



# Sudha Murthy's Yoddha Nayaks: A Comparative Study

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## Abstract

*Comparative Literature offers a unique opportunity within contemporary academic practices to explore texts and ideas across barriers of language, temporality and discipline. In English literature, with the help of Comparative literature, we can compare two or more works in different perspectives and wide range of future study. The present study aims at comparing the three strong women protagonists in Sudha Murthy's novels- Mahasweta (2000), Dollar Bahu (2006) and Gently Falls the Bakula (2008). The three protagonists- Anupama, Gouramma and Shrimati represent many common women in modern times and society. In Sudha Murthy's Mahasweta, Anupama is a perceptive woman who can see right through the self-serving intentions of a society where men predominate. Anupama, with her self-confidence and bold attitude towards patriarchy, raised a powerful voice of protest against patriarchal dominance. In Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu, Gouramma (Chandru's mother), has trouble in coping with and handling the societal stress resulting in the fear of unacceptance. Gouramma is in a desperate need for acceptance in the elite circle. When this aspiration does not get met, it pops up as anxiety, anger etc. and Vinuta becomes her soft target and wields control over her. In Gently Falls Bakula, Sudha deftly portrays the modern women, who always are ready to become sacrificial goals by claiming their roles as successful wives, submissive life partners, victims of societal expectations in the garb of marriage wedlock. But Shrimati breaks the shackles and takes a harsh decision and realizes the urge and opportunity to fulfil her long cherished dream of pursuing higher study, which she had sacrificed at the altar of her husband's career and marriage. Sudha Murthy tries to reflect the rich formative literary and spiritual instincts of woman personality through her novels. She also stresses on the transitory nature of physical beauty whereas emphasizes on womanish indomitable courageous spirit. She tries to spread the message of the women to recognize the tremendous force of her inner source of fountain of the heart and soul.*

**Keywords:** Comparative Literature, women protagonists, self-serving, spiritual instincts

## Comparative literature: An overview

Comparative literature is a field that examines literature from different countries, periods, languages, and genres. Scholars in this discipline study various works in comparison to each other to understand the complex components that form the historical, gender, economic, cultural, social, philosophical, religious, and linguistic factors of cultures. Scholars can establish a sense of understanding of genre and

meaning by evaluating several literary traditions and languages at once through studying literature without borders. Thus, the term comparative literature includes comparative study of regional literatures, national literatures, and international literatures. In the conception of world literature, the works of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Emerson, Thoreau, Valmiki, Vyas should be taken as one for comparison.



The academic discipline of Comparative Literature originated in the 19th century alongside other new fields such as Comparative Law or Comparative Philology. The aim of those disciplines was to find what was common to different legal systems, different languages or, in the case of Comparative Literature, different literatures. The pioneers in the field were Abel-François Villemain, Philarète Chasles and Jean-Jacques Ampère.

Comparative Literature offers a unique opportunity within contemporary academic practices to explore texts and ideas across barriers of language, temporality and discipline. While doing this, this program also allows us to reflect more deeply upon the nature of those barriers and how they gain their validation. In English literature, with the help of Comparative literature, we can compare two or more works in different perspectives and wide range of future study.

### **Comparative literature in Indian English Literature**

Comparative study of various literatures in the West and in India is not quite the same. The fact that Indian Literatures are a product of multicultural, social-historical mélange cannot be overlooked. The concept of comparative literature in India received an impetus from Rabindranath Tagore's lecture delivered on the subject when he was invited by National Council of Education in 1907. But the idea of Comparative Literature suggested by Das, a practicing comparatist, is different from the idea expressed by Tagore. Studying Indian literature demands a comparative method, and this cannot be substituted by the direct application of any method or theory imported from outside the plural culture in which the literature is located. Karimpumannil Mathai George (1914–2002), popularly known as Dr. K. M. George, was an eminent Malayalam writer and educator. An erudite scholar and literary critic with astute organisational capabilities, he is best known as a pioneer of Comparative Indian Studies and Literatures.

### **Comparative study of Sudha Murthy's Protagonists**

The present study aims at comparing the three strong women protagonists in Sudha Murthy's novels-

Mahasweta (2000), Dollar Bahu (2006) and Gently Falls the Bakula (2008). The three protagonists- Anupama, Gouramma and Shrimati represent many common women in modern times and society. The word, 'Yoddha Nayaks' in the title of the article is referred as warrior heroes-the protagonists of Sudha Murthy.

### **“Adhyavi Anupama”**

Ādhyavi is a Sanskrit word that stands for a 'warrior princess'. We interpret Ādhyavi as a modern, strong and forthright queen who values resilience, strength, and a love for tradition. Anupama is referred with this Sanskrit word, 'Adhyavi', because she is very strong, mentally and emotionally in her life. She faced all the challenges very boldly and courageously. So, this word 'Ādhyavi' may suits her aptly.

In Sudha Murthy's Mahashweta, Anupama is a perceptive woman who can see right through the self-serving intentions of a society where men predominate. She knows that Anand did not recognize her true love; he was simply attracted to her physical attractiveness. He left her behind as his beauty waned.

“There were distinct rules, and his actions would not raise any eyebrows in a society ruled by men. He would not face any consequences and escape punishment. She also realized that men are never questioned about anything in society, whereas women are constantly held accountable for living lonely lives.” (Murty et al. 2004).

Anupama irreversibly shattering such a delicate stereotype picture of women. She had assessed the circumstances and made her decision. Anupama claims to have learned that confidence and bravery are the real assets in life. Education can help to make things better. (Mahashweta, 27). The author emphasizes in this chapter the importance of education as the only path to women's emancipation. Anupama can live independently and without limitations, without depending on anybody else, thanks to her education. Her positive view on life, her empathy and concern for others, her acceptance of people for who they are, and her lack of judgment were the qualities that gave her contentment and confidence “I embrace life's circumstances without any remorse.” (Mahashweta, 127). She



embraces life's challenges and triumphs over her psychological distress. Anand's mother removed her daughter-in-law after feigning to be a devout woman and accusing Anupama of being a sinner due to her splotchy complexion. Anand regrets his naive belief in his mother. He thought about the true nature of his mother and sister, and the confusing state of his mother, who wrongfully accused his innocent wife. He didn't appreciate her hypocrisy since she was acting like a sinner and doubting the saint's morality, and then he kicked his wife out of the house. His sentiments of hatred and misery deepen as he feels more regret for betraying her and acting rashly. He hates what he did, even though he knows that leukoderma is not a clinically recognized illness and is not communicable. When he compared Anupama with his mother and sister, he felt that Anupama was much beyond everyone else in terms of intelligence, morality, and behavior. She doesn't accept Anand's apology since she doesn't trust him and she doesn't like risky people.

Anupama's rejection of Anand's proposal to reconcile is a statement of her resistance to the patriarchal society that aims to exclude and punish her. It also shows how she is coming to terms with and claiming her own feminine identity. In addition, she states emphatically, "It is improper to refer to a stranger by her given name." (Mahashweta, 165). The best illustration of a powerful woman oppressed and marginalized by a patriarchal society is Anupama. (Kangne et al. 2016) Anupama, with her self-confidence and bold attitude towards patriarchy, raised a powerful voice of protest against patriarchal dominance. The collection of works written in English by authors who live in India or who were born there but now reside abroad is referred to as Indian Writing in English. One of the several Indian languages may be these authors' mother tongue or co-native tongue. (Geetasomjee et al. 1989) In the early sixteenth century, the British began setting up commercial offices in India. After the British took over India, on February 2, 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay delivered his "Minute on Indian Education," which sought to establish a Western curriculum taught in English as the primary language of instruction. By the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century the

establishment of English education in the cities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta led to the emergence of Indian literature in English.

### **"Pragalbhanāyikā Gouramma"**

Pragalbhanāyikā refers to a "very mature heroine", The heroine of the Pragalbha type is very mature and is able to express her feelings to the full extent. Gouramma is very mature not only in her age, but also in her mind. So, this word 'Pragalbhanāyikā' may suits her aptly.

In Sudha Murthy's *Dollar Bahu*, Gouramma (Chandru's mother), has trouble in coping with and handling the societal stress resulting in the fear of unacceptance. She always dreamed of diamonds, gold and silver, jewellery, cars, a big house, servants etc. and thought that these were the tickets to help her move in the elite circle. She found her desires getting fulfilled through Chandru's dollars. Between Jamuna's dollars and Vinuta's selfless devotion, Gouramma finds favour with the dollar and ignores Vinuta's devotion and family bonding which actually is truly priceless. Vinuta bears the brunt of endless comparisons between her and 'Dollar Bahu'. She starts withering physically and mentally at these constant attacks meted out at her. Gouramma then gets a chance to go to America to live with her son for a year, she opens her eyes to the faults of Jamuna and realizes that Jamuna is basically a very selfish person. She gets to meet a lot of Indian families settled in America and this helps her to change her opinion on life she had till then. She understands the affection and devotion Vinuta holds for the family in contrast with Jamuna's selfishness. Money does speak honey but it also corrupts the way people look at each other and has the power to tear the family apart. Vinuta becomes very depressed as Gouramma's arrival draws near. She begins to resent the word, 'dollar'. The continuous erosion of family values impairs the bond Vinuta has with her mother-in-law.

Gouramma is in a desperate need for acceptance in the elite circle. When this aspiration does not get met, it pops up as anxiety, anger etc. and Vinuta becomes her soft target and wields control over her. This arises due to the neurotic need to have control and power over others. She is obsessed with the



thoughts of becoming rich and sees Chandru's job as the perfect gateway to acquire this. Her experience in America greatly influences her personality. She realizes that she is treated with no self-respect and is at the loss of cognitive abilities which was her forte while at Bangalore. This new analysis of herself changes her opinions and perceptions of life and brings about a potential self-realization. In the three ways of neurotic needs proposed by Karen Horney, Gouramma is seen as moving against people because she is bossy, demanding and sometimes even cruel.

This Dollar may have transformed the lifestyles of some families, takes them from poverty to wealth, but it has also broken up some families. It has created financial and social distinctions within families and destroyed the peace of mind. Very few people have understood this. If Gouri had been more mature, she would not have been in awe of the Dollar and danced to its tune. Her greed childhood, lack of education, the sudden surge of money, have obviously affected her. Gouri is not a bad human being, but she is misguided. Finally, Gouramma learns a new lesson from her dollar bahu. She feels that she is only a servant in her son's house and everything has to be decided by her dollar bahu. So, her realisation begins here in the novel and she maturely took a decision to go back to her family in India. Now she is a state that her family in India is everything for Gouramma.

### **"Vidushi Shrimati"**

Vidushi in Sanskrit means "learned" or "knowledgeable." It is a name often given to someone who is intelligent and possesses a deep understanding of various subjects. It is very suitable for Shrimati, because she is very scholarly in her thoughts and deeds in Sudha Murthy's Gently Falls the Bakula.

Shrimati Deshpande, the protagonist of this novel, is a slim and tall girl with a wheatish complexion. The novel revolves around Shrimati Deshpande who studied in the Model High School, Hubli. She was one of the best students in her class, intelligent but also an introvert. As she could easily win any competition, everyone was jealous of her. Shrikant Deshpande and Shrimati Deshpande were classmates from the first standard and were neighbours. They always compete with each other in school. Shrimati

always surpasses Shrikant and all others in her class in studies. Shrimati was a simple girl who always wore Bakula flowers in her hair. The Bakula tree plays the main role to bring them close and fall in love with each other. The Bakula tree which was between their houses for years not only bloomed with bunch of flowers but also bloomed love between them. Shrimati topped the school in tenth standard board exams. Shrikant hoped to beat her but she secured the first position in the entire board and Shrikant stood second. Shrikant was disgusted when he heard about Shrimati's result. He managed not to cry. "Men were not supposed to shed tears in front of others" (GFTB 021). This shows the egoistic and male dominance of Shrikant, which made him think that his rival should get less marks than him.

Shrikanth realized Shrimati was different from his family members' perspective. Shrimati got a good place in Shrikant's heart and the negative perspective of Shrikant towards Shrimati has also changed. Very soon Shrikant falls in love with Shrimati and they get married despite stiff opposition from their families. Shrikant enters the corporate world of business in Bombay and the couple leaves Hubli and start living in city. It is in Bombay that life changes drastically for the two.

Unfortunately, Shrikant is totally unaware of Shrimati's sacrifice and devotion for him. This conflict between the two shows the vast difference between the old and the new value system. Shrikant criticizes Indian history and Shrimati does not like the artificial gestures of friendship and hospitality of Shrikant with his American clients, the lavish parties and his business manoeuvres. She believes in the ancient Indian culture that values honesty and money is not the top priority. Shrikant has succumbed to the growing tide of commercialism. The love for money, status and business blinds him and he fails to realise the worth of his love, his wife Shrimati. She tolerated this negligence for ten years, waiting for him to change, but in vain. This propelled her to take the hard decision of forsaking him and walking out of his life to fulfil her dream to pursue Ph.D. in history. The Bakula flower signified the love between Shrimati and Shrikant.

Though, the story ends at a sad note, the end of the novel totally gives justice to the title. Sudha



deftly portrays the modern women, who always are ready to become sacrificial goals by claiming their roles as successful wives, submissive life partners, victims of societal expectations in the garb of marriage wedlock. But Shrimati breaks the shackles and takes a harsh decision and realizes the urge and opportunity to fulfil her long cherished dream of pursuing higher study, which she had sacrificed at the altar of her husband's career and marriage.

Sudha Murthy tries to reflect the rich formative literary and spiritual instincts of woman personality through her novels. She also stresses on the transitory nature of physical beauty whereas emphasizes on womanish indomitable courageous spirit. She tries to spread the message of the women to recognize the tremendous force of her inner source of fountain of the heart and soul. Role of women in literature as a reflection to their roles in the society, as a mirror to the society, literature has always reflected the change in the representation of women that history has chronicled. Modern literature has served to give voice to women's rights with the emergence of feminist pioneers.

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