



# Panorama Of Indian Values In Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu: Comparison Between Culture And Currency

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## Abstract:

Indian values are considered to be the fundamental moralities of happy and peaceful life. Sudha Murthy is a contemporary writer who tries to portray the need of social reformation and gender equality in her works. Her efforts to raise awareness to capture the complexity of female emotions and behavior is remarkable. *Dollar Bahu* is a popular novel related to Indian family living in Bangalore which represents two distinctive perspectives towards life. The novel shows comparison between two sisters-in-law on the basis of financial status and sound bank balance with piles of dollars. In line with this the themes of the effect of globalization on the socio-familial traditional Indian psyche and the disintegration of domestic relations in India. Sudha Murthy has closely observed the drastic changes in the behaviour of young male and female employees of the Infosys Foundation. Most of the engineers preferred IT sector, as it opened new vistas of job opportunities in India and abroad to earn dollars. Dollars may have transformed the lifestyles of many families, changed them from poverty to wealth, but it has also broken up some families. It creates financial and social distinctions within families and destroys peace of mind. This realistic scenario is depicted through the novel, 'Dollar Bahu.' Eventually, the novel expresses the dominant figure, Gouramma's awareness about Indian values and its implications rather than American values.

**Keywords:** Indian values, Culture, Socio-familial relation, Western values, Dollar Bahu.

## I. Introduction

A Sanskrit phrase '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'-which means, the entire world is a family projects the actual nature of Indian values. That in reality seems to be the guidelines followed by an individual in the world. India has always been a land of rich cultures, values and heritage. India has occupied remarkable place in the world due to his ethical, cultural, and humanitarian values which are the core of the hearts of people. Indian values can be seen through the enactment of law, religious scriptures and the cultures. Though modern world is defined by technology and machines, yet the Indian values are close to the hearts of the Indians. Mark Twain acknowledged his views about India- 'India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandfather of tradition. Our most valuable and instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only'. Though there is diversity in India in terms of religions, caste, faith, groups and geographical features, yet there is unity in diversity due to the Indian values only.<sup>2</sup>

Sudha Murthy is a humanitarian literary figure. She is well known writer and a philanthropist in recent year, who contributed much to the arena of Indian literature. She is a prolific writer with more than two hundred books to her credit.<sup>3</sup> *Dollar Bahu* was originally written in the Kannad language with the title "Dollar Sose" and was published by East West Books Pvt. Ltd., in the year 2005. *Dollar Bahu* is a very popular novel in which comparison between Indian culture, currency and western modern values are the major issues. Such problems are faced by many Indians in the modern culture due to some reasons. The financial

status for developing country like India is more important for the nation's building. But it seems to be very low in comparison to other developed countries. There are enormous problems as education, unemployment, poverty etc. It affects the psychological sense of some Indian people. It is a natural tendency that they want to live a modern comfortable life like western people.

Modern technology and scientific inventions bring different countries very close to each other. It is very easy to go any country and know the values, customs and traditions. Most of the people migrate abroad for fulfilling their dreams of career making. There is high possibility of cross-cultural conflict leading to sense of loss and being misfit in new foreign environment. This type of migration affected Indian people also. Sudha Murty observed numerous cases which are responsible for the changing mindsets of some Indians.

Sudha Murty sketched very carefully the blend of the Indian and foreign values in the current scenario of Indian society through the representation of socio-familial characters in Dollar Bahu. She attempted the several reasons to change attitude of Indians who are extremely attracted towards foreign country values rather than Indian values through the persona of Gouramma, Chandra Shekhar, Jamuna and Surabhi. In the end author has analysed the importance of Indian values through the characters of Shamanna, Girish, Vinuta, and self-realization of Gouramma also.

The novel is about a small Indian middle-class family of teacher, Shamanna and Gouramma and their three children-Chandra Shekhar (Chandru), Girish, and Surabhi. They lived in two cities of India, Bangalore, Dharwad, and partly in an America (Florida). Shamanna and Gouramma has different characteristics in their ideological thoughts. Shamanna always teach real ideology to own children and his students also. Her wife was somewhat greedy and always tried for a rich lifestyle like other women those having rich friend circle. She always dreamt of diamond, gold and silver jewelry, cars, a big house, servants (DB19). Their first son Chandru posting for deputation in America and started to earn the 'magical dollars,' then reformed the scenario of house. The second son followed his father's ideology and lived in his home-town and remain happy. After the weddings of both the children, there was a continuous comparison between the sons as well as the daughters-in-law, and the reason behind this scenario was earning of the dollar and rupees.

Her husband, Shamanna is a Sanskrit teacher. He is very simple and responsible man. Gouramma was a clever woman who knew how to run the family. She worked hard to keep the domestic expenses within the budget, but she was extremely ambitious. She is not happy and content in what she has. She longs to have money and the materialistic luxuries like rich people. She wants her children to have good education so that they can fulfil her desires. When she comes to know that her husband could not fulfil her aspirations, then she pins her hopes on her children. Her elder son, Chandra Shekhar is follower of mother. He is very good at engineering study and also ambitious like mother. The second son, Girish is a commerce graduate and worked as a clerk in nationalize bank. He follows the human values and nature of his father. Surabhi, her daughter is learning in degree college but selfish and narrow minded like mother.

Gouramma always dreamt of living as an upper-class life as that of her richest friends who had travelled abroad to form an exclusive circle. Most of their children were settled abroad, so their conversation like I was in New York the last time, I brought a coral set. Other say I brought jade from San Fransico. Third say, In Florida best quality cardamom and Spanish saffron that I use. Ultimately her dream comes true to some extent through Chandru who gets job in America and earn lot of money so that she could join that circle and tell them, 'See I am equal to you' (DB19). Her happiness remains no limit. 'Gouramma was in India only in body at such times; her spirit would be flying across the length and breadth of America. She would dream of the Dollar, that magic green currency, which could change her house and fulfil her dreamt. It was the Dollar, not Indian rupees, which could elevate her into the elite circle at social gatherings and marriage halls. The Dollar was like the Goddess Lakshmi, with a magic wand' (DB 25).

Gouramma started the pre-marriage talks of Girish with Vinuta 'After all, this is the first wedding in our family and we have to invite all our relatives and friends. We do not want any dowry, but everybody will be keen to know what saris and jewelry Vinuta will wear. Our elder son is in America and we have to maintain our status, isn't it? If the wedding is simple, like that of ten other people, we will be ridiculed. The wedding should be grand (DB 36). The marriage of Girish with Vinuta is to be held in simple way without any dowry and expensive gifts. Gouramma face reflected very angry and humiliating to Vinuta all the time. She hatred for long time due to killing her ambition. Finally, Chandru got green card of America after six years and thought about the marriage within a month. Gouramma and Shamanna had shortlisted four girls for Chandru to choose from thirty potential bride. One shrewd father, Krishnappa, was a property developer. He

had a daughter and a son. He owned a palatial house and three cars. The greedy Gouramma was lured, then there would be no problem in finalizing the match.

Krishnappa invited to Chandra Shekhar family on his farmhouse. Krishnappa and his wife Parvati wear gold and diamond jewelry, impress to Gouramma. Jamuna, was an ordinary graduate and dusky complexion, but in an expensive sari, ornamented with jewels, she looked very appealing to Gouramma. Jamuna was behaved friendly with Surabhi and that made Gouramma very comfortable. When they were leaving, Parvati handed over baskets of vegetables and fruits, saying, 'The match is not in our hands. But let us at least continue with the cordial relationship.' Gouramma left with tears in her eyes. On the way home, Gouramma silently prayed that her son would choose Jamuna as his bride' (DB 48). Her aim of life is to acquire pleasure from money and the materialistic assets. Jamuna, who belongs to a rich family, brings huge dowry and expensive gifts in marriage. Gouramma makes the difference between Vinuta and Jamuna and calls Jamuna as Dollar Bahu and Vinuta as Indian rupees.

Gouramma's dream to go to America is fulfilled by her son. She went to America and lived with Chandru and Jamuna for a year. She observed gender equality in a twisted form. Not only the roles in the household are not gender specific, but also the dressing and lifestyle of women are an eye-opener for Gouramma. She expected that in USA, Jamuna would welcome her by touching her feet, neatly dressed in a sari, wearing gold and diamond jewelry. She had carefully composed and rehearsed her blessing. Jamuna looked so bare. She looked so strange with her short hair, a loose gown, and neither a bindi nor her *mangalsutra*! The only improvement was that her complexion had brightened (DB 82). She had noticed that, unlike Girish, Chandru had to help in the household work, like washing the dishes, ironing the clothes etc. Indian culture in which the male members of the family did not work in the kitchen (DB103). In USA, she had the different experiences like before delivery, naming baby girls as Manasi, man was allowed in delivery room and small baby sleep alone at night, nobody live in joint family, comparison between husband-and-wife earning, divorce and pair to any other without knowing any religion or caste etc. She visited different places in America and observed culture and lifestyle. She felt that she was seeing the world from a new perspective. She compares the value of Indian culture with American culture and understands the importance of Indian values which are actually the source of socio- familial happiness.

Gouramma's character critically knew that she always compares the Indian and American currency. She has some friends whose relatives were living in America and discuss about Dollar and lifestyle. She thinks to live in America with her son for long time, but practically it is too much difficult. At last, she understands own mistake of attraction towards dollar and American cultures. 'America was no more a paradise for her. She realized that the grass is always greener on the other side' (DB 135). Money cannot buy the human relationship and the true values of life. 'Money comes with an expectation and spoils the delicate equilibrium of social work'.<sup>4</sup> Self-realization is the turning point of the novel. Gouramma said sadly, 'America has opened my eyes and I shall never make that mistake again' (DB 141). In India everything was a hassle. It was, no doubt, a five-thousand-year-old civilization where great kings like Ashoka and Harshavardana had ruled. The land that had been praised by poets and writers in the days of yore had now become home to scarcity and superstition. (DB 23). Sudha Murty emphasizes on the Gouramma as a representative of the Indian socio-familial scenario in which many people have conflict and suffers with same condition.

Indian values and principles show how they are supreme over everything else in this world including money. She shows to her reader how socialism still prevails over capitalism at least for Indians. Many people become blindfolded on seeing great money and its complementary affluence being brought into their lives, but then realize that it's silent poison. Hence, Sudha Murty rightly points out at the privilege of being an Indian and tells her readers to never lose 'Indianness' and its values no matter what country or what position you are standing at. She tries to focus that Indian core moral value mixed with changing modern adaptation is helping shape the world in to a better place. Dollar Bahu is symbolically a literary vista of Indian values which strikes a perfect balance between tradition and modernity. She analysed the importance of Indian values which are in actual sense the lighthouse of humanity. Her respect of Indian values is mirrored through the sketch of Shamanna, Girish and Vinuta in Dollar Bahu.

Shamanna, the important character in the novel, is a Sanskrit teacher. He was calm, sensible and contented man. He had reputation as good teacher and good human being. He is senior and head of family, he understands the value of Indian cultures, customs, history, and land. He tries to inculcate such values amongst his children and wife. He is a simple, good nature man who had a modest salary but does not have any attraction of money and rich life. He lives in small house Jaynagar, Bangalore. His priorities were different

from his wife. He believes in virtues that give him true happiness. He knows that his wife is greedy, selfish and practical, yet he never arguments her. 'If the women of the house are unhappy, a family can never live in peace' (DB 138). He tries to make her understand the significance of Indian values which are rich and appreciated by other countries in the world. But she does not want to understand his ideology. He satisfies through only Girish follows his father's traditions of life. His elder son, Chandru and daughter, Surabhi did not have any respect of the Indian values. Shamanna was anxious in the sense of changing thoughts of Gouramma, Chandru, and Surabhi about foreign values and their great eager to attempt those following the wrong ways of life. He understands that the attraction of money has injured the peaceful state of minds of numerous people in the community. When Chandru settled in America, Shamanna never shown any interest to visit USA like Gouramma. He wanted to be happy himself with the sacred environment of human relationship in his own country. After the marriage of Girish and Vinuta, whenever Gauramma oppressed Vinuta, Shamanna was very sorrowful and appreciated Vinuta at every situation as a daughter. At every occasion he was ready to take care of her in difficult times and motivates her to attempt further success in life.

Shamanna is a responsible person he does his sincere duties towards own family, school and society also. He was very anxious about his wife as she deceived because of attraction of lot of money and richest lifestyle. Gouramma always taunts to Vinuta as poor and parentless girl but never show any sympathy for her. His apprehensions for her, he spoken with his true love for the Indian values and the human relationship- 'This Dollar may have transformed the lifestyles of some families, taken them from poverty to wealth, but it has also broken up some families. It has created financial and social distinctions within families and destroyed 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 burnt the peace and harmony in our family. Gouri is not a bad human being, but she is misguided. I am sure she will realize that the enchanted forest is a mirage, but I am afraid it might be too late by then'. (DB139).

When Gouramma return from America, Shamanna feels very happy. He thought that his wife would appreciate the Indian values one day. Shamanna symbolize the significant role in the novel who holds the Indian values and make the family members to learn about it. His wife Gouri now changed and said sadly. 'America has opened my eyes and I shall never make that mistake again' (DB 141). I promise, I will not be talking about America, its wealth and Dollar Bahu, Jamuna. At that moment Dollar did not hold any charm, any power or any magic. The invincible Dollar had fallen .....(142).

Shamanna, Girish and Vinuta represent Indian values in virtue of their actions and thoughts. Girish, a free and amiable man, is ready to help the needy people like his father. By profession he is a clerk in bank and lives a happy and contented life. He neither dreamt of more money nor crave for luxuries in the same way as his elder brother and mother. He was very proud of his father's ways of life. He has great love and adherence for Indian values that he cherishes through his helpful nature. Girish is scolded by his practical mother for his humanitarian perspectives. But he ignores her. His deep affection and curiosity about Indian culture should be appreciated when he answered his mother- 'Amma, I don't agree with you. What Appa says is right. As a human being it is our duty to help everyone' (DB 20). He is very happy and contented throughout the novel. He is a man of friendly gritting and always supportive to his wife Vinuta.

Vinuta is a beautiful, talented and good-natured girl. She is simple and responsible personality. She is not only well educated but fond of Hindustani music with golden voice and deep dedication. She had won almost every prize in every event in the Karnataka college, Dharwad. She is parentless, her father died in early age. She has grown by her uncle Bheemanna, in Dharwad. Bheemanna Desai was kind hearted man with a loud voice and a jolly manner. He had four Children. He was very kind person and wanted to complete graduation of Vinuta. His vision for Vinu, is that she can stand on own feet only on the basis of education. Vinuta is the *koel* in Desai's house. Every night, after dinner, Bheemanna would sit on the bamboo cot underneath the mango tree and relax for some time. That was the time when he also talked to Vinuta. 'Vinu, come here. You have done enough work for the day. Let the others also do something. What did you learn in the college today? Come on. Sing me a nice song now' (DB 12). After the death of her uncle, she shifts to Bangalore and join as a teacher in government school, Jaynagar, Bangalore. Both Gauramma and Surbhi liked Vinuta in their first meeting. She looked very pleasant, and the kind who would be willing to adjust (DB 32). She married with good natured person Girish. So, she hopes for the parental love from his family. Though she is not treated well by mother-in-law, but no doubt, supported and blessed by father-in-law, Shamanna. Sometimes, she felt a little sad that Girish did not have an ear for music, like Shamanna did. But he certainly did not objections to her singing. Shamanna would often say, 'Vinu, you have a good voice. You should pursue music as an alternative career' (DB 40). She never complains against her mother-in-law but,

she is frustrated and hate the word 'Dollar'. Her friend Shashikala who is temporary teacher in the same school. Her marriage also cancelled due to dollar culture. She loves and respects her husband who never hurts her. So, she remains happy due to the good nature of her husband and father- in-law. She upset when Gouramma taunt her for simple marriage gifts, dowry and teacher's salary in rupees.

In this novel, the outstanding nature of Vinuta shows that she does not affect by the richness of sister- in-law Jamuna. Vinuta's culture, education and honesty for Indian value is reflected in her answer to her aunty. When her aunt asks her about the choice of the groom whether Vinuta wants an engineer or class 1 officer, she simply answers- 'No. I don't have any such demands. Nor am I bothered about his family's riches. If necessary, I will continue to work. All I ask for is to be contented'. That was what Vinuta really felt and what she honestly believed (DB 31). At last, in the novel 'Dollar Bahu' it is clearly reflected that Vinuta's good nature and her devotion towards family are extremely appreciated by mother-in-law, Gouramma after her conversion from an ambitious and materialistic woman to a reliable and perfect ideal Indian bahu.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, the novel 'Dollar Bahu' is a literary panorama of Indian values. Sudha Murty highlights this truth through this novel in which Gouramma and Jamuna become the slaves of money and material things. But in the same society, there are some noble people like Vinuta, Girish and Shamanna who advocate moral values and human relations rather than money. In highly competitive and career driven world, the real life of modern Indians faces many socio-familial problems. This technological age reflects the drastic picture of global society. It proves the changing perceptions of Indian people due to the attraction of the westernization. Moral principles which are the indispensable phenomenon of human life, must be adored humanity and individual personality to remain alive forever. Our most valuable and instructive material is the history of human culture like treasury. Money or Dollar has played its insidious, evil part in many middle-class societies. Author threw a light upon the domination and implication of Indian ethics through the different character-sketches in Dollar Bahu. It appeals to each and every Indian citizen not only to love, respect but cherish the Indian culture and traditions.

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