

**A Status of Women in Sudha Murty's Novel *Dollar Bahu***

Dr. Sandeep Kumar  
Assistant Professor of English  
GCW Gohana (Sonapat)

**Abstract** Sudha Murty's novel *Dollar Bahu* explores the themes of materialism, family dynamics, and gender roles, particularly focusing on the status of women in Indian society. The novel contrasts the lives of two daughters-in-law, Jamuna and Vinuta, highlighting the impact of wealth, societal expectations, and family values on their treatment and standing within the household. This paper examines the representation of women in *Dollar Bahu*, analyzing their struggles, the influence of patriarchal norms, and the ultimate realization of moral and emotional wealth over material prosperity. Through a critical lens, the study sheds light on the portrayal of traditional versus modern women and their evolving roles in Indian literature.

Key Words-Gender, Patriarchal, Family, Women etc.

**Introduction** Sudha Murty, an acclaimed Indian writer, has consistently highlighted social issues, especially those concerning women, through her literary works. *Dollar Bahu* is a compelling novel that presents a stark contrast between traditional Indian values and the materialistic aspirations driven by Western influences. The narrative unfolds through the experiences of Vinuta, the underappreciated daughter-in-law, and Jamuna, the wealthier but less emotionally connected 'dollar bahu.' The novel raises pertinent questions about the status of women within the family structure and society at large.

The novel *Dollar Bahu* is originally written in Kannada. The story is about a middle class family living in Bangalore. The novel circles around two daughters- in-law of a family- Vinuta and Jamuna. Vinuta is the wife of Girish, the bank clerk, stays in India and Jamuna, the wife of Chandru, stays in the US. After Vinuta's marriage, she takes care of the family and adjusts with her mother-in-law, father-in-law and husband. But Jamuna has no regard for her in-laws. In spite of this, she is always more loved and respected by the family for her money and lives in US. Gouramma comes to stay in US with her son and gets the original behaviour and true colour of her 'Dollar Bahu' Jamuna and the fact behind the presents she has gifted all the years.

She finds that dollars cannot inculcate true love and feelings of respect for the family members. Constant comparison between Vinuta and Jamuna made Vinuta mentally disturbed

and unhealthy. On the advice of a father-in-law Shamanna, she moves to a village with her son and husband to live a peaceful life. The novel ends with the Gouramma's impulse to meet Vinuta and her grandchild.

**Women's Status in *Dollar Bahu*** The novel vividly portrays the different roles women play within a patriarchal system and how their worth is often measured in economic terms. Vinuta, despite her sincerity, hard work, and emotional dedication, faces neglect and discrimination from her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, Gouramma. On the other hand, Jamuna, who resides in the United States and enjoys financial prosperity, is revered despite her lack of deep familial bonds.

This contrast highlights a common social reality where women's value is often determined by their financial contributions rather than their personal qualities. Through Vinuta's character, the novel sheds light on the plight of countless women who, despite their unwavering support to their families, are overshadowed by societal preferences for wealth and status.

*Dollar Bahu* showcase the struggles of urban middle class women to find their own identities. "The Indian woman passive or aggressive, traditional or modern is in a state of bewilderment and emotional vulnerability, and there is a sense of fear and isolation in her. Even though, she is swayed by the words of equality and liberation" (Parvathi and Pushpalatha 539).

In her family, Jamuna is more valuable than Surbhi, even after their marriage. Gaurma purposely overlooked Vinuta. When determining the wedding date, 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)

**Patriarchal Influence and Social Expectations** *Dollar Bahu* also reflects on the deep-seated patriarchal norms that dictate women's lives. Gouramma's preference for Jamuna is not merely a reflection of materialism but also an extension of the societal tendency to equate prosperity with success and happiness. However, Murty gradually dismantles this illusion, revealing the emotional void and superficial relationships that wealth cannot bridge.

The transformation of Gouramma, who ultimately realizes Vinuta's worth, underscores the novel's central message: emotional wealth and genuine relationships hold more significance than financial affluence. This realization serves as a critique of the existing social order, urging a reevaluation of the way women are perceived and treated.

**Women in Indian Literature and *Dollar Bahu*** Indian literature has long been a medium to voice the concerns and struggles of women. From the works of writers like Rabindranath

Tagore and Mahasweta Devi to contemporary authors like Sudha Murty, literature has depicted the evolving status of women in society. *Dollar Bahu* contributes to this discourse by presenting a nuanced view of women navigating societal expectations, familial obligations, and personal aspirations.

Murty's storytelling brings forth the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, emphasizing that true progress lies in recognizing the intrinsic worth of individuals beyond material success. The novel calls for a balanced approach where financial independence is valued, but not at the cost of emotional well-being and ethical integrity.

Chatterjee and Rahman Khan explore Sudha Murty's notable contributions as a children's writer "Murty addresses her hopes, dreams, strengths, weaknesses, and personal growth. She emphasises the importance of human values, drawing out the complexities and nuances of her characters' lives and allowing readers to form deep emotional connections with them" (Chatterjee and Khan 211).

**Conclusion** Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu* serves as a poignant critique of the materialistic mindset that often overshadows human values. Through the contrasting lives of Vinuta and Jamuna, the novel underscores the struggles women face in a society that frequently prioritizes wealth over character. Ultimately, the novel advocates for a more equitable recognition of women's contributions, reinforcing the idea that respect and appreciation should be based on intrinsic virtues rather than financial status. The novel remains relevant in contemporary discussions on gender roles and the evolving status of women in both Indian and global contexts.

#### References-

- Murty, Sudha. *Dollar Bahu*. Penguin Books, 2007.
- Parvathi, S. and S. K. Pushpalatha. "Quest for Self" In the Select Novels of Sudha Murty." *International Journal of English Language, Literature And Translation Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2016, pp. 536–540.
- Chatterjee, Arnab, and Shakibur Rahman Khan. "Sudha Murty: A Pioneering Writer in Children's Literature." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2023, pp. 210–214.