a break between them, he had forgotten about the sacrifices done by her love.

The similar scenes can be seen in Mridula, she was described as a "She had enormous enthusiasm for life and unlimited energy for reading, cooking and sketching. She wanted to spend every minute of the day fruitfully. It seemed the sun rose for her and rainbow colours were meant only for her" (HOC 2). She had experienced a happy life before marriage but everything starts to shed up after marriage. As a teacher, she was wise to others. The power of money destroyed their lives. She had helped him to pursue many degrees in the medical field with her salary. After getting a job and when he started a private nursing clinic he slowly starts to ignore her. Also he started to do malpractices in the medical field for more money. All this leads to an unhappy life, he never has time to hear her and also he starts to criticise her job because of low income. So we can see how men treat women. He takes away everything from them for their development and after their use there is nobody to look at them or to support women. Mridula says "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? I don't know what to do" (HOC 184). We can see a break in her way where she feels trapped or confused to continue life.

While reading chapter 3 we get a clear picture of abandoning. Like the above chapters, in this novel too we could find the theme of abandoning. In 100 percent around 80 are included in this category, they feel women are just for an entertainment purpose, for cooking etc. They never give space for them instead treat them very poorly. Like every woman how the family teaches to be a wife, men also had gone

through those lectures. The family teaches them as a superior and has given them space. Men are trained to show superiority complexes against women rather than treating them as equals. So due to these early childhood lectures they fall to those aspects.

Bhagavva in *The Mother I Never Knew* is an example of a powerful woman because when she learns that her husband had died in a train accident, which was a fake story created by her mother-in-law and also this mother-in-law feels Bhagavva was in an illicit relationship with her cousin. Conclusively, we could find she had regained her confidence to move forward. To prove her truth she starts to drown in water because she truly loves her husband, so without him she can't live. She feels that it's better to suicide and drowned into water with the baby and was helped by a fisherman. Then she understands that it's not good to destroy her life and then she says that a lady can also live without a man and start a new life. Like her Mridula, Shrimati also feels it's better to live for their own individual freedom rather than under men's feet. By the end they had done this.

Denial of motherhood can be seen in the novel *Gently Falls the Bakula*. It is the dream of every girl to be a mom, to enjoy motherhood but here Shrimati is denied it. While going with developments in career Sanjay starts to ignore his wife and also to have a baby. For not having a baby Shrimati was treated very badly by her mother in law. So here Sanjay looks for his growth, and his desires. In *The Mother I Never Knew* Nirmala Kumari was denied to enjoy motherhood because of the reputation and pride of male dominated members. She had a relationship with a man but after hearing she was pregnant he flees away. Actually it's not a good practice but her father ordered to kill the baby after birth. It is very difficult for the mother to kill the baby but at that time we could see Rupinder who comes and saves the baby. She feels

happy to take that baby because she is childless. Nirmala feels so sad to leave her baby but it was her father's order.

Rupinder was also under the patriarchal rules. She was under the feet of their family. Whenever she takes this baby home they never took them and the black mark on the baby is considered as a bad omen. Through this we can understand the superstitious belief in Indian society. Because of the continuous tortures that Rupinder has to face in that family she gives this baby to Sumati. So these three women are denied a happy life with their kids.

Each novel consists of elements related to nature. While referring to the chapters we can see the presence of nature, the author had compared with nature. The bakula tree can be related to women. The flowers that produce a divine fragrance are compared with Shrimati. Also the portrayal of different weather creates the readers to understand the feeling gone through the characters. We could see the spring season, as it is the arrival of a new life. When Mridula went back home, the author shows the arrival of a new season which means that Mridula had started to enjoy a new life with freedom. The portrayal of the ocean indicates freedom and escape. By watching the ocean we could see Shrimati cleanses her feelings. Also this reminds her about the past memories which always creates happiness in us. So each and every thing in nature is part of us and this type of comparison enriches our thinking capacity.

In the case of education there is a practice in our society, if a girl never gets educated it doesn't matter to anybody but men must have higher degrees and higher positions in career. In Bhagavva's case, she was not allowed to study because of that she studied upto fourth standard. "She was not allowed to study further because there was no middle or high school in the village. She didn't study more either—higher education for girls was unheard of in those days and she had to help at home" (MINK

64). Because of lack of education she had suffered a lot to keep an eye on her children but in the case of both Shrimati and Mridula, they were educated but they were never supported by their partners. The partners have completely used her for their wishes and throw them as a waste. So in these three cases we can find the changes in society. The period where Bhagavva was born was against educating girls but in the case of Mridula and Shrimati, their parents were very strong and they worked for their daughters wishes. Still there are people with different ideas. While looking into the Northern part of India we could see such ideas and strong beliefs. Both Shrimati and Mridula can be included in the modern period where women wish to be independent. In the case of Bhagavva, there was nobody to support her, she had already lost her parents.

At first the writer had shown these women characters as weak but in the end of the novel we could see how they changed. They got confidence from their experience to move forward. So the theme of self empowerment is reflected in her works. Each character goes through harsh realities but from there they build up their confidence to live as per their wish. Sudha Murthy has shown how education, empowerment are important in a woman's life and how all this helps her to break from all traditional practices existing in the society. Her works portray the gender bias, domestic abuse in our country but she never attacks the male community, indirectly through characters she tells the types of norms that exist in our country. So our writer is a strong woman who has used art as a method or medium to express the realities of the period.

Marriage is a promise or pledge of love which is very important for humanity's transmission. While going through Sudha Murthy's works we could find the women characters had suffered a lot in mediaeval times but they had turned to be brave ones nowadays. In a male dominated society women are considered to be a

slave of men but nowadays women are independent and live according to their wishes. So education is very important in everybody's life. Once somebody had said that educating a woman is like educating the whole world and this is true. Marriage is not very important in life, we should focus on building up our career and once we get settled can think about a partner. More issues are happening in our society due to marriage, there can cause a feeling of superiority and inferiority and this finally leads to a clash.

Swami Vivekananda has worked for the development of women, he has given many lectures for the growth. Sudha Murthy had given a clear picture of modern women through her characters, they are not incapable but capable as men. So as the result of many lectures women are no more restricted to the four walls of the kitchen, they turn to be a money earner. The novels also show how women had earned self confidence, self esteem through education. Her female characters are first oppressed by the patriarchy but through their self confidence and urge for freedom helps to come out from the cage they had built. In India, family relationships are very important, so we must try to balance our life and there must not have any types of strict norms to follow. Everything should be balanced in our life. The patriarchy exists in her novels that make female characters feel oppressed but we can see that they victoriously move against it because they are also a part of this world and they have to live happily as per their wish.

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