



A TRAUMA-BASED PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SUDHAMURTY'S *THE MOTHER I NEVER KNEW*

Gayathri V

Assistant Professor, Department of English, S.A. College of Arts & Science, Chennai.

Abstract

*SudhaMurty's **The Mother I Never Knew** explores the emotional and psychological struggles of individuals who experience identity confusion and emotional pain due to separation from their biological parents. This paper analyses the novel from a trauma-based psychological perspective, focusing on how emotional trauma shapes the inner lives of the two main characters, Mukesh and Venkatesh. Mukesh's life changes when he discovers that he was adopted. Although he was raised in a loving family, this truth creates emotional confusion and disturbs his sense of identity and belonging. He begins to question his origins and feels a strong need to know his biological mother. Similarly, Venkatesh suffers emotional pain because his biological father refuses to accept him, creating feelings of rejection and emotional insecurity.*

This paper examines how separation and rejection create psychological trauma and identity crisis. It also explores how trauma influences thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. Both characters go through emotional journeys in search of truth and acceptance. Through their experiences, SudhaMurty shows that trauma affects emotional stability but emotional healing becomes possible through understanding, acceptance, and self-discovery, leading to psychological growth and emotional strength.

Keywords: *Psychological Trauma, Identity Crisis, Maternal Separation, Rejection, Emotional Healing, Self-Discovery, Belonging.*

A Trauma-Based Psychological Analysis of SudhaMurty's *The Mother I Never Knew*

Literature has always been closely connected with human emotions and psychological experiences. Through literature, writers express the emotional struggles, conflicts, and inner realities of individuals. Many literary works explore how individuals respond to emotional pain, loss, separation, and identity crisis. One of the most important psychological experiences explored in literature is trauma. Trauma refers to the emotional and psychological suffering caused by painful or disturbing experiences, especially those related to loss, rejection, or separation. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma is not just the experience of a painful event but also the emotional disturbance that continues to affect the individual's psychological state

(Caruth 4). Trauma can create emotional confusion, insecurity, and a disturbed sense of identity. It affects not only the emotional stability of individuals but also their understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

SudhaMurty is one of the most respected contemporary Indian writers known for her simple yet emotionally powerful storytelling. Her works focus on human relationships, emotional struggles, and the realities of everyday life. She portrays emotional experiences in a realistic and relatable way, which allows readers to connect deeply with her characters. In her novel *The Mother I Never Knew*, she explores the emotional and psychological impact of separation, rejection, and identity crisis. The novel presents the emotional journeys of two main characters, Mukesh and Venkatesh, whose lives are deeply affected by emotional trauma caused by separation from their biological parents.



Mukesh is introduced as a successful and emotionally secure person who lives happily with his parents and family. He believes that his life is complete and that he belongs fully to his family. His parents have always loved him and supported him, and he has never questioned his identity. However, his emotional stability is suddenly disturbed when he learns that he was adopted. This revelation creates emotional shock and confusion. He begins to question his identity and his sense of belonging. Even though his adoptive parents continue to love him, he feels emotionally unsettled. This emotional reaction reflects the psychological impact of trauma. According to trauma theory, unexpected revelations that disturb a person's sense of identity can create emotional conflict and psychological distress (Caruth 6). Mukesh's emotional disturbance reflects this reality, as he struggles to accept the truth about his origin.

Mukesh's emotional experience shows how closely identity is connected with emotional stability. Before discovering the truth, he had a clear sense of who he was and where he belonged. His identity was closely connected with his family. However, the discovery of his adoption creates emotional insecurity and confusion. He begins to feel that there is a missing part in his identity. This emotional response reflects what Sigmund Freud explains about unconscious emotional disturbance. Freud states that unexpected truths can disturb the unconscious mind and create emotional conflict (Freud 18). Mukesh's emotional struggle reflects this psychological disturbance, as he begins to question his past and his true identity.

His emotional struggle also shows the psychological importance of belonging. Belonging gives individuals emotional security and a sense of stability. When Mukesh discovers that he was adopted, he begins to feel emotionally incomplete, even though his parents continue to love him. His emotional need to know his biological mother reflects his desire to understand his true identity. This shows that identity is not only shaped by social relationships but also by biological origin. His emotional struggle reflects the trauma caused by separation from his biological mother.

Mukesh's decision to search for his biological mother reflects his psychological need for emotional closure. His search is not driven by anger but by emotional curiosity and a need for understanding. Trauma theory explains that individuals often seek meaning and understanding in order to overcome emotional pain (Caruth 10). Mukesh's emotional journey reflects this psychological process. He wants to understand his past so that he can achieve emotional clarity and stability.

When Mukesh finally learns about his biological mother and the circumstances of his adoption, he begins to understand the reality of his situation. He realises that his adoption was not caused by rejection but by difficult circumstances. This understanding helps him accept his emotional reality. His emotional healing reflects the psychological importance of acceptance. His journey shows that trauma can create emotional pain, but emotional healing becomes possible when individuals confront their past and accept the truth.

In contrast to Mukesh, Venkatesh's emotional experience reflects trauma caused by rejection rather than separation alone. Venkatesh is born as a result of an extramarital relationship, and his biological father refuses to accept him. This rejection creates deep emotional pain and psychological suffering. Unlike Mukesh, who grows up in a loving family, Venkatesh grows up feeling unwanted and emotionally isolated. His emotional suffering reflects the psychological impact of rejection trauma. According to John Bowlby, lack of parental acceptance can create emotional insecurity and affect psychological development (Bowlby 27).



Venkatesh's emotional pain reflects this psychological reality.

Venkatesh's rejection affects his sense of identity and self-worth. Identity is often shaped by emotional relationships, especially parental acceptance. When Venkatesh's father refuses to accept him, it creates emotional insecurity and feelings of abandonment. He feels emotionally incomplete and struggles to understand his place in the world. His emotional suffering reflects the psychological effects of trauma caused by rejection.

His desire to meet his father reflects his emotional need for acceptance. He hopes that meeting his father will give him emotional closure and help him understand his identity. This emotional need reflects the psychological importance of belonging. Individuals naturally seek acceptance from their parents because parental acceptance plays an important role in emotional development. At the same time, Venkatesh's emotional journey also reflects emotional strength and resilience. Even though he experiences rejection, he continues to search for emotional understanding. His emotional strength shows that individuals can develop resilience despite emotional trauma. Trauma does not always destroy emotional stability. Instead, individuals can grow emotionally stronger through their experiences.

Mukesh and Venkatesh experience trauma in different ways, but their emotional journeys reflect similar psychological struggles. Both characters experience identity confusion, emotional pain, and a strong desire for acceptance. Their emotional struggles reflect the psychological impact of trauma on identity and emotional stability. Their journeys show how trauma affects the emotional and psychological development of individuals. SudhaMurty presents their emotional struggles in a realistic and sensitive way. She does not exaggerate their trauma but presents it as a natural emotional experience. Her portrayal reflects the psychological reality that trauma affects individuals internally. Trauma changes the way individuals see themselves and their relationships.

Mukesh's emotional journey reflects the psychological process of self-reflection. After learning the truth, he begins to reflect deeply on his identity and his emotional connection with his family. His emotional struggle reflects his effort to rebuild his sense of identity. This psychological process shows that trauma can lead to emotional growth and self-understanding. Similarly, Venkatesh's emotional journey reflects his effort to cope with rejection and emotional pain. His emotional resilience shows that individuals can continue their emotional journey despite trauma. His emotional strength reflects psychological maturity and emotional growth.

Both characters eventually achieve emotional clarity and acceptance. Mukesh achieves emotional healing when he understands his biological mother's situation. He realises that his adoption does not reduce the love of his adoptive parents. Similarly, Venkatesh achieves emotional strength when he learns to accept his emotional reality. SudhaMurty shows that trauma is a deeply personal emotional experience that affects identity, emotional stability, and sense of belonging. At the same time, she also shows that emotional healing is possible. Her characters demonstrate that individuals can overcome trauma through emotional understanding, acceptance, and self-discovery.

Her portrayal reflects the psychological truth that emotional healing takes time. Trauma does not disappear immediately. It requires emotional reflection, acceptance, and understanding. Mukesh and Venkatesh's journeys reflect this gradual psychological process of healing. Through their emotional journeys, SudhaMurty highlights the importance of identity, belonging, and acceptance. Her characters



reflect real human emotions, which makes the novel meaningful and relatable. She shows that trauma can create emotional suffering, but it can also lead to emotional growth and self-understanding.

Conclusion

Sudha Murty's *The Mother I Never Knew* presents a powerful and realistic portrayal of psychological trauma and its impact on identity and emotional well-being. Through the emotional journeys of Mukesh and Venkatesh, the novel explores how separation and rejection can create emotional pain, identity confusion, and psychological disturbance. Mukesh's discovery of his adoption creates emotional conflict and identity crisis, while Venkatesh's rejection by his biological father creates emotional suffering and feelings of isolation. Their experiences reflect the psychological effects of trauma caused by separation and rejection.

The novel also highlights the psychological importance of identity and belonging. Identity plays an important role in emotional stability, and when identity is disturbed, it creates emotional insecurity. Mukesh's emotional struggle reflects his search for identity, while Venkatesh's emotional suffering reflects his search for acceptance. Their emotional journeys show how trauma affects emotional well-being and psychological stability. At the same time, the novel also shows that emotional healing is possible. Mukesh achieves emotional peace through understanding and acceptance of his past. Similarly, Venkatesh develops emotional strength and resilience despite rejection. Their journeys reflect the psychological process of emotional healing.

SudhaMurty presents trauma in a realistic and meaningful way. Her characters reflect real emotional experiences, which helps readers understand the psychological impact of trauma. She shows that trauma is not only a source of emotional suffering but also a process that leads to emotional growth and self-understanding. Overall, the novel highlights the importance of identity, acceptance, and belonging in emotional well-being. SudhaMurty successfully shows that trauma can affect individuals deeply, but emotional healing becomes possible through selfdiscovery, understanding, and acceptance.

References

1. Murty, Sudha. *The Mother I Never Knew*. Penguin Random House India, 2014.
2. Bowlby, John. *Attachment and Loss*. Basic Books, 1980.
3. Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
4. Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho analysis*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1966.