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Sudha Murty's Select Works As Panopticon Of Indian Values

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Abstract

The paper tries to analyse Sudha Murty's select novels in the light of value theory. The novels taken for study are *House of Cards*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *The Mother I never knew*. Value theory highlights human values and its function in the society. Indian society is shaped by Indian virtues. In spite of advancement of science and influence of western culture, Indian society sticks to its own virtue system. Each member of Indian society is expected to adhere to its values. Sudha Murty presents a plethora of characters who follow Indian value system as it is and some characters leave the system altogether. In India Women are expected to nurture family and impart value education to children. And men are expected to remain loyal to the family and be its support system. Sudha Murty presents characters who are carried away by human flaws. Some go after materialistic benefits and fail to do their duty. The paper compares and contrasts the virtue and belief system of such dichotomic characters.

Keywords: Sudha Murty, Dollar Bahu, The Mother I never knew, House of cards, Value Theory, Axiology, Indian Values

Sudha Kulkarni Murty is a Padma Shri awardee. She is an Indian social worker and author. She is a passionate teacher, philanthropist and columnist. She is also the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. She started her career as a development engineer with TELCO (now Tata Motors) and has also taught computer science to BSc and MCA students at a college affiliated with Bangalore University. She is a prolific writer in English and Kannada. She has founded several orphanages, participated in rural development efforts, supported the movement to provide all Karnataka government schools with computer and library facilities, and established 'The Murthy Classical Library of India' at Harvard University. Murthy initiated a bold move to introduce computer and library facilities in all schools in Karnataka. She got "Best Teacher Award" in 1995 from Rotary Club at Bangalore. Some of the famous works by the author are *Three Thousand Stitches*, *The Man from the Egg*, *Here, There, Everywhere*, *Magic of the Lost Temple*, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read* and other stories, *The Old Man And His God*, *Mahashweta*, *Wise and Otherwise*, *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk*, *The Serpent's Revenge*, *Gently Falls The Bakula*, *Something Happened on the Way To Heavens*, *The Magic Drum* and other favorite stories, *The Bird with the Golden Wings* *How The Sea Became Salty*, *The Upside Down King*, *The Daughter From A Wishing Tree*, *Grandma's Bag of Stories*

The paper aims to analyse the select novels of Sudha Murty in the light of axiological theory. The novels taken for study are *House of Cards*, *Dollar Bahu*, and *The Mother I never knew*. Value theory is used for a relatively narrow area of normative ethical theory. Axiology can be thought of as primarily concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are. For instance, a traditional question of axiology concerns whether the objects of value are subjective psychological states, or objective states of the world. Sudha Murty focuses on Indian values. Indian values refers to the expectation of Indian society. In India every

family member is expected to behave in particular ways. Indian society has laid down certain rules for everyone. There are a set of values to define a mother, wife, daughter, daughter in law, son, father, father in law, mother in law and relatives of particular families. Every new born is expected to grow up by absorbing the stereotypical values in the society.

Ralph Barton Perry's book *General Theory of Value* (1926) has been called the magnum opus of the new approach. A value, he theorized, is "any object of any interest." Later, he explored eight realms of value, they are morality, religion, art, science, economics, politics, law, and custom. The faculties of intellect, emotion, and will seek the values of trueness, goodness and beauty, respectively, and through these, a society of trueness, an artistic society, and an ethical society will be actualized. In doing so, what is required for the realization of a society of trueness is a theory of education for the pursuit of the value of "trueness". An artistic society requires a theory of art for the pursuit of the value of "beauty"; An ethical society requires a theory of ethics for the pursuit of the value of "goodness." Since axiology is a theory that deals generally with the values of trueness, goodness, and beauty, axiology is the general theory serving as a basis for these three particular theories.

Values can be categorized as either material values or spiritual values. In psychological terms, this analysis involves the examination of the development and assertion of human values. It also concerns the study of the ways in which human beings act on values or fail to act on them. In sociological terms, value theory deals with the types of personal values that are commonly held within a community. It also examines ways in which certain conditions or situations may change those values. Additionally, it's concerned with how different groups of people may believe in and prioritize values that influence how they behave in social situations.

Value theory is a concept concerned with the value or worth of people or things. Worth may be considered in terms of usefulness or economic value. This concept can also involve legal, moral, aesthetic, or quantitative value, and it can involve just one type of worth, or a combination of different types. It is generally accepted that values are at the root of all types of behaviors, including those that are morally, politically, or economically motivated. Values may be held individually, socially, or both. In some cases, however, individual values may seem worthless without social understanding and acceptance. Value theory deals with examining their individual and social repercussions.

In psychological terms, this analysis involves the examination of the development and assertion of human values. It also concerns the study of the ways in which human beings act on values or fail to act on them. Psychology-related value theory focuses on determining the reasons behind human preferences and choices in relation to values. Studying it also includes attempting to develop plausible explanations for the ways in which values may or may not govern behavior.

In sociological terms, value theory deals with the types of personal values that are commonly held within a community. It also examines ways in which certain conditions or situations may change those values. Additionally, it's concerned with how different groups of people may believe in and prioritize values that influence how they behave in social situations.

'Dollar-Bahu' is a beautiful portrayal of a middle class family residing at Jayanagar, Bangalore. The novel highlights the fact that family love, affection and bonding are more important than money. The story is set in two countries, the first half in India, in which is explored the sensibility of the protagonist Vinuta, within the framework of the disintegrating relationship in her household, due to the blinded passion developed by her mother-in-law for the 'Dollar'. The second part of the story is set in America, when Vinita's mother-in-law, Gouramma, visits her older son Chandru. On the American stage, Sudha Murthy has successfully interwoven stories of many Indians living in America, juxtaposing one story with another. As Gouramma meets every character she matures inwardly, and finally understands that family bond holds more riches than 'Dollar'.

The main focus of the novel is on the interesting twists it holds. As the plot unfolds, the twists are disentangled. The relation between Vinuta and Chandru is snapped abruptly when Chandru is sent to America. Vinuta's peaceful life at her home in Dharwad catapults when Bheemanna, Vinuta's uncle dies of an unexpected heart attack. Vinuta relocates to her aunt's house in Bangalore and joins the same school in which Shamanna (Chandru's father) teaches. Vinuta and Girish, Chandru's brother are united in a wed-lock. Chandru returns to India after a good six years. He becomes the eligible bachelor and a wedding is arranged for him with Jamuna, the only daughter of an affluent property developer Krishnappa. They return to America soon after the wedding.

Gouramma (Chandru's mother), has trouble in coping with and handling the societal stress resulting in the fear of unacceptance. She always dreamed of diamonds, gold and silver, jewellery, cars, a big house, servants etc. and thought that these were the tickets to help her move in the elite circle. She found her desires getting fulfilled through Chandru's dollars. Between Jamuna's dollars and Vinuta's selfless devotion, Gouramma finds favour with the dollar and ignores Vinuta's devotion and family bonding which actually is truly priceless. Vinuta bears the brunt of endless comparisons between her and 'Dollar Bahu'. She starts withering physically and mentally at these constant attacks meted out at her.

Gouramma then gets a chance to go to America to live with her son for a year, she opens her eyes to the faults of Jamuna and realizes that Jamuna is basically a very selfish person. She gets to meet a lot of Indian families settled in America and this helps her to change her opinion on life she had till then. She understands the affection and devotion Vinuta holds for the family in contrast with Jamuna's selfishness. Money does speak honey but it also corrupts the way people look at each other and has the power to tear the family apart. Vinuta becomes depressed as Gouramma's arrival draws near. She begins to resent the word 'dollar'. The continuous erosion of family values impairs the bond Vinuta has with her mother-in-law. Seeing the misery of Vinuta, Shamanna finally decides to send Vinuta and Girish to Dharwad. The decision comes as a surprise for Vinuta. Shamanna reasons that the decision would make Girish independent, assertive and confident just as Chandru has become after going to America. Vinuta and Girish leave for Dharwad to live there on the insistence of Shamanna, before Gouramma reaches Bangalore. Though upset that they have left without her permission, she understands that it is time to leave her children to their independence.

The second novel for analysis is *The Mother I never Knew*. The novel is divided into two novellas. Both narrate the stories of sons and their mothers. First novella is about the story of a bank manager, Venkatesh, who lives in Bangalore. When the story begins, he has been transferred to Hubli and because of that he is upset. One day Venkatesh sets out for Shiggaon to attend a function, where he is mistaken by a jeweller with someone else who looks like him. In that function again he is mistaken by someone. After that he is determined to find more information about his look-alike. He starts investigation and find out that Shankar is a primary school teacher and works in Shishunal. There he discovers many things about Shankar and his mother Bhagavva. He is surprised to know about his father's hidden past which includes an abandoned wife and a son. Bhagavva was his father's first wife and Shankar was his son. Venkatesh is determined to make amends to his impoverished step-mother. At last he decides to help them with fifty lakhs to repay his father's debt.

The second novella is about Mukesh, a young man who is a programme executive at BBC in London, where he is responsible for covering India's cultural and heritage section. One day, after his father's death, he is shocked to know that he is an adopted son. He desperately searches for his biological mother. Mukesh finds out his mother who gave birth to him. She had to abandon the child due to her unmarried status. Later, the child is brought up by Roop. Roop did not have her own children. From Roop, Sumathi had adapted him and brought up as their own. At last, he decides that his loyalties lie towards his mother who brought him up.

The Third novel for analysis is Sudha Murty's *House of Cards*. Mridula, a rudimentary village girl full of morals is the protagonist of the story. She has a beautiful soul with vibrance of happiness. She is a girl who lives the moment of life, to her values matter more than material assets. she wanted to be a teacher and work for social cause. She meets Sanjay for the first time and falls in love. She marries Sanjay inspite of his handicap. They relocate to Mumbai. Sanjay is a doctor at KEM hospital. For the Post Graduation of Sanjay they move to Bangalore. Both of them earn fair incomes. Sanjay who is a hardworking and sincere doctor works under a senior doctor gets frustrated as his work is underrated and not appreciated by anyone. He quits his government job and establishes his own clinic. He earns huge profit from his hospital and Mridula and Sanjay start to lead a luxurious lifestyle but Sanjay is intimidated by all success and he forgets human virtues.

He becomes egoistic and declares self importance everytime. Sanjay even misguides his son Sishir. Sanjay becomes materialistic and disregards family. Mridula who has been enduring the trauma for her past twenty five years of marital life decides to move out of marriage. Sishir goes to the US for higher education. Sanjay broke Mridula's trust and this made her take a bold step. Sanjay realizes his mistake and persuades Mridula to return to his life. Sanjay's mother Lata and his sister Lakshmi also exhibit greed and their disregard for Mridula irritates her and fuels Sanjay's greed

Indian values are the great source of true happiness. Indian values are the paradigm of human life which embodies the Indian society from the humanitarian perspectives. The intrinsic forms like eternal pleasure, love, affection, human relationship, humanity, brotherhood, peace, duties, politeness etc are embedded in Indian values. Sudha murty showcases both positive and negative qualities in her novels. The

characters like Vinuta, Mridula portray the endurance expected in wifely roles. They are embodiments of all good qualities of Indian women. They love sincerely, take care of family, bring up their children with morals and values. The sons like Venkatesh and Mukesh display the quality and purity of love for their mothers. They are generous and open minded men. The characters like Latha, Lakshmi, Gouramma, Jamuna stand for egoistic and materialistic people who value money and the luxury more than values. It can be assured that Sudha Murty writes didactic novels emphasizing the importance of human values and virtues. Through her novels she depicts that life can be more meaningful if people stick to Indian values and life can be challenging and disastrous if people neglect values of humanism altogether.

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