

Dollar Bahu : A Study in Perspective of Indian Values

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Abstract

Indians are known for their immigration across the world with an aim to achieve name and fame. Indians have a specific attachment for the USA, and 21st century is the witness of Indians' immigration to the USA. The world has created a passion for following Indian traditions and cultures. But the question arises on preserving and valuing the culture by Indians.

This research paper focuses on declining human values in the modern sophisticated era. Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu makes readers to realize the importance of Indian social and moral values despite the domination of money. Sudha Murthy's brilliance in interweaving the characters makes readers come out of money-madness and retain their permanent human relations.

Key Words

Immigration, cultures, human values, domination of money, human relations.

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Introduction

Globalization is highly discussed and debated word across the world. Technology has speeded its wings in most of the areas of development. It has changed Indian society by proving itself as the most influential phenomena in Indian society. Indians scored as the second largest immigrates to the United States of America during the last two decades with a view to assuring better life standard and earning more Dollars. Most of the Indian families consider Dollar as an incarnation of Devi Laxmi,(Goddesses of Wealth) with a magic wand. But unfortunately, the most by-product of globalization is obtained as increased individualism amongst the Indian families. It may be treated as a struggle between Dollar and Indian family culture. In this contest, *Dollar Bahu* is a remarkable literary work through which SudhaMurthy tried to wake up Indian society which is in the spell of a dollar. The story of *Dollar Bahu* moves from Karnataka to the USA it is about immigrated family but it holds to be any part of India and a part of any Indian middle-class family. The Indian values and Dollars clash with each other in the story. Research paper intends to analyze Indian social values in the context of *Dollar Bahu*.

Background of the study

The Indians are known for their hard work and business skills across the world. Every Indian middle-class family expects from their children that their growth should result in financial independence and good social status. Indian families have also a great dream to see their children immigrated to the USA for a better life either through better education or better business. Along with the achievement of this goal, the immigrant supposed to remember his/her motherland, mother -tongue as well as own mother. The story of *Dollar Bahu* revolves around these basic phenomena. The features of Indian social values are changed with changing time. The major features of urban Indian society like social heterogeneity, secondary relations, anonymity, Individualism, social reference, unstable family, special segregation, lack of community feeling, lack of unity in family, moral laxity, unbalanced personality, high incidence of crime, social disorganization, peculiarities of marital life, dynamic life and artificial life are reshaped in our society. *Dollar Bahu* tells about changing social values and its impacts on individuals.

Dollar Bahu shows the sensitive relations in families. Life starts with a family and also ends in a family. The journey connects human and financial relations. It is unfortunate that in the present days' relations are more financial than human. *Dollar Bahu* is in one-way a satire on ignorant people who are fascinated by the western culture and dollars. The novel is essentially about middle-class Indians' aspirations to grow rich by earning money from the USA.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives are formulated on the basis of reviewed previous work done by researchers and academicians with reference to *Dollar Bahu*.

- To study the Indian social values reflected in *Dollar Bahu*
- To study the moral values reflected in *Dollar Bahu*.
- To study individual's attitudes towards the self and society.

Review of Literature

Ashokkumar (2014) writes in his article titled, "*Myriad Shades of Human Nature: A Study of Sudha Murthy's Stories*" that many examples can be traced in the works of Sudha Murthy which are examples of both incredible generosity and unbelievable meanness which define general human nature on this planet. The researchers argue in this study that *Dollar Bahu*'s mother-in-law shows the myriad shades of nature of womankind. B. Sridharkumar (2015) writes in his article entitled, *The Element of Cultural Conflict in Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu* that the author has maintained the balance between American culture and Indian culture without degrading any of the cultures by explaining the importance of money in human life. He also adds that the main theme of *Dollar Bahu* has never gets deviated.

B.T. Lahane and R.V.Kangne (2016) wrote in their research article titled, "*The Contribution of Sudha Murthy in Indian English Literature*" that Sudha Murthy's literary work concentrated around feminism, charity, hospitality, and self-realization through fictional and non-fictional works. She advocates feminism and gives power to her women characters to strike the worst situations of their lives. She strokes on the points where the women are strong in their worst conditions and fought against the discrimination. Dishna Pannikot(2010) writes in her article entitled , *Debating Multiculturalism: A Study of the Fictional Narratives of Jhumpa Lahiri and Sudha Murthy* that most of the female characters of *Dollar Bahu* are presented just as a 'vision' in the eyes of Gouri in order to provide examples of how life is and need to be. At the end of the novel, one could see that Gouramma gets transformed from her idealist views of a Dollar seeker to that of an Indianised woman, one who values the Indian way of living.

M. Gowsalya (2017) writes in his paper entitled, "*Thematic Study of Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu*" by doing a thematic study on *Dollar Bahu* that *Dollar Bahu* shows sensitive relations in most of the families. Life starts with a family and also ends in a family. The

journey connects human and financial relations. It is unlucky that the present day relations are more financial than human. *Dollar Bahu* is in one-way a satire on ignorant people who are fascinated by the western culture and dollars. In this study, the researcher is of an opinion that human relations are becoming more and more formal and, individualism is increasing.

Mukta Jagannath Mahajan(2017) writes in her article entitled, *Value Vs. Value: An Axiological Study of Sudha Murthy's Dollar Bahu* that family of the middle class based at Bangalore, Shamanna, a Sanskrit teacher advocates the virtues and considers values in a human being on the basis of his virtues. Gauramma, a wife of Shamanna, a symbol of greediness. Researchers argue in this study that needs and greed has a demarcation line and it must be maintained in human life. Namita Devidayal and Pradipta Bagchi(2001) comments in their article entitled, *The many facets of Sudha Murthy* that the two faces of human being are playing important role in human life and they are materialistic mind and non-materialistic mind. She also adds in the same article that circumstances make human as inhuman. The researchers argue that the power of humanity works as a catalyst in certain conditions.

Nilesh P. Sulbhewar et.al (2013) discussed in their paper titled, *Social Consciousness in Sudha Murthy Wise and Otherwise*, that social consciousness in *Dollar Bahu* is represented by Sudha Murthy seems in deception manner. The researchers argue in this study that social consciousness narrated in *Dollar Bahu* is an image of contemporary changing social values in the country like India and opportunities can be seen to see the same with a different vision.

Ruchi Chandra(2010) writes in her article on *Dollar Bahu* titled, *"Dollar Bahu by Sudha Murthy Wonderfully Written Story"* that general mentality of Indian women towards Bahu is similar and have different mindset by discriminating them between two cultures like; the USA and India. The issue of social equality of two different cultures is different and the solution of such discrimination is tried to give through the characters of the novel *Dollar Bahu*.

Smruti Chaudhary (2015) writes in her article entitled, *Using Literature to Create Awareness about the Status of Woman in Society* that self-realization plays a key role in changing behavior and mind towards specific attitudes. In *Dollar Bahu*, a clash between

two female minds on money reflects their social status. The researchers argue that money can be a catalyst for social status but should not be considered as a supreme element.

T.Sai Mamata (2011) studied in her article titled “*Women in the age of Dollars and Indian Currency-A Perception into Sudha Murthy`s Dollar Bahu and Mahasweta*” that declining human values and attitudes in the modern sophisticated era. Sudha Murthy's *Dollar Bahu* makes the readers realize the importance of humanity, despite the domination of money.

The works of Sudha Murthy motivated researchers to understand the power of Indian values with the refinement in the character of a person, which can be termed as empowerment through values. The Indian values most prominently present in Sudha Murthy's book *Dollar Bahu*. A glance at the title given above shows that much work has been done by Sudha Murthy but it seems that no one has undertaken the analytical study of Sudha Murthy's *Dollar Bahu* from the perspective of analyzing Indian Values.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this article is an analytical study. The Indian social values and moral values are discussed which are implied in *Dollar Bahu*. The dimensions of Indian social values and moral values are analyzed in the context of *DollarBahu*.

Discussion

The terms social value refers to wider financial and non-financial impacts of programs, organizations, and interventions, including the wellbeing of individuals and communities, social capital and the environment.

In *Dollar Bahu*, there are two prominent themes in the novel. One of them is the dehumanizing effect of globalization on the traditional Indian psyche and the second one is the crumbling domestic relations in India by Indians. At the one hand growth and development in IT and their positive economic implications enchanted Indians while on the other hand, it eroded the personal relations not only in Indian society but also within the family. Sudha Murthy has dealt with this phenomenon in *Dollar Bahu*.

Globalization brought dollars. Dollars crippled Indian minds. Most of us had been blinded by the glaring power of a dollar. People lost their interest in each other without a reasonable explanation for it. *Dollar Bahu* thus came to be regarded as a scratching attack on Indian madness for money. Gouramma represents this mentality, she knew that

Chandru would fetch handsome dowry in marriage but Girish would not. Therefore she valued Chandru and took care not to hurt him. He was dear to her because he was a source of richness. Gouramma did not have soft words for Girish and Vinuta because they were unable to add to their property. Two sons were weighed by their capacity to earn money and not by the simple fact of their being her sons. Gouramma overpowered Shamanna and Chandru because she was fascinated by the splendid money and glittering jewellery that Jamuna brought along with her in marriage.

It is remarkable that *Dollar Bahu* herself did not earn dollars. She was not even employed anywhere in America, neither did she have any private business of her own to accumulate dollars. She was just a parasite housewife there. Yet she spoiled the peacefully integrated environment of Shamanna's family. The sudden entry of dollars disturbed the peace of Shamanna family. His wife Gouramma was crazy for dollars. She began to calculate each and every person in dollars. Personal human touch lost its value for her. It was replaced by commercial considerations. Dollars purchased not only lifeless objects like cars and houses for her but also living human beings, like servants. Its touch turned human beings into a commodity. It ruled the minds of the members of the family.

Jamuna's case was not different. Her husband's dollars had made her insensitive to normal human relations. Jamuna and her parents started ignoring Gouramma and other members of the family immediately after marriage. Jamuna went to her father's house and returned only a day before her departure to America. In fact, she had promised to return from her parent's house within a day or two. She declared,

"I am leaving for America tomorrow. I feel really sorry that I could not spend time with you and Surabhi. I knew that visa would take a long time, and so I went to meet all my uncles and aunts in Chennai, Delhi, and Ahmedabad. The next time I come I will stay for a good three months with you"(Murthy,123)

She broke her promise knowing well that Gouramma would not dare to question her because Jamuna's husband Chandru earns dollars. Dollar played important role in the family relations also, Jamuna was allowed to dominate and Vinuta younger daughter-in-law of Gouramma was not even allowed to express her mind.

Traditional family was based on basic human values like sacrifice and mutual respect. Modern industrial society has changed the old structure of the family. Human relations seem to be thwarted under the pseudo-philosophy of career development.

Traditional Indian society believed in the power of human relations more than the power of money. Chandru ran for a dollar so much that he had no time to share his feelings with his mother when she was in America. It was as if he had forgotten his parents, brother, sister- in -law, sister and brother- in -law back home. Incoming dollars had tricked him into subdued silence.

Gouramma is a representative of the modern Indian women who are ready to forget self-respect in order to acquire dollars. Jamuna insulted Gouramma quite often in America. She refused to take her along to the hospital at the time of her delivery. She deflated her enthusiasm to carry out puja extensively in her house. She ignored her suggestions on the auspicious and inauspicious moments of the day. Gouramma wanted to take a newborn baby in her arms. But Jamuna prevented her from doing that. Anything that Gouramma suggested or tried to do was snubbed at badly by Jamuna. Gouramma had no other way but to keep quiet in front of Jamuna. This belittled her image of a respectable mother in law. Lioness in her had become a traditional cat in front of Jamuna.

It is also noticeable that Jamuna tolerated Gouramma's presence in America until the time of her needs. She was pregnant; she was to deliver a child. She and the child needed Gouramma's services. That is why Gouramma was allowed to stay with them in America. Chandru, Jamuna, and Gouramma lived together in a huge bungalow in the USA without the mutual involvement and sense of belonging. That is why the writer commented that the home that had been a cozy heaven so far had suddenly erupted like an inferno, the flames of which were blistering its very soul. The demon Dollar had devoured its peace and harmony. There were six elderly persons and two children in Shamanna's family. Surprisingly, six people lived in six different worlds. Gouramma's world was inhabited by selfishness. Shamanna was crushed underneath the heavy weight of family. Girish was attacked by inertia and Vinuta's world resembled the tediously routine life of a bull yoked to a revolving mill. Though sensitive and intelligent, Chandru had devoted his life to his job in America. Gouramma, of course, had nothing much to do with other people in the family.

Thus the novel showed the destructive effects of a dollar on the family of Shamanna. Gouramma and Shamanna had lived a peaceful life along with their two sons and a daughter. But the dollar broke the well-knit family into pieces. Gouramma insulted Vinuta every now and then. Jamuna never identified herself with the other members of the family. Chandru had drowned himself in his own work. Thus the dollar worked its devious magic on the family.

Conclusion and Findings

From the above discussion, it is to be concluded that *Dollar Bahu* reflects the following sociological facts and gives a message to the modern Indian society.

- (1) The war between personal human touch and dollar power resulted in a win-win situation for the dollars. Such kind of situation destroys the human values in the society.
- (2) The characters in the novel reflect on converting human being in a commodity is a red signal for Indian society.
- (3) The dollars take control over the life of human being in the novel which destroys the social as well as moral values.
- (4) It is also concluded that the discrimination also gets birth in the family, by keeping dollars in the center of the family which also destroys the Indian social and moral values.
- (5) Traditional emotions in relationships among family members also lose trustworthiness in this society.
- (7) It is also concluded that maintaining human relations in modern India amongst the family members is a tough task.

At the end of the novel, one could see that Gouriamma gets transformed from her idealist views of a Dollar seeker to that of an Indianised woman, one who values the Indian way of living. Thus *Dollar Bahu* teaches us the valuable lessons that mere dollars cannot buy love and respect and that each one has a unique life that should not be spent vying others.

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