



# Humanitarian Perspectives and Materialism in Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu* and *House of Cards*

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**Abstract**— On the contrary to the humanitarian values presented in Sudha Murty's works, novels like "*Dollar Bahu*" and "*House of Cards*" emphasize their difference with materialism. Firstly, in "*Dollar Bahu*", a choice has to be made between her enjoyment in India or seeking wealth in the US and thus portrays Western materialism. Lastly, in "*House of Cards*", the weak-minded greed and materialism lead to the compromising of morals and relationships and, therefore, call out more for compassion. The present research paper explores the cosmopolitan sensibility and global humanitarian perspectives present in some selected novels by Sudha Murty, such as *Dollar Bahu* and *House of Cards*. Using a description, interpretative, and analytic approach with library research, the paper critiques Murty's views concerning materialism, the deterioration of moral values, and regaining human morals. The analytical overview emphasizes important humanitarian themes represented by characters and love stories, selflessness, responsibility, and ethical values. Murty's writings can be viewed in the light of reflection about how materialism clashes with moral values in today's society and the need to return to humanitarian ideals in this globalized world.



**Keywords**— *Sudha Murty, Dollar Bahu, House of Cards, English Literature, Materialism*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sudha Murthy is a prolific writer, writing in Indian English Literature. She has written many books on varied themes ranging from childhood to old age, on men and women, on children, on family life, on art and culture, literature, on customs and tradition, rituals, ethical values, ideal life, student hood, on humanistic issues, predicament of women, identity crisis, issues related to rural women and urban women. Social issues such as the devadasi system, poverty, illiteracy, unequal wealth and power structure, starvation, subaltern issues then issues related to family, human relationships, societal expectations, socio-cultural upbringing, travel experiences, lessons learnt from life, issues related to vulnerable position of a women, the challenges, tabulations, crisis, arising within the family and outside the family, students unrest, their problems, issues of unwed mothers, professional women, career

aspirants, simplicity amidst, abundance of wealth and position.

Sudha Murthy is an Indian novelist, social activist, and philanthropist from Shiggon, Haveri District, North Karnataka, born on August 19, 1950. She is a co-founder of Infosys Company and chairs the Infosys charitable NGO. Born into a rather conservative Brahmin Madhwa Kannadiga family, she is ardently dedicated to empower women and socially marginalized people through kindness and philanthropy. Among her siblings, there is an astronomer, a gynaecologist, and a founder of the Deshpande Foundation.

### 1.1. House of Cards

*House of Cards* is such a novel that, due to the uniqueness of plot and the characters, stands out from all others. People don't think about what it would mean for their relationships in life since they know it; realism is more important. It's not only Mridula and Sanjay but many

truthful and "apparently" educated persons who have done terrible things.

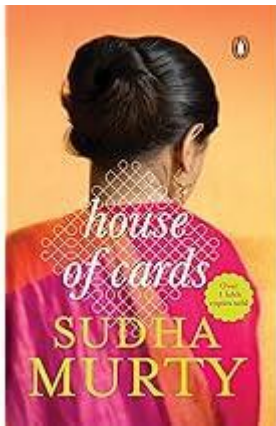


Fig.1: *House of Cards* by Sudha Murty

It was when her protagonist, Mridula, came into the world that her father chose the aptest name for her. because that is really impressive. She was a good student and her mother Rukuma Bai revealed to all that Mridula's good qualities were inherited from her side. She was more or less content with whatever she had in her life before her marriage. Considering everything, nothing mattered to her. She was a free bird who didn't have to do anything. Her teachers were telling her to study either engineering or medicine. Bheemanna was different from all the people. Moreover, this difference shows that opportunity begins at home, which is a very important message to any girl from the middle class who determines to stand on their own two feet. Bheemanna is a father who gave Mridula a choice to decide what she wanted to do in her life. That's why she had to select her future line of work also. Now it's a vital turning point to end male domination and inequality over women. De Beauvoir's effort to provide freedom to women points out that women have to look for themselves and make decisions for themselves. Mridula is intelligent, creative, and caring so she was the best thing in society. She learned that she valued people as well as animals from Mridula and Bheemanna. She even acted like youngsters and took Mridula to the banks of a river when she was only six months old, much unlike the contemporary world, where money is an obsession.

### 1.2. Dollar Bahu

In *Dollar Bahu* by Sudha Murty, the values of wealth and those within the family are debated against the changing Indian socioeconomic fabric in which this story occurs. For instance, on one hand, there is Gauramma, the mother-in-law, surrounded by her two daughters-in-law- Vinuta, a simple and devoted homemaker, and Jamuna, the "dollar bahu," who lives with her wealthy husband, Chandru in the US. Gauramma, the matriarch, grows more and more taken

up by the wealth and the life Chandru and Jamuna lead outside, particularly attracted to the American dollar. Jamuna, who was like an elder sister to Vinuta, was one of the better daughters-in-law in her books.

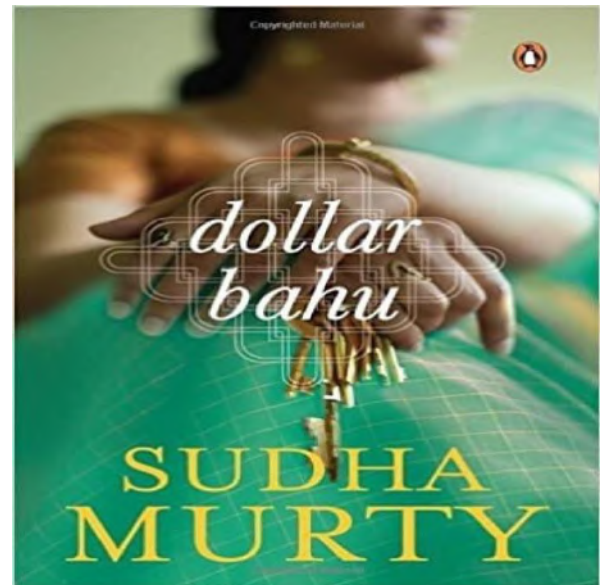


Fig.2: *Dollar Bahu* by Sudha Murty

As Murty reflects, favoritism towards Gauramma and the focus of the family on wealth brings about divisions in the household. The book elucidates the emotional turmoil Vinuta undergoes when she feels unappreciated and compared much more often than not to Jamuna, even though she makes sacrifices. A pivotal shift is introduced with Gauramma's trip to the United States; Murty allows Gauramma to come to terms with a reality that life in another country, far from India, is not all rosy tints. She learns that it is not money that can replace the warmth and love of relationships, or the peace of a simple life. *Dollar Bahu* is therefore ultimately a critique of a society that increasingly drowns in its craze for money and status, highlighting instead the importance of deep human relationships, sympathy, and the emotional depth that exists in wonderful bonding within family.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Rode, Ashok Arzoo (2016)** The integration of Hindu myths and legends has been handled in the novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* by Sudha Murthy. This study highlights how Murthy weaves the traditional mythological stories into those of the characters' private lives, using such cultural tales to make deeper the morality and spiritual conflicts the protagonists have. These myths, according to Rode, are not background elements but serve the function of illustrating themes of sacrifice, love, and identity by

contributing an essential cultural perspective to the novel's contemporary narrative.

**Devi, Aruna G. and Vijaya Lakshmi, K. (2018)** Paper The paper revolves around the theme of domestic violence in Murthy's *Mahashweta* and explores how the character Anupama fights with her own patriarchal society. Focusing on the psychological and emotional abuse that Anupama suffers, the paper attempts to highlight the social stigma and silent suffering of women in abusive marriages. The authors bring to the fore how Murthy exploits the story of Anupama's journey to change the context of larger societal issues such as gender inequality and domestic violence and portray her as a symbol of resilience.

**Kavya, P. S. S. L. (2017)** analyses leadership principles as embodied by Anupama in *Mahashweta*. The paper underlines how despite personal and societal crises around her, Anupama succeeds to portray strength, resilience and leadership, in that vein serves as a role model for female empowerment. Kavya contends that Murthy portrays the character of Anupama as an independent woman who defies what people expect from her as an un-conventional version of success, and has portrayed her as an emblem of determination and will.

**Rode, Ashok Arzoo (2016)**, In another work, re-states the relevance of Hindu myths and legends on *Gently Falls the Bakula*. He posits that "myths make for allegories, all over again, of character conflict and choice--here involving love, duty, and self-fulfilment." Rode emphasizes how Murthy uses myths and legends in such a manner that the cultural past and the present are so integrated together that the characters' experience is commonly contextualized and grounded in fact.

**Vadhana, D. Chandra and Grace, Danish Shakina, S. P. (2017)** Focus on theme personal ambition and its effects on relationships in *Gently Falls the Bakula*. Their work explains the intention of the primary characters: their dreams and aspirations, especially professional success, broke down the emotional relationship. Vadhana and Shakina argue that Murthy effectively portrays the tension between personal goals and the demands of relationships, which can illustrate how societal expectations can shape the choices of the individual to affect interpersonal dynamics.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research paper is conducted using descriptive, interpretive, and analytical research approaches. The library approach is also used to gather pertinent information for this paper.

## IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Sudha Murthy's worldwide sensibility towards improved efficacy of global humanitarian viewpoints is demonstrated by the chosen novels—*Dollar Bahu*, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, and *House of Cards*—and their emphasis on moral principles and human values. In an effort to revive humanitarian perspectives on a global scale, her textual analysis echoes her worries about the decline of the humanitarian approach and the prioritisation of immorality over ethics. Every piece of writing that Murthy writes that explores human sensitivity and strives for mankind's well-being is built upon her compassion for humanity, which she possesses as a philanthropist. The various abstract forms of humanitarian viewpoints—emotions, love, human values, ethics, spirituality, duties, etc.—are examined and discussed in Sudha Murthy's selected works, which serve to show the humanitarian perspectives worldwide.

### 4.1 Dollar Bahu

In today's postmodern environment, *Dollar Bahu* is a critique of materialism and hedonism that lead to the loss of humanistic perspectives. Through the novel's characters, it also examines the worries about people's shifting perspectives. Humanity, love, caring, helpfulness, unselfish sacrifices, affection, wishes, duty, and a sense of social commitment are just a few of the many facets of global humanitarian perspectives that are covered. Murthy has also attacked the hedonistic and immoral behaviour of contemporary men, who appear to be to blame for the decline of human values worldwide. In the chosen novel, Murthy's social commitment to reviving humanitarian viewpoints demonstrates her genuine human compassions. The *Dollar Bahu*'s portrayal of certain individuals demonstrates the realisation of human values, which is a hallmark of humanitarianism.

Sudha Murthy's book *Dollar Bahu* examines how money affects society and how individuals like Gouramma, Chandru, and Jamuna are exploited. The narrative centres on an Indian family in Bangalore, whose patriarch, Shamanna, is a philanthropist and Sanskrit instructor. Girish and Surabhi, the family's children, emulate their mother Gouramma's pragmatic and hedonistic ways. In order to live a happy and peaceful life, Shamanna counsels his family to adopt humanitarian viewpoints. The book also emphasises the value of interpersonal connections over financial belongings, since Gouri, a foolish character, is shown to be in awe of the dollar. Gouri adds to the enchanted woodland in spite of her foolish actions. The narrative emphasises the harsh truths of the world's society, where individuals like Gouramma and Jamuna are made slaves to wealth and personal belongings.

### 4.2 House of Cards

House of Cards is a great example of Sudha Murty's philanthropic work; the novel's protagonists and antagonists both demonstrate the importance of humanitarian principles. It paints a realistic image of modern life, where people have grown petty, self-centred, and pragmatic. One of the best examples of teaching moral values and compassion is shown in this piece. It is a criticism of how people have evolved from idealists to realists, from being unselfish to being greedy, from being nice to being cruel, and from having spiritual principles to having material values.

The female protagonist Mridula, her father Bheemanna, Narasinga Rao, and Jaya are the primary vehicles for the portrayal of humanitarian perspectives. Sanjay and Mridula's story, told in House of Cards, is captivating. They view life from different perspectives. Mridula was brought up in a spiritual and environmentally conscious environment in her hometown of Aladahalli. She inherited her father Bheemanna's spiritual traits; he is an elderly man with a humanitarian perspective. In spite of life's inevitable difficulties, he tells Mridula to hold on to these beliefs. She takes after her father in his desire to help the less fortunate in her neighbourhood. As a result of her father's humanitarianism, Mridula is shown as a strong and determined character with a tremendous capacity for empathy. Hospitality to friends, relatives, and villagers is the best way to show Bheemanna's humanitarian views. He tells his daughter not to bottle up her feelings but to talk about them. It demonstrates his understanding of human existence —

Do you know why God gave humans the ability to speak while denying animals this ability?

Mridula would childishly reply, 'To talk.'

No, kid. Not merely to converse. It's also for sharing. Therefore, you must share your delight and struggles with others whenever you experience them. However, consider all the animals—those unfortunate creatures are unable to even express their struggles to others. They must endure it by themselves. Remember, Mridula, you have to remain open at all times. Avoid hiding. It is sinful to hide.

Throughout her life, Mridula has adhered to the viewpoints that she inherited from her father. Despite being aware of Sanjay's physical deformities, she accepts his marriage proposal and marries him. It demonstrates her empathy as a person. She marries him because she is aware that he is a poor doctor. Although Sanjay was also raised in a tiny community, he attends different schools outside of it. After his father passed away, his mother raised him. His mother is a local moneylender who enjoys making money

exclusively. As a result, she educates him to be frugal and to appreciate money. He receives a lower pay as a doctor at the Bombay government hospital. He is greatly impacted by city life.

In her home village, Mridula teaches at a government school as well. She is moved from her village to Bangalore in order to care for Sanjay, who left Bombay to work in a government hospital there. Like his classmates, Sanjay hopes to grow up and eventually open his own hospital. At first, Mridula disagrees with his choice, but she eventually agrees to help him launch his care home. She learns that Sanjay now aspires to become wealthy and to have all of his pals. Sanjay loses sight of the true goals and responsibilities of his job when he becomes overly preoccupied with his work. He pursues material luxury and wealth, which separates him from Mridula. Because of her humanitarian views, she always tries to encourage him and support him in any challenging situation. However, Sanjay is making money illegally and unethically, which goes against her humanitarian approach concept. She chooses to leave his home of manufactured worth, where human compassion and love are out of place, as a result. Her conversations demonstrate how her humanitarian ideals have empowered her.

No, I never felt like I belonged to you or your family, even though I spent 25 of my most significant years with you. I remain an outsider. I've fulfilled my obligation to you both. As a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, I have performed all of my responsibilities. I want to live my life for me now. I have my village, my work, and my school. You no longer need to be concerned about me. Sishir and you are welcome to come see me at any time.

In order to avoid being destroyed by the influence of fake values in Sanjay's home, she must decide to leave him. She prepares to give up her marriage in order to value her humanitarian viewpoint, which is the most important element of House of Cards.

Sanjay's father, Narasinga Rao, is a humanitarian who instills a respect for human values in both his wife and son. He counsels Sanjay to connect two islands in relationships and communicate genuine sentiments, but Sanjay adopts his father's pragmatic and hedonistic methods, which causes him to become isolated and lose his wife. Another character, Neha, counters Sishir's hedonistic outlook by highlighting the value of caring for one another. Sishir changes and respects his mother as a result of realising the importance of values and being impacted by Neha's insight. The book emphasises how humanitarian viewpoints have triumphed over



antihumanitarian beliefs, finally conquering humankind's challenges.

As a result, *House of Cards* is a literary landscape of humanitarian viewpoints from around the world that is strongly influenced by cosmopolitan sensibilities.

## V. COCNLUSION

In short, the novels such as *Dollar Bahu*, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, and *House of Cards*, by Sudha Murthy are poignant reflections on the anxiety of the world going frantic in the mad pursuit of materialism vs. humanitarian values. Through her characters, she has tried to bring out the ideals of high living, love, and sacrifice from the bad pursuit of wealth and status at the cost of personal and moral integrity. The study therefore reveals that works from Murthy are attempts at inspiring a better life where commitment to the people, concern for what is virtuous, and nurturing of human relationships become more than mere economic success so as to create a society more humane and sensitive to living relationships.

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