

The Reflection of Disparity and Conflict Amongst Women Characters in Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu

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Abstract:

Indian writing in English has reached global acclaim in the hands of various new writers of this contemporary era. Women writers have contributed significantly in the growth and development of Indian literature in English by depicting female protagonist as a warriors. Sudha Murthy is one of the important and favourite Indian women writers during the modern time. She has penned down remarkable literary works which reflects Indian culture, heritage and society realistically. She is also an epitome of voice of women, their sufferings and identity in the society. The world famous novel *Dollar Bahu* beautifully deals with the disparity and complexity between Indian and American as well as values. It also highlights on desires of Gaurma for the American Dollars, culture and glamour. She is extremely fascinated towards American materialism.

This research paper primarily investigates nature of Indian mentality and attraction for Dollars as a magnetic foreign currency. Therefore, the women characters are forgetting the importance of real feelings, relationships and morality. It also unfolds the struggle and conflict for self-realization and identity by the protagonist. *Dollar Bahu* convincingly narrates the story of the middle class family from Bangalore. Gaurma is the prominent female character represented in the novel. Vinuta is the younger daughter - in- law. She is from poor family so treated as a Laxmi and maid servant. Jamuna is the elder daughter- in - law from rich family and treated as Mahalaxmi.

Keywords:

Disparity, Conflicts, Self- Realization and Identity, Indian and American Culture, Materialism.

Introduction about Sudha Murty:

Indian writing in English has successfully completed a long journey of representing problems present in the society. Indian English Literature has variety of writings. Before Independence, the number of Indian English writer is less writers but in modern era many writers started to write in English and many people started reading English literature. Day by day Indian literature is flourishing in English language in India. Sudha Murty is one of the renowned Indian writers in 21st century. She is one of the prolific writers of English in India. She is an extremely accomplished business woman, teacher, social worker and a well-known author to reckon with. She is a philanthropist and chairperson of Infosys Foundation.

A renowned journalist, T.J.S George motivated and inspires her to write in English. Even he gave her the title of her first book 'Wise and Otherwise' and her journey started from hesitant writer to widely read author. She has written 17 books, and it consists of novels, novella, short stories, travelogues, fictional and non-fictional writings. In her books, she contributed real experience, her social work, Indian tradition and values, human behaviour. The speciality and uniqueness of her writing is use of simple language. She uses real experience and made her writings realistic. Sudha Murty is from Karnataka. She is an Engineering student. She is recipient of prestigious Padmashri award for her contribution in literature and social work.

Dollar Bahu this being published by penguin. The original Book is '*Dollar Sose*' written in Kannada and it has been translated into many Indian languages. This book also has been prescribed as a textbook for undergraduate students in Karnataka Universities. She shows various women issues and highlighted their miserable plight. She drew the reader's attention towards the Indian middle class society it's women and American society. The novel showcases how Indian women themselves are the worst enemies of each other. This novel throws light on human behaviour and Indian tradition.

Predicament of Vinuta as a Woman.

Vinuta is the first female character we are introduced in the novel by Sudha Murty as: "She was the fair with bold beautiful black eyes, a straight sharp nose and long click hair braided into plate. She seemed slightly flustered to find someone Porcupine her seat." (*Dollar Bahu*: 4)

Initially, we think that she may be very independent bold girl as she countered with Chandru in train as: “Could you please get up this is my birth.” (Dollar Bahu: 5) But we find very opposite personality of Vinuta in novel. At home, she has to share most of the house work. In the morning, she had stepped out of house with broom and a bucket to clean the garden to collect the milk and to do the day's chores. Chandru describes the works Vinuta has to do as: “Even from his room on the terrace, he could hear someone or other calling out for her.” (Dollar Bahu: 11) Generally, women are oppressed by male dominated society but in present novel in Vinuta's case it is find that she is dominated by fellow female like Seetakka. Her behaviour towards Vinuta proves that.

They all are leaving in the house belongs to Vinuta but she is treated badly as a servant in her own house. She is fond of singing, but she can't even sing the song. The elder women always dominating her as: “Do you have to keep singing all the time? Do some worthwhile work at least sometime. If you sit in the garden whole day who will do the housework? God knows when your madness for music will go away.” (Dollar Bahu: 11) Vinuta is pictured as a traditional girl. Though she is scolded by elder women and do heavy housework, she lives happily. She is the best example for adjustment each and every time. She never becomes upset though she can't get anything of her choice and it is revealed as: “Oh that's all right. This is also very pretty. I like this blue colour.”(Dollar Bahu: 14) After the unexpected death of Bheemanna, Vinuta has to leave Dharwad and shift to Bangalore to her distant aunt Indira.

Though the girl is educated, she has to give dowry to get marry. So her aunt suggests her to sell her Dharwad's house for her marriage. That time Vinuta miserably implored. “Please, let us not sell us not sell the house that is the last memory of my parents.” (Dollar Bahu: 29) Accidentally she meets Girish Shamanna's son. To her luck Girish is very kind and good nature man. He takes care of her and bothers her all opinion. He firmly stands with her for not selling her Dharwad's house.

After marriage Vinuta takes all responsibilities, she binds all the family together. She wakes up early in the morning and helps her mother-in-law in her work before going to school. Though she looks happy, she is suppressing her feelings here too. After marriage, Vinuta and Girish have never gone out anywhere except to a temple or market. Vinuta is born with beauty as well as brain. She is superior to Girish in everything. But, due to poor economic condition she has to marry with Girish. But, she never feels or talks a word about it to Girish or her

family. Vinuta is totally unselfish and willing to adjust to any situation and it has been shown as: “Amma you go to airport. Tell me what Chandru likes, I will get everything ready.” (Dollar Bahu: 39)

But in return she gets nothing from her family for her true hard work and honesty. She is humiliated and treated as a servant all the time. The misery starts in Vinuta's life after the incident when she caught Surbhi with her boyfriend in theatre. “Gaurma could not sleep that night. First she was unhappy that her daughter betrayed her and second Vinuta had found it out.” (Dollar Bahu: 58)

After that incident Gaurma and Surabhi ill-treated Vinuta as: “Vinuta noticed that after the incident Gaurma and Surabhi were very aloof and offhand with her.” (Dollar Bahu: 59)

She never says anything against them and thinks positively about Surabhi because of her presence of mind Surabhi 's life save in the proposal of Shekhar. Gaurma aggressively and callously remarks as: “You are one who incites Girish in this way. You are trying to keep him under your thumb.” (Dollar Bahu: 64)

Surabhi also not leave the chance to pour out her anger as: “You are jealous of me. Ever since you are coming I have noticed that you create fight between Amma and Girish. You are selfish to the core stop you can fool everybody with your innocent smile but you cannot full me.” (Dollar Bahu: 64, 65)

Vinuta is continuously crying on account by humiliated by Gaurma and Surbhi. So, she says that she will not interfere in any decision. She comes to know her place and she apologizes. This was the first major conflict in their house and Dollar had played its insidious evil part. From that incident, we know Vinuta become silent onlooker.

Discriminating treatment by Gaurma as a protagonist.

Gaurma is a main female protagonist in the novel. Mother of Chandru, Girish and Surabhi and dominant mother in law of Vinuta and Jamuna. She always makes difference between Jamuna and Vinuta. Vinuta is always compared with Dollar Bahu. Vinuta suffers the depression because she is very often surprised raised with negativity as: “Should a marriage be arranged on the basis of love and understanding or on the love for Dollar?” (Dollar Bahu: 59)

Vinuta has no respect in her house. Jamuna has more importance in her family even in the Surbhi's marriage Gaurma neglected towards Vinuta purposefully. While fixing the date of marriage, she is ignored as: "No that won't be right. How can we offered to upset Jamuna? We have to fix a date convenient to her." (Dollar Bahu: 68). Gaurma is praising Jamuna all the time who even not live a single day with her or takes any responsibility. Vinuta is fed up with all these continuous comparison between them. Therefore Vinuta confesses to her brother-in-law as: "To be honest with you are not at all happy either. All the time there is a comparison between Jamuna and me." (Dollar Bahu: 72).

Though she is ill-treated, she takes care of all family members and to perform her chores. When Gaurma is not feeling well, she admitted her in hospital does all the test and fulfill her responsibility as a daughter-in-law. In hospital, she stays with her and takes care of her. Even she cancelled her trip to Karwar. She said to her husband as: "Amma is alone and scared. She requires company. I shall stop back." (Dollar Bahu:74)

They never acknowledged Vinuta. Neither her daughter nor her Dollar Bahu come to meet her. When Gaurma comes to know that Jamuna is pregnant she prays in various temples for safe delivery of a Dollar Bahu. Poor Vinuta is silently observing all that which reminds her past how she is treated when she was pregnant no gifts and no sweets for her. Gaurma told Vinuta with evil intention as: "If you want to buy anything or eat anything you can go and eat outside with Girish." (Dollar Bahu 77)

Gaurma even makes difference between the grandsons too. She sends 100 rupees on the naming ceremony of Harsha. Vinuta felt it as unfair. She is sick of the word Dollar and prayed to God as: "Let a day come when 45 are equal to the one rupee. If that didn't happen what would this Dollar Bahu do?" (Dollar Bahu: 137)

While Surbhi's marriage, taking major decisions Gaurma always underestimates Vinuta and give preference to Jamuna. In spite of this, Vinuta's dutiful caring Gaurma never acknowledges Vinuta. Even in Surbhi's marriage more importance is given to Jamuna because she and Chandru paid two lacs whereas Girish and Vinuta are totally neglected because they have contributed only one lakh.

Gaurma's relationship with her daughter Surbhi.

Gaurma is dominating mother in law but she is very caring mother for Surbhi. She always takes care of her daughter and never shoulders any household responsibilities to her. Surbhi and Vinuta are of same age still Gaurma treats them differently. She is searching a bridegroom who is settle down in US so that her daughter should lead luxurious and stylish life. She loves her daughter. Though she knows that Surbhi deceives her, she neglected it. After her marriage when Gaurma is operated Surbhi is not coming to meet her loving mother.

Reflection of conflict between Indian and American Culture .

Dollar Bahu beautifully shows the conflict between Indian and American culture. It also deals with the difference between religion and education communication etc. In India, we can talk very friendly with everybody but in America one should not have to ask more questions about their personal information. Chandru always reminds his mother whenever he takes her to meet someone as: “Amma, do not ask her anything personal like marriage or children.” (Dollar Bahu : 111)

Gaurma gets very worried about her granddaughter Mansi when she hears about the daughter of Savitri who was brought up in US and its culture. She felts strange growing away and with great concern remarks as: “What if after twenty years Manasi behaved in the way to her came causing great anguish to her Son.” (Dollar Bahu: 98)

Gaurma’s passion for American dollar

Gaurma counts everything in money. Her concepts of happiness are only related to money. Even she compares her two daughter-in-law not on the basis their potential but on the basis of money. Vinuta is very simple, obedient and virtuous compared to Jamuna still Gaurma praised blind value of Jamuna. Chandru sends her a check for 300 Dollar to cover the expenses to praise Vinuta hospitality and caring done for her mother. But Gaurma neglects the comments “For Gaurma their comments were like water off a duck's back. Check meant more it was in fact everything.” (Dollar Bahu: 75)

Self- realization of Gaurma:

The first shock of self-realization is on the airport when Jamuna would not come to greet Gaurma but mentally she parches her. When she sees Jamuna in loose gown, no Bindi or Mangal sutra gives her second shock disappoints Gaurma “She had expected that Jamuna would come welcome her by touching her feet, neatly dressed in a sari with gold and diamond

Jewellery.” (Dollar Bahu: 83) During her stay many times Gaurma realized Jamuna's rudeness bossing nature on Chandru. In India vinegar responsibilities of household works but here she has to do all work she has to cook and do all chores. Gaurma feels hurt and humiliated when she asks Chandru not to work in kitchen. Jamuna intervened her immediately by: “Don't pamper him. Everybody has to share in the housework here.”(103)

While staying in New York, Gaurma's perception of America has changed a lot a lot. She was missing country and family. MI hunting around for saving kid government finds a photo album and once again she is shocked and realises that Jamuna has clearly get rid of many of our old sarees and has received so much appreciation and gratitude for that this incident deeply hurts Gaurma. The conversation between Jamuna and Girija is a real eye opener for Gaurma. “Nothing so surprising. My mother-in-law is greedy and stupid full stop my sister in law Surbhi does not have any brain full stop it is easy to manage search women.” (Dollar Bahu: 128) Things over the night and answer become clear. It is the Dollar. Adalat Blinds are making her enable see the reality. When the flight landed is Bangalore when she realizes “The grass was always Greener on the other side.” (Dollar Bahu: 136)

Conclusion:

This novel convincingly justifies the proverb "All that glitters is not gold." Gaurma is fascinated with America, its luxurious life culture and Dollar etc. She is very crazy for that. But when she goes to stay there, she realizes the reality also the self-identity. Though Gaurma is crazy for Dollar, traditionalism is within her personality. In this way, an attempt has been made to investigate depiction of disparity and conflict amongst women characters in Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu.

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