

## The Study of Female Characters in Sudha Murthy's *Dollar Bahu*

<sup>1</sup>Afrin Bankalagi  <sup>2</sup>Dr. Deepak H. Shinde 

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D Research Scholar, Karnataka State Akkamahadevi women's University, Vijayapur – 586 105

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor and Research supervisor, Department of English, Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women's University, Vijayapur – 586 105

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57067/ir.v2.i11.444>

*The female characters of Sudha Murthy oeuvre are not only endowed with the name of an elastic resilience, but they are also in fact, a conscious opposition to the cultural hegemony that attempts to restrain them. In my critical analysis, I enlighten on how these women are inverting normative prescriptions in their behavior, actions and heroism. They rebel through the mould of collective expectations by claiming individuality, taste, and fortitude, thus rejecting the domination of the patriarchs, domestic tutelage, injustice in the system and archaic conventions. Their daring act of nonconformity is not a simple vigilante event; it is the act itself, which enables them to create an autonomous story, which puts to pieces any suggestion that they can be nothing more than echoing echoes of others. The paper then questions how the characters of Murthy break their boundaries; how they struggle and triumph in a world dominated by men. By the stories, Murthy challenges the concept of empathy, understanding, and empowerment, and so motivates us to fight in favor of the rights and equality of women. Her writings break the norm and make the reader (at least me) reevaluate the preconceived ideas about the abilities of women in society, thus standing the so-called young, independent women as the sellers of their agency.*

**Keywords:** Morden Woman, Patriarchal, Oppression, Traditional Norms, Violence.

### Introduction:

Murthy is a successful essayist and novelist in English and Kannada. She has authored more than forty-two books in children literature, short stories, novels, technical treatises and travelogues some of which have also been translated into Hindi, Marathi, Telugu and Gujarati. Some of his works include the following: a collection of Gopi stories, *The Big Book of Gopi Stories*, *A Salute to Life*, *Wise and Otherwise*, the book *The Mother I Never Knew*, *The Grandparents Bag of Stories*, and the book *The Magic of The Lost Temple*. The style of Murthy is quite interesting and easy to access; she has a habit of touching upon the topics of love, loss, self-discovery, and social concern. Her stories often incorporate moral lessons and principles and make them attractive to both young and adult readers. Her motivation is based on her

personal observation and experience, which makes it clear that reading can be viewed as a means of increasing an understanding of the world. Murthy continues to hold that authors have to be sensitive to the world around them and take in emotionally rich and experience-driven content to create emotional stories. She also underlines the importance of learning compositional skills and emotional clarity in the design of the narrative. Murthy is one of the most admired literary figures in India with a lot of accolades to his name such as the Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri and the Sahitya Akademi Award among others.

The literary work of Sudha Murthy is concise and clear, and it is just understandable to a large audience. Her work appeals to the Indian context with the delicacy through a wide range of universal concerns such as love, family, societal problems and self-disclosure. Her work is frequently rendered in regional

languages out of the English language, thus expanding it. Her work has been revered all over the world with the readers in different parts of the world connecting with her work. Her method is enlightened by the Indian folklore, traditional stories, and philosophical discussion, as well as her versatile experience as a scientist, educator, and social employee. The contribution of Murthy to the literature in Indian language is enormous, as his work sets the base of scholars in the future who would be working in this field. Writing in English enables her to reach the audience in the whole world, whereby she shares the Indian stories, values, and views.

## Plot

The book by Sudha Murthy named Dollar Bahu provides a heartrending exercise of the nature of relationship and the culture of expectation and the real price of material wealth. It is the story of the middle-aged, kind-hearted Vinuta who gets married to Girish, a bank clerk, and takes the extended family, which is a typical middle-income family, to Bangalore. Vinuta is constantly a target of the scathing comment of her mother-in-law, Gouramma, who contrasts her with the so-called “Dollar Bahu” -a wife whose husband works in America. This jealousy and hatred gradually worsen the peace of mind, health and happiness of Vinuta.

The moment of watershed takes place when Gouramma goes to the United States to meet her Dollar Bahu. She is free to feel the disengagement that is associated with being un-anchored to well-established social norms

and expectations but eventually she realizes that money cannot be happiness and loving relationships. This is the epiphany that makes Gouramma reevaluate her priorities and relationships. The novel raises some very sharp questions about the ideals that are pinned on money, the view of cultural identity, the human price to material success. Murthy shows the complexity of Indian society and specific difficulties that women must deal with the help of a simple story and natural characters.

This new understanding is what helps Gouramma to redefine her priorities and her relationship with Vinuta. It is after reflection that Gouramma realizes the sacrifices and values that Vinuta had to make and her heart changes significantly. The novel ends with Gouramma recognizing the importance of Vinuta in her life; the two women develop a stronger connection and understand each other better, thus stressing the fact that relationships are very important and they are much more than the material possessions.

## FEMALE CHARACTERS

### Gouramma

Discussing the book of Sudha Murthy called Dollar Bahu in a scholastic setting, I consider Gouramma as a central character who is a representative of the complex web of Indian cultural values. Her character is highly entrenched in the norms of the society, which includes the roles and responsibilities that are conventionally assigned to women in a family. Being the matriarch, she has a strong

commitment towards conservation and passing on cultural heritage to the generations to come. This devotion is visible in her work, which is done in a very dutiful and altruistic way. However, this self-destructive devotion may be incompatible with the individual aspirations of the other family members anticipating the dialectic between the established traditions and the novice modern ideas.

In this review, an attempt is made to point out the conflicts that Gouramma experiences as she tries to balance between tradition and a fast-changing modern environment, more specifically, through her relationships with Vinuta, who is a representative of the younger generation with its own ambitions and views. This clash of values remains one of the main themes throughout the story, which shows how people struggle with cultural practices and social conventions. The tension arises when Gouramma, the person who believes in rituals and practices, does her best to maintain the identity of her family in the context of a shifting cultural environment.

Murthy questions the complexity of the relationship between generations, between generations, and formation of identity through Gouramma character. I admire the strength and perseverance of Gouramma, particularly when it comes to dealing with family crisis; her change of heart is a good representation of how old principles can be redefined. Being representative of the ethos of older generation, Gouramma provides a solid background

concerning the discussion about intergenerational changes in the family. Her story is used as literary reminder that people meet and overcome challenges in the bargaining between cultural heritage and individual anticipation.

## Jamuna

The Jamuna in the novel is a complex character due to her manipulation and machination, which indicates a journey to independence. She uses her financial means, education, and professional liberty not only to achieve the attention of society but to create her identity. But this portrayal also reaffirms patriarchal stereotypes of who affluent, educated women are manipulable by nature. It, therefore, throws a sobering view on the expectations of society, especially those that put women out of their conventional roles.

Jamuna is a product of the author who is anxious about female empowerment. Her vamp characteristics sharply differ with the traditional Indian female that the story creates, creating a good versus evil dichotomy. It is this portrayal that highlights the need to have more complex, more layered stories that are real accounts of the experiences of women.

## Vinuta

Vinuta turns out to be a quiet and strong power of the story. Whereas the character of Jamuna provides economic prosperity as a measure of achievement, the role of Vinuta provides value in the feelings and family commitments. The contrast

between the subplot of financial rewards and that of loving devotion depicts the varying values systems in action in the home. The fact that Vinuta is an honest girl who is faithful to the very end reflects her inner strength in difficult situations.

Vinuta is a character from whom Murthy criticizes the obsession with financial acquisition in society. The author uses the concept of foregrounding love and empathy to provide a different version of the story in which worth is evaluated through emotional fulfillment, and not material prosperity. This description makes the readers reflect on their priorities and it is a recognition that enduring satisfaction is found in the form of intangible relationships.

Vinuta is a living icon of traditional Indian values, which is the bright contrast to her sister-in-law. Her self-sacrificial service to her family and determination to maintain the most important values of her character demonstrate the ultimate power of character that the novel praises. By stressing that the world is becoming increasingly commodified, Murthy emphasizes the importance of relationships.

The author also discusses the pressure of the society on the roles of women and men. Despite her talent and competency, Vincenta is still attached to the role of a wife and a daughter-in-law. However, her image is dynamic, caring, and an active agent of positive change in her domestic realm that supports the idea that real wealth is not

considered by the amount of material goods but the love that is being spread.

The experience that Vinuta undergoes in Dollar Bahu is a reflective self-esteem exploration in the face of adversity. She struggles with the inadequacy as compared to her mother-in-law Gouramma who compares her to Jamuna, the wealthy “Dollar Bahu.” However, Vinuta is portrayed to be a person who has a strong will to overcome challenges with pride and ethical beliefs. Her silent obedience highlights her inner strength, making her a convenient and motivational protagonist.

Girish is the husband of Vinuta, it is a kind of emotional anchor that is the defensive barrier against external pressure. Their collaboration is a demonstration of the effectiveness of empathy and mutual respect which provided Vinuta with the room to develop even in the face of societal demands. The combination of them shows that the greatest power might be silent perseverance.

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