

From Chaos to Clarity: A Study of Sudha Murty's *Mahashweta*

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Abstract

Sudha Murty's novel *Mahashweta*, addresses the challenges women face in patriarchal societies, particularly in India. The narrative explores themes of pain, marital discord, divorce, disbelief, economic independence, gender inequity, and personal empowerment. Literature has documented the silent sufferings of women throughout history. Fewer women are shown as silently accepting sufferings in unbearable situations, while others are depicted as raising their voices against injustice and facing challenges with courage. The protagonist, Anupama, suffers societal rejection and familial neglect after being identified with leukoderma. Her journey from abandonment and despair to clarity exemplifies her resilience, self-awareness, and individual strength. Through self-acceptance, education, and economic constraint, Anupama reclaims her identity and transcends societal stigma. The research paper emphasizes the importance of inner strength and independence, presenting Anupama's transformation as a model for overcoming societal obstacles and living by personal values rather than external judgments. The novel advocates self-love, emotional well-being, and financial independence as tools for empowerment. This article reflects the broader message of valuing oneself over societal expectations and offers practical inspiration for navigating chaos in life and highlights the path to clarity through self-reliance and strength of spirit. It serves as a guide for individual's striving to rise above societal norms and embrace a life of purpose and reliability.

Keywords: Economic independence, Gender inequity, Patriarchal societies, Reliability, Transformation

Introduction:

Sudha Murty is an Indian author, social worker, and philanthropist. She is well-known for her significant contributions to both literature and society. She addresses themes of compassion, resilience, and women empowerment in her writings, which are frequently influenced by Indian mythology and folklore. Her writing is accessible to readers of all ages, particularly young readers, because of her straightforward and captivating approach. She has aided with rural development, healthcare, and education throughout India in her role as chair of the Infosys Foundation. Murty's legacy mixes her passion for sharing stories with her strong belief in bringing about social change.

The novel *Mahashweta* highlights how a woman can rise above rejection, social stigma, and loneliness to discover resilience and purpose. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir reflects on the role of the female body in shaping a woman's social existence. She argues that "to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world" (Beauvoir 39). Princess Diana's kindness and humanitarian work are well remembered. Her beauty and grace played a role in making her a global icon. Her elegance drew media attention, which helped her spread messages of love and compassion. Even in fantasy stories, the princes showed interest in attractive girls, who went on to become extremely wealthy and have happier lives. However, women who are unattractive or unremarkable lead impoverished lives. When she looked shabby, no one liked her in the well-known Cinderella story; nevertheless, when she was gorgeous, the prince of the nation admired her. *Mahashweta*, explores the theme of fairy tale love through the protagonist's journey. Anupama, the protagonist, idealizes love and relationships, much like in fairy tales, and believes in finding her perfect soulmate.

The novel begins with Anupama, a beautiful and talented woman, marrying Dr. Anand, a wealthy and accomplished man. However, her life takes a drastic turn when she develops leukoderma (a skin condition causing white patches). This revelation shatters her marriage, as her in-laws and society ostracize her. Anupama is abandoned, ridiculed, and forced to return to her father's home, where she faces further humiliation. In the depths of her despair, Anupama discovers her inner strength. She moves to Mumbai, where she rebuilds her life through education, independence, and self-respect. The novel showcases her journey from chaos, marked by societal rejection and personal heartbreak, to clarity, where she embraces her worth beyond societal norms and beauty standards. This novel critiques the stigma around physical appearance, questions patriarchal values, and highlights women's ability to withstand and overcome challenges. It is a story of self-discovery, empowerment, and the triumph of the human spirit over societal prejudices. Murty takes inspiration from Banabhatta's Sanskrit book *Kadambari*, which uses a mythical plot as a setting to differentiate between classical and modern love. *Kadambari*, one of the earliest Sanskrit novels composed by the renowned scholar Bana Bhatta, has been partly translated and dramatized by Ms. Anupama. *Mahashweta*, the heroine, and Pundarika, the hero, fall in love in this tale. Anupama recites the famous dialogues of the story and puts them instantaneously into action on the dais where she enacted the play. Murty employs the poetic expression voiced through Anupama to convey not only suffering but also to echo the real-life experiences that shape her journey. At this stage,

Anupama is deeply in love with Anand and imagines their bond in idealistic, almost mythological terms: “Like Rohini to Chandra, like Lakshmi to Narayana, am I to him. Just as the creeper depends on a tree, I depend on him I cannot live without him, and for his sake, I am ready to renounce everything. Let society say anything I wishes, I do not care” (MWS 6). These lines get repeated throughout the story. Anupama’s words reflect her idealistic conception of love and marriage. By comparing their bond to that of mythological couples such as Rohini–Chandra and Lakshmi–Narayana, she imagines their relationship as eternal and inseparable. The imagery of the creeper and the tree reveals her total reliance on Anand, and her declaration of renouncing everything for him shows the depth of her devotion. She even dismisses social conventions, asserting that love is more important than societal approval.

The symbolic depth of this passage becomes clearer when read alongside the legendary tale of Princess Mahashweta from Bhanabatta’s Sanskrit play. According to the myth, Princess Mahashweta was struck by tragedy when her beloved died suddenly. Overcome by grief, she renounced worldly life, withdrew to the forest, and performed painstaking sacrifice. Her ascetic devotion was marked by her transformation into a figure clad in a white saree and garland, embodying both sacrifice and resilience. Sudha Murty draws on this legend for the title of her novel, as Anupama’s journey parallels the mythological princess’s path of suffering and transformation. Just as the princess turns to penance after loss, Anupama, following rejection and abandonment, evolves from a dependent lover into a self-reliant woman who discovers inner strength and dignity.

Thus, the quoted lines not only capture Anupama’s youthful and absolute faith in her love for Anand but also foreshadow the painful contrast between her expectations and reality. By invoking the name *Mahashweta*, Murty connects her modern heroine’s struggles with an ancient narrative of renunciation and resilience, enriching the novel with cultural and symbolic resonance.

Despite the best efforts of her friend Kadamabari to dissuade her, Mahashweta decides to persevere, and eventually her beloved is revived and they are reunited. By contrasting this true beauty of love, which arises from the inner beauty of the soul, with contemporary love, which lacks sanctity and commitment, the novel didactically highlights the significance of mutual understanding between a husband and wife in the tie of marriage.

In this novel, the author examines the attitudes of the society on woman with leukoderma. Through Anupama, Sudha Murty makes an intense examination of the psychological ascetics of the human psyche by stepping into the world of leukoderma and tries to understand the intricacy and problems revolving around women. The novel delineates the fact that beauty does not depend upon the external appearance of an individual but the inner beauty. Though the white patches turn Anupama’s life upside down, she sets herself on course to rebuild her life. She refuses to be under the suppression of the family and society. Having been rejected by her marital family and marginalized by society, Anupama becomes aware of the way people create their own versions of a woman’s tragedy:

Oh, poor Anupama, she had a white patch, so she killed herself. Or, ‘The unfortunate girl slipped from the hill’, Or, Poor girl, her husband rejected her, what else could she do?’ Or, ‘Her husband left her. She must have had an affair and got into trouble. So she commied suicide. How shameful! (MWS 77)

The above statement reflects the malicious gossip, misinterpretations, and moral judgments society is quick to cast on women in distress. In context, these are not actual remarks made by others, but rather Anupama’s own fearful imagination of what society would say if she chose to end her life in despair. She foresees that people would neither sympathize with her condition nor understand her truth; instead, they would distort her story with rumors and baseless accusations. This realization acts as a moment of awakening for her. Rather than letting herself become the subject of such pity or scandal, Anupama decides not to yield to hopelessness. It is here that she resolves to resist suppression, rebuild her life, and live with dignity, marking the beginning of her transformation from a dependent, broken woman to one of courage and self-reliance.

Anupama’s realization happens on the verge of her committing suicide. The new-found courage makes her brave enough to face life all alone. She is able to survive and recreate her new identity as a playwright of Sanskrit dramas. The choice she makes shows her decision to be her own master and be an economically independent woman to live her life rather than being defined by someone else’s framed norms. The system of patriarchy however, has conditioned women to accept suffering in their lives. Anupama decides never to get back into the same structures of the society. This does not mean that she has discredited the structures, but has only become wary of those who operate the systems. She no longer wants a companion in her life and starts searching for people with understanding. When she finds Dr. Vasant, she accepts him as her well-wisher and not as a companion to travel with her all her life. The novel aptly reflects the emotional depth of the character, Anupama.

We can understand the different meanings that come from the victims’ behavior, even though the title is ironic. The title *Mahashweta* has both literal and figurative meanings. Literally, it means “white bodied.” With leukoderma, Anupama’s skin turns white. Figuratively, it symbolizes purity, resilience, and transformation, as Anupama rises above prejudice to reclaim her identity and independence. Drawing on mythology, where *Mahashweta* represents grace and strength, the title critiques superficial beauty standards and celebrates the triumph of character over societal bias. It encapsulates Anupama’s journey from victimhood to empowerment, urging readers to look beyond appearances. In Indian cultural contexts, the lord of learning is Saraswati, and knowledge is represented as white. The character is an embodiment of knowledge that frees herself from oppression and imperfection. The knowledge that one is not intrinsically a victim and the knowledge about oneself will rescue, rehabilitate, and revive the notion of perfection. It is knowledge that removes

the internalization of subjective notions of dependency and disadvantage. This has clearly been exemplified in the text and idiomized in the title. The writer has beautifully portrayed the difference in Anupama's life and attitude before and after discovering the disease. The author has written the novel as an eye opener to women who lacked courage because of their situation and variables that are not under their control. Interestingly, the novel has proved to be a weapon of social change as proved by the postscript that documents how this text brought in a change in the life of a woman who faced uncertainties due to leukoderma.

One day while the novelist was going through the letters she received, she found a card attached with invitation with a personal note "will you be attending?" "*Madam, if you do not attend our marriage, we will consider it unfortunate*" (MWS 152). The writer decided to attend the wedding out of curiosity and it was a typical middle-class wedding. An elder gentleman found her and approached her politely, 'Do you want to meet the couple and greet them?' (MWS 152). The novel *Mahashweta* serves as a powerful affirmation of social message. The following lines appear in the postscript of the novel, where Sudha Murty recalls a wedding where the groom, deeply moved by Anupama's struggles in the novel, overcomes prejudice against leukoderma and chooses to marry Malati, showcasing the novel's transformative social impact:

The author followed him to the dais and wishes the couple. The newly wed couple seemed very happy. Then the elder gentleman smiled and said, 'Madam I am the groom's father. My son fell in love with Malati, the bride, and we arranged the wedding, Malati contracted leukoderma after the engagement, and as a result my son backed out of the marriage. We were all very sad. Her family was worried about her future. There was so unpleasantness in the family. To escape from the tension at home, my son began to visit the library often. After about a month, he told me that he was ready to marry Malati. We were all pleasantly surprised and were truly happy'. 'Madam, later e came to know that he read your novel *Mahashweta*,' he said. 'The plight of your heroine touched him deeply. He took a month and decided he did not want to be like the man in your novel who shed his responsibilities only to regret it later. Your novel changed his thinking.' (MWS 153)

After the ceremony, the groom's father approaches her, introduces himself, and recounts how her novel *Mahashweta* changed the course of his son's life. The groom's father explains that his son was initially engaged to Malati, who developed leukoderma soon after. In keeping with society's prejudices, the son broke off the engagement, causing pain and unpleasantness within both families. To cope with the tension, the young man began frequenting the library, where he came across Murty's novel *Mahashweta*. Reading about Anupama's suffering and her husband Anand's failure made him reflect on his own actions. Unlike Anand, he chose not to abandon his fiancée. He reconciled with Malati and went ahead with the marriage, much to the joy of both families.

In addition, the passage highlights the real-world impact of literature. It shows how Murty's novel functions not only as a fictional narrative but also as a social instrument that influences human behavior and challenges prejudices by questioning the stigma, superstition, and discriminatory attitudes associated with leukoderma. By including this incident within the novel itself, Murty blurs the boundary between fiction and reality, underlining her belief that stories rooted in compassion and truth can inspire individuals to reject injustice and embrace humanity.

The post script tells the real-life experiences of women who have suffered from leukoderma and social ostracism. One such woman, a disease survivor from India, was forced to live on the outskirts of their village due to societal stigma. However, with the support of organizations or welfares working for them, they could rebuild their life and become a successful entrepreneur. The courage and resilience are a testament to the strength of the human spirit, and a reminder that we must work towards creating a more inclusive and compassionate society as Anupama.

In the novel, chaos enters Anupama's life following her marriage to Dr. Anand, a promising and compassionate young doctor who initially adores her for her beauty, intelligence, and kindness. Their marriage appears perfect, filling Anupama with hopes for a bright and fulfilling future. However, her life is soon thrown into turmoil when she discovers a small white patch on her skin, a sign of leukoderma: "She noticed something very odd. Initially, Anupama did not bother much about the patch. Later, she began to suspect that it could be leukoderma, and became numb with fear. She was too shocked even to cry" (MWS 47). This seemingly minor physical change becomes a turning point in her life, triggering a series of chaotic events that deeply affect her relationships, social standing, and sense of self-worth.

The first wave of chaos comes from the social stigma associated with leukoderma. In Anupama's conservative Indian community, physical beauty and perfection are highly valued, especially in women, and any visible imperfection can lead to harsh judgment and ostracization. Her husband Anand, who should be a pillar of support, instead succumbs to societal pressure and prejudice. He reacts to her condition not with empathy but with disappointment and shame, which marks the beginning of Anupama's struggle. Anand leaves for further studies in England, abandoning her without support. Anupama's dream of a happy, loving marriage shatters; replaced by loneliness and betrayal from the person she trusted the most. This abandonment creates deep emotional turmoil, showing how quickly love can dissolve in the face of social stigma.

The chaos intensifies when Anupama's in-laws, who once admired her, begin to see her as a burden and a disgrace. They mistreat her, showing no compassion or concern for her emotional or physical well-being. Instead of offering support, they view her condition as a curse and begin to spread rumors, fueling the stigma around her. Anupama's life becomes a nightmare as she is constantly humiliated, blamed, and judged for something beyond her control: "A feeling of misery engulfed Anupama. She realized that her position had become lower than that of a servant in just one day"

(MWS 55). The oppressive behavior of her in-laws drives her into a state of despair and isolation. Instead of offering comfort or compassion, they humiliate her and ultimately send her back to her parents, cutting her off from her role as a wife and daughter-in-law. This act of dismissal reflects the rigid expectations of women in marriage, where beauty and health are considered essential virtues, and any deviation is met with disdain. She becomes a victim of the double standards of her family and society, which value a woman's worth based on her appearance and her ability to meet traditional expectations. This lack of support and empathy from both her in-laws and her own family intensifies the chaos in her life, leaving her to confront these challenges alone.

Upon returning to her parent's home, Anupama expects a reprieve from mistreatment but instead finds only more judgment. Her father, a conservative and status-conscious man, views her condition as a stain on the family's honor, worrying that it will damage the reputation of her siblings and diminish marriage prospects within the family. Rather than support his daughter in her time of need, he distances himself, reinforcing her sense of shame and isolation. Her stepmother, indifferent and unsympathetic, subtly views Anupama as a burden, treating her as if her very presence is a liability: "Sabakka the step mother had never felt any affection for Anupama. She felt as burden to her family. She was not bereft of compassion and motherless children roused her sympathy, except Anupama" (MWS 61).

It is not true that Anupama "internalizes" the beliefs that are linked to the alleged bad outcomes and conditions of her illness. On the contrary, she resists it. The psychological process known as "internalization" occurs when a person accepts and adheres to the attitudes, beliefs, standards, and opinions that others have forced onto them (Williams and Joseph 67-73). Regretfully, the internalization mechanism occurs in women's difficulties and is successfully employed to take advantage of them. It is true that patriarchy has effectively persuaded women to believe certain ideals about women's beauty. Anupama rejects the advice given by men in her life and by society at large. She gradually begins to challenge the notion that "one cannot be autonomous" and accordingly, begins to cultivate her own independence. The emotional and psychological chaos Anupama experiences pushes her to a breaking point. She finds herself struggling with deep feelings of shame, self-doubt, and depression. The harsh reality of her situation being abandoned, mistreated, and humiliated by those closest to her, forces her to question her own worth and purpose in life. She realizes that society places unreasonable standards on women, judging them for their physical appearance rather than their character or abilities. Anupama's descent into emotional chaos is Murty's way of illustrating the cruelty of societal expectations and the profound impact that prejudice and stigma can have on a person's mental health and self-esteem. Additionally, Anupama rejects the stigma associated with her illness. Those who are linked to a stigmatized condition are discredited by society and relegated to an unfavorable social standing through the process of stigma, which is founded on the social construction of identity (Goffman 7). Self-stigma, for instance, is the process by which a person with a mental illness absorbs stigmatizing attitudes and ideas that the general public holds.

People who think of themselves as a burden might think that they are rejected (by others or by themselves), and people who are socially isolated might think that their condition is a result of or a contributing factor to an unfavorable social status. Stigma increases existing limitations on individual liberties that are usually experienced by those with a lower social rank in society by exaggerating social disparities. The novel's portrayal of Anupama's mistreatment makes it abundantly evident how a sick lady in Indian society experiences unimaginable stigmatization and discrimination. In actuality, the author does a good job of portraying it. While socially stigmatized diseases affect both men and women, women have been subjected to mistreatment, social disadvantage, and forced to live in substandard conditions, particularly when it comes to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV in Third World countries (Kontomanolis 12). Despite this chaos, however, *Mahashweta* also reveals how Anupama gradually begins to reclaim her life and identity.

After enduring deep suffering and isolation, she decides to move away, finding work in a new city where she can start fresh, away from the people who judged her. This step represents her move from chaos to clarity as she starts to rebuild her life on her terms, focusing on her independence, education, and self-worth. This journey from chaos to inner strength is the core of Anupama's transformation, showcasing her resilience and her ultimate rejection of the unfair standards imposed on her. *Mahashweta* portrays the chaos that erupts in Anupama's life due to society's rigid views on beauty and worth. Her suffering reflects the challenges faced by those who deviate from societal norms, particularly regarding appearance and physical health. Through Anupama's story, Murty sheds light on the destructive power of prejudice, the emotional cost of rejection, and the strength required to overcome chaos and find one's true self in a judgmental world.

Anupama's journey from chaos to clarity is a powerful transformation that highlights her growth in self-awareness, inner strength, and independence. After enduring intense emotional and social turmoil due to leukoderma, she eventually realizes that her worth does not depend on external validation or acceptance. The clarity she gains is a product of her practical decisions, resilience, and gradual acceptance of her own identity, which allow her to rebuild her life on her own terms:

Whatever the circumstances she found herself in, she would meet the challenge head-on, and win. She was now ready to face the world, determined to stand on her own feet and build a new life for herself. She looked back and prayed to the goddess, *Give me the courage to live no matter what happens!* and started walking home. (MWS 79)

Anupama's realization is a turning point. She decides that if she is going to find peace, she must take control of her own life. Her journey towards clarity begins with this critical, practical insight that she can no longer wait for others to accept or validate her; she must seek fulfillment and purpose independently.

Anupama makes a bold decision to leave her home and move to a new city where she is unknown: "I want to go to Bombay and stay with Sumi" (MWS 79). This move itself is a practical step toward freedom, as it removes her from the environment that constantly reminds her of the social stigma surrounding her condition. In the new city, she takes up a job and rents a small room, living modestly but independently. Her job, though humble, provides her with a sense of purpose and financial independence, reinforcing her belief that she can survive and thrive on her own. This practical action of finding a job and supporting herself marks her transition from a life defined by others to one she defines herself. She finds clarity in the realization that financial independence is a crucial step in her emotional recovery. With her newfound independence, Anupama also gains confidence and a fresh perspective on life. She begins to engage with her own interests, like literature and theater, which had once brought her joy but were set aside due to societal pressures and marriage expectations.

Anupama begins thinking optimistically because she is a forward thinker. She examines the details of her life in great detail and comes to terms with them. She becomes aware that while she can change herself, she cannot change them. She attempts to put together some sort of self-defense mechanism. She formulates her personal life philosophy. She begins to reenact her whole life story. The affection of her mother is unknown to her. Her father is a helpless puppet controlled by his second wife. His stepmother Sabakka is a heartless and self-centered person who demands that her daughter's lives be successful at the expense of other peoples. And her teasing would just make Anupama worse off. Additionally, she learns about Anand's true character, whom she had believed to be his 'Manmatha': "Anand has loved her beauty and married for it. Then why should she die for a husband who doesn't even care about her?" (MWS 78). Radhakka is a superstitious mother-in-law who, at the expense of her daughter-in-law's life, frequently verified the horoscope under Narayan, the evil-minded relative in the family. Narayan cleverly instigates Radhakka against Anupama, filling her mind with doubts and making her treat Anupama cruelly. By fueling Radhakka's fears about family honor and social stigma, he turns her completely against her daughter-in-law. Sister-in-law Girija is a loose-moral person who solely marries men for financial gain. Even the bursting of the white patch gives her a nasty sense of enjoyment to Girija. Consequently, Anupama thinks, why should she have to pass away? Nobody would care even if she passed away. The general public would support Anand and feel sorry for him. The only question is that "why should she die for a husband who don't even care about her" (MWS 78). These following lines shows how she begins to rebuild her life: "Anupama went to the interview for a lecture job hesitantly. They were impressed by her academic record. Anupama was overjoyed. 'Certainly, Father! I would love to direct plays'. Anupama no longer hoped to play the role of a heroine the white patches now covered her hands as well" (MWS 93).

By reconnecting with her passions, Anupama reclaims parts of her identity that had been suppressed, realizing that these interests are a source of personal strength and happiness. This choice to focus on her interests is practical as it helps her build a fulfilling life that doesn't revolve around others' perceptions. Her connection to literature, especially, serves as an emotional outlet and a way to express herself, enabling her to rediscover the value of her intelligence, creativity, and empathy. After the initial turmoil of rejection and humiliation, Anupama slowly begins to carve a new life for herself in Bombay. Her appointment as a lecturer becomes a turning point, granting her both financial independence and emotional strength:

With financial independence, Anupama's confidence began to blossom. She had become friends with many of the girls who worked with her. They were from various backgrounds and different parts of the Bombay. none of them ever talked about her skin patches or her past. Anupama, too, had begun to accept her condition and look beyond it. The darkest period of her life was behind her now. (MWS 84)

It shows how a supportive environment and self-reliance helped Anupama leave behind her pain and begin a journey of acceptance and renewal. As Anupama becomes more comfortable with herself, her self-worth grows, and she no longer feels the need to hide or feel ashamed of her condition. Instead, she accepts leukoderma as a part of her reality but refuses to let it define her. This acceptance is another practical element of her clarity; she chooses to stop viewing her skin condition as a limitation or curse and begins to view herself holistically, recognizing that she has much more to offer the world. This newfound acceptance empowers her to interact confidently with others, breaking the internalized shame that once held her back. She realizes that true beauty lies in character and kindness, not in superficial appearance. Anupama's social standing is somewhat influenced by her financial situation. Her concerns are clearly explained by her lack of economic status. Her current situation demonstrates how concern for individuality among educated women positively correlates with age and occupation. It is accurate to say that educated working women are more concerned with their status than housewives or nonworking women. Educated women's concern for status has deeper psychological foundations and is strongly linked to specific personality traits. It has been shown to have a favorable correlation with emotional stability and ego strength. The interactional impacts of age, employment, and other social and personal background variables affect all of these values' interactions. Nevertheless, given the current situation, Anupama is forced to participate in the patriarchal system. One can't help but feel sorry for this poor woman who would disappoint her own people in order to conform to social norms that were created by men.

Sudha Murty consistently engages with women's struggles in her writings, whether in stories like "Stove Bursts or Dowry Deaths," "Price of Jealousy," "Crisis of Confidence," or "A Life with Dignity." Through these works, she highlights the social and personal challenges faced by women. In her reflections, she stresses the need for self-reliance, remarking: "Education and financial independence are tools that can help any woman face difficulties, but confidence is

the one which helps the most" (*Wise and Otherwise* 140). Thus, while external support is vital, Murty emphasizes inner strength as the key to women's empowerment.

As Ambedkar has noted rightly, education allows women to gain awareness of their rights, challenge societal norms, and strive for equality. Moreover, Ambedkar has stressed that financial independence is vital for women to have autonomy and escape patriarchal control. He advocated for women's participation in the workforce as a step toward economic empowerment. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also written extensively on how education and financial independence help women navigate and challenge patriarchal structures. Spivak in her essay, "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" stresses how education and economic empowerment are necessary to amplify the voices of marginalized women.

Anupama's clarity is ultimately about self-respect and resilience. She understands that her life is her own to shape with her education, regardless of societal expectations. Her practical choices moving to a new city, finding work, pursuing her passions, and accepting her condition help her break free from the limitations imposed by society and find a new purpose. By the end of the novel, Anupama achieves a profound sense of clarity, she recognizes her inner strength, feels content in her independence, and sees her self-worth as something intrinsic, not dependent on others' judgments or opinions.

Anupama's journey to clarity is practical and deeply empowering. Her steps toward independence, self-acceptance, and inner peace demonstrate that clarity often comes from within, achieved through self-reliance, introspection, and the courage to reject societal prejudice. Her story is a powerful reminder that true strength lies in building one's own path and finding value in oneself, beyond the constraints of societal labels or appearances.

Through the story of Anupama, Sudha Murty conceptually focuses on the idea that believing in true beauty only gives life purpose and empowers contemporary women. Through her conceptualization of the word "real beauty," Sudha Murty effectively challenges her audience. Murty deserves the reader's admiration for elaborating on the same idea throughout the novel *Mahashweta* with Anupama's understated appearance and clothing. In the present world, being beauty concerned has become the norm. Murty asserts: "One's beauty is seen in one's nature. A good human being who is compassionate to others, who tries to understand the other person's difficulties and reach out them in their hour of need has real beauty. Such people should always be cherished and honoured" (MWS 132).

People are shocked by the cosmetic experimentation and beauty advice. Dailies' marriage columns are highlighted and adorned with demands for beauty. Throughout the book, there are characters that are obsessed with beauty and are influenced by it when making important choices. Despite being a doctor, Anand has also succumbed to the fleeting allure of beauty. Despite Radhakka's superstitious beliefs and dislike of impoverished backgrounds, she accepted because of Anupama's elegance and attractiveness. However, Anupama lets her inner beauty take control of her life rather than letting her outward beauty control her. When performing in plays, she never wears makeup other than a few light torches. Anand, however, is her opposite. His wealth and upbringing have thrown him into his own fantasy world, making him so obstinate that he only chooses the finest in life. Regretfully, his choosing of a life partner is now influenced by his fictitious status. Even when choosing a mate, he aspires to be meticulous. His infatuation with beauty ultimately turns him into a beast and ends his family life.

Conclusion

To sum up, this article examines the oppressive constructs of societal norms, particularly the stigma surrounding physical imperfections and the rigid expectations placed on women. The novel exposes the hypocrisy and superficiality of social relationships, where worth is often determined by appearances rather than character or intellect. Anupama's journey from chaos to clarity challenges traditional patriarchal values and advocates for autonomy and self-respect. The novelist aptly highlights the preconceptions that uphold injustice and alienation and wishes for a more compassionate and inclusive society.

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