



Exploring Female Empowerment through the Image of Tridevi in Sudha Murty's Mythological Stories

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ABSTRACT:

This paper looks at the theme of women empowerment as personified by the Tridevi (the three goddesses: Devi Saraswati, Devi Lakshmi, and Devi Parvati or Shakti) in Sudha Murty's mythological stories. The paper investigates, based on interpretations and analysis of Murty's narratives, how these three deities symbolize different aspects of womanhood: Saraswati represents knowledge and wisdom, Lakshmi embodies prosperity and abundance, and Shakti signifies strength and resilience. Murty's stories often blend these godly qualities with the lives of contemporary female characters, illustrating their struggles and triumphs in a patriarchal society. Murty not only reclaims traditional narratives but also inspires modern readers to recognize and harness their own potential by drawing inspiration from these mythological female characters. This paper also highlights how Murty's storytelling serves as a vehicle for promoting female empowerment, encouraging women to embrace their identities and assert their agency in various spheres of life. The paper analyses three short stories from her collection of stories *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree*.

Keywords: Female Empowerment, Mythology, Strength, Knowledge. Introduction :

Introduction:

Sudha Murty is a well-known author, philanthropist, and social activist in India who has made significant contributions to Indian English literature through her remarkable stories and profound reflections on human behavior. Often, her literary works are inspired by elements of Indian mythology, folklore, and cultural heritage that are very tastefully interwoven with stories to attract modern readers. In her stories, Murty explores complex themes such as love, sacrifice, social justice, and women's empowerment to place herself within the canon of modern Indian literature. A dominant theme in Murty's mythological stories is that of female empowerment personified by the Tridevi: Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Shakti. Each goddess embodies different attributes that reflect the multifaceted nature of womanhood. Saraswati, revered as the goddess embodying knowledge and wisdom, underscores the crucial role of education and intellectual development; Lakshmi, celebrated as the goddess symbolizing wealth and prosperity, accentuates the essential nature of financial autonomy and abundance; and Shakti, recognized as the goddess of power and strength, epitomizes resilience and the capacity to surmount obstacles. In her storytelling, Murty adeptly weaves these divine characteristics with the experiences of her female protagonists, illustrating their pathways toward self-discovery and empowerment. By reinterpreting all traditional myths centered on women's lives, Murty does not only pay tributes to India's cultural heritage but also looks at the patriarchal standards that systematically circumvent women's voices. This paper will deal with three short stories written by Sudha Murty in *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree*. Each story focuses on one of the goddesses from Tridevi. The selected stories are: 'The Source of Knowledge', 'The Eight Forms' and 'The God with the Head of a Horse', dealing with the adventures and power of Goddess Saraswati, Lakshmi and Shakti respectively.

Discussion:

The goddesses in Sudha Murty's mythological tales, Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Shakti, constitute the Tridevi. They are great symbols of woman empowerment. Different features characterize each of the goddesses; thus, they correspond to the very modern views on femininity, and Murty's story narration expertly drives home those attributes through her heroine's voices. The present research covers three stories: "Saraswati: The Source of Knowledge," "Lakshmi: The Eight Forms," and "Shakti."

Saraswati is the source of knowledge.

In the Saraswati narrative, Murty underlines a deep influence of knowledge and education. Most of the variations of this story reveal a female character capturing the wholeness of Saraswati who is vagdevi or vani. Once Saraswati was playing veena on the satyalok when the asuras snatched the book of

knowledge and ran away. Being no warrior herself, Saraswati decided to follow the asura by turning into a river. After regaining her book, she was named Guptagamini from then onwards.

Lakshmi: The Eight Forms

In the tale centered around Lakshmi, the deity symbolizing wealth and prosperity, Murty investigates the complex characteristics of abundance. The narrative examines the eight manifestations of

Lakshmi—Aditi (the maternal figure of deities), Dhanya (cereal), Gaja (the pachyderm), Santana

(progeny), Vijaya (victory), Dhan (wealth), Vidya (knowledge), and Aishwarya (prosperity)—each signifying different aspects of prosperity in life. The female protagonist in this tale learns to value the various manifestations of wealth besides money. Along her journey, she realizes that true prosperity includes emotional fulfillment, intellectual growth, and spiritual well-being. For example, Murty's Lakshmi presentation encourages women to understand their value and the potential that could be offered to families and communities. As such, in the celebration of variety in life, the narrative suggests that women empowerment goes beyond just providing financially but rather a concept of abundance. Shakti:

The discussion regarding Shakti, or at least as she represents, provides a fascinating exploration of strength and resilience. In this tale, the protagonist is confronted with the formidable challenges and cultural pressures that seek to limit her potential. By tapping into the fierce energy of

Shakti learns to speak up and challenge the status quo. In depicting Shakti, Murty points out that inner strength and courage play an important role during traumatic moments. The transformation of the character into a symbol of strength itself demonstrates the goddess in the form of assertive womanhood who encourages readers to recognize how powerful they are and to stand up against oppression. This narrative serves as an effective reminder that empowerment often requires strength and a willingness to encounter adversity head-on.

The Hayagriva is a deity that has a horse's head and is supposed to be an avatar of Lord Vishnu, worshipped as the heavenly figure who has embodied wisdom, knowledge, and intellect in Hindu mythology.

His unique shape-endowment—which included a human body and a horse's head—embodies brilliant thinking, strength, and the knowledge that is possessed by him. Many legends are about Hayagriva. One such legend describes how Hayagriva stole the Vedas from Brahma, the god who created the universe, and darkness and ignorance prevailed. Vishnu assumed the form of Hayagriva, a god with the head of a horse to fight the evil spirits. Utilizing his celestial might and sagacity, Hayagriva triumphed over the demons and restored the Vedas. In an alternate narrative, it is reported that Vishnu's head was inadvertently detached during a period of meditation. To reinstate him, the deities substituted his head with that of a horse, thereby metamorphosing him into Hayagriva.

In the mythological stories written by Sudha Murty, the Tri-Devi—Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Shakti—serve as powerful symbols of female empowerment, each goddess representing an essential quality that resonates with modern women.

Saraswati, who signifies learning and education, emphasizes knowledge as a dramatic force in bringing about revolution. The stories told by Murty depict the power of education for women to overcome situations imposed by society, with the condition that it helps them in framing their identities and consequently in realizing their goals. In the account of Saraswati, Murty emphasizes the search for knowledge as a vital road to self-empowerment and emancipation. Lo and behold, Lakshmi throws open the importance of prosperity and richness within the discussion of women empowerment. Murty's portrayal of Lakshmi provokes women to recognize their inherent worth and the different riches they could nurture in their lives.

Besides the literal meaning of financial independence, the story highlights the need for emotional and spiritual wealth, further reiterating the point that true prosperity is comprised of many aspects of life. Shakti means strength as well as protection, which incorporates with her all the strength and courage that a woman needs to strive against adversity. Through them, Murty expresses how important inner strength is, along with the ability of women to protect themselves along with their families. The powerful force represented by Shakti motivates women to claim their rights and resist oppression, highlighting the necessity of courage to confront societal conventions in the pursuit of empowerment. In summary, Sudha Murty's examination of the Tri-Devi within her mythological narratives not only pays tribute to these conventional figures but also reinterprets them for modern audiences. It is in the infusion of attributes like wisdom, prosperity, and strength that Murty ultimately constructs narratives motivating women to accept their identities, assert their autonomy, and manage the complexities of existence with confidence and resilience. Through these very representations, Murty plays a crucial role in the conversation surrounding female empowerment as it urges readers to use their cultural heritage while while carving out their trajectories in contemporary society.

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