

## **The Impact of Globalization on the Traditional Indian Psyche: An Analytical Study of Sudha Murthy's A Doller Bahu**

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### **Abstract**

The phenomenon of brain-drain, which refers to the emigration of highly skilled individuals from their home country to seek better opportunities abroad, has been expedited during the era of globalization. This has had a significant impact on various fields, including literature. Indian literature in English, in particular, has garnered worldwide acclaim due to the emergence of talented new authors who have been influenced by the globalized world. In recent years, a multitude of writers have made noteworthy contributions to the advancement and evolution of Indian English literature across various categories. These authors have brought fresh perspectives and narratives that reflect the complexities of Indian society in the modern world. Sudha Murthy, a distinguished contemporary female author, has played a pivotal role in enhancing Indian English literature with her unique storytelling style and insightful themes. Her imaginative works eloquently capture the essence of Indian culture, often incorporating elements from Indian mythologies. She skillfully weaves together traditional and contemporary themes, creating narratives that resonate with readers from different backgrounds. Through her novel "Dollar Bahu," she adeptly depicts the realities of Indian culture, while also shedding light on the challenges faced by immigrants in their marriages within an Indian context. "Dollar Bahu" explores the story of Gouramma, a character who experiences cultural disorientation as she navigates life in a foreign land. The novel delves into the complexities of marriage and the clash of values that arise when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together. Her portrayal of Gouramma's struggles provides readers with valuable insights into the intricacies of marriage and life in a foreign land, highlighting the challenges faced by immigrants and the need for understanding and adaptation. Through her writing, she not only entertains readers but also educates them about the diverse cultural landscape of India and the experiences of immigrants. Her works serve as a bridge between different cultures, fostering empathy and understanding among readers from various backgrounds. By exploring themes of cultural identity, marriage, and the immigrant experience, Murthy contributes to the advancement of Indian English literature and promotes cross-cultural dialogue.

**Keywords:** Cultural shock, marriage, earning, false belief

### **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to delve the dehumanizing impact of globalization on the traditional Indian mindset and feminist consciousness, while considering the intricate nature of life, diverse histories, cultures, and value systems. It also explores the women's question, the desire for wealth, and the phenomenon of working abroad as a status symbol in Indian society. The study reveals the Indian mentality's fascination with the Dollar, a foreign currency that is valued more than sentiments, morals, and relationships. Sudha Murthy is widely regarded as one of the most realistic authors, as she effectively portrays the evolving psyche of women in changing times. Her concern for women who find themselves torn between freedom and individuality, and stability and protection, is relatable. The paper showcases how urban middle-class women strive for self-identity while remaining deeply rooted in the values of womanhood that bind families together, as depicted in Sudha Murthy's novel "Dollar Bahu." The novel centralizes women's emotions and attitudes, with a clear emphasis on traditionalism as women tend to belittle each other in pursuit of wealth. The research study highlights the dominance of the powerful Dollar in all aspects of life. Today's modern women are determined to achieve their aspirations. Unlike men, Indian women possess moral and

emotional strength. The novel unravels the truth that it is the power of 'SHE' that can either make or break a family.

Sudha Murthy, the renowned novelist, has had a close association with professionals in the IT industry through her company Infosys. She has keenly observed the changes in the behaviour of young male and female employees in the IT sector. This first-hand knowledge of the industry is evident in her novel "Dollar Bahu". The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a remarkable boom in the Indian IT sector, attracting thousands of boys and girls to pursue engineering degrees in IT. This field offered new opportunities both within and outside India, particularly in America, where they could earn substantial amounts in dollars. The growth and development in IT, along with its positive economic implications, captivated Indians. However, this boom also had a darker side, as it eroded personal relationships not only within Indian society but also within families. Sudha Murthy addresses this phenomenon in "Dollar Bahu". Gouramma, the protagonist, desires for her sons to become engineers and earn money in dollars. While her elder son fulfils her wish, it has a detrimental impact on the behaviour of her daughter-in-law.

A Doller bahu delves into themes of greed, prejudice, and respect for others at its core. It contrasts the values and customs of America and India in a simplistic manner. The narrative is straightforward, lacking in nuance or complexity,

portraying America as wealthy but lacking in soul, while India is depicted as poor yet upholding traditional family and marriage values. The story's message, as succinctly put by Shamanna, resonates authentically.

“... Nothing is absolute in life. America has a set of advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, India has its own. You cannot have the best of both worlds. If you have a choice, choose a country, and accept it with its pluses and minuses and live happily there. Staying in America and dreaming of an Indian way of life, or living in India and expecting an American way of life-both are roads to grief.”  
(P. 25, Dollor Bahu)

The narrative revolves around two daughters-in-law belonging to a family, one hailing from America and the other from India. The manner in which their mother-in-law treats them, in terms of currency (Rupees and Dollars), is brought to light. The crux of the story lies in the mother-in-law's perception that her American daughter-in-law (referred to as the "dollar bahu") is superior to her Indian counterpart, solely because she resides in the land of opportunities, the USA. Consequently, she yearns to live with her son in America. However, after spending a year or so in America, she realizes that Indians residing there encounter the same difficulties and challenges as those in India. This realization dawns upon her that "the grass always looks greener on the other side." Upon returning to India, she exhibits immense affection towards the daughter-in-law whom she previously regarded as insignificant, as well as her grandson. Ultimately, after being emotionally jolted by her dollar bahu, Gouramma comprehends the fact that while money may alleviate poverty, family holds far greater significance than mere wealth.

Gouramma, a mother of three in Bangalore, lives with her husband Shamanna. Her eldest son Chandru is settled in America and is married to Jamuna, the daughter of wealthy parents. The younger son, Girish, works as a bank clerk and is married to Vinuta, a diligent wife who takes care of her family. The comparisons between Vinuta and Jamuna, known as the 'Dollar Bahu', begin to affect Vinuta's peace and health. Gouramma soon visits Chandru in the US and experiences a different way of life, realizing that money cannot buy love and respect as it does back in India. Will this change lead to a new bond between Gouramma and Vinuta, and can Vinuta move past the hurtful comparisons?

It is challenging to believe in the dynamics of relationships, especially when Gauramma consistently Favours Jamuna's material wealth over Vinuta's unwavering dedication and selfless love. The narrative unfolds like a typical Indian soap opera, with Vinuta enduring the constant comparisons and bearing the weight of it all. As a result, her health and mental well-being begin to deteriorate. Eventually, Gauramma seizes an opportunity to visit her son Chandru and Jamuna in their American home, where she stays for an extended period. However, before it is too late and Vinuta is forever lost, she comes to the realization that not everything that shines is gold, and money cannot buy everything in the end.

Gouramma plays a significant role in the novel due to her insatiable greed for money, which drives her desire for expensive clothing and jewellery. Despite being married to a school teacher with a modest income, she dreams of her children pursuing lucrative careers to fulfil her materialistic wishes. Her eldest son, Chandru, becomes an engineer in America, earning a salary in dollars that brings her immense joy. However, when Chandru marries Jamuna, who hails from

a wealthy family and is aware of Gauramma's greed, the dynamics shift. Jamuna, in an act of deception, gives Gauramma and her sister-in-law Surabhi used clothing and jewellery. It is only when Gauramma faces mistreatment in America that she realizes the value of Vinutha, her kind and caring daughter-in-law. Through the characters of Gauramma, Jamuna, and Vinutha, the novelist effectively portrays the negative consequences of greed for money.

Omar Moufakkir (2016, p. 323) cited in (Furnham and Bochner, 1986) explains that Culture shock was first introduced to the literature by Oberg in the 1950s. It describes the feeling of confusion and disorientation that a group of people may encounter when entering a different culture. Gouramma, in this case, faces various cultural perplexities which lead to self-realization, benefiting both herself and her family. Her dream of going to the US, known as the Dollar Nation, comes true thanks to her son Chandru, who has obtained a green card and become a resident of America. James Rajasekar and Franck Renand (2013, p. 144) cited Kohls (1979) who defined culture shock as the term used to describe the pronounced reactions to the psychological disorientation experienced to varying degrees when spending an extended period of time in a new environment.

Gouramma encountered a cultural shock in different situations. For example, there was a time when Chandru was concerned about the challenges of raising his child in a foreign country. He expressed as,

When they are young, they mingle with other kids, talk in their accent, and feel very proud. But when they behave like American teenagers, we get upset. At times, I think about my daughter and get scared. (91)

Chandru pondered the emotional turmoil and he faced while raising his newborn child, which he linked to the difficulties his friend Venkant encountered in America. Venkant's daughter was going through teenage issues, causing their family to fall apart and lose any sense of true happiness. Gouramma was stunned to learn about the challenges of raising children and felt great internal distress after sympathizing and understanding the struggles her son faced in raising his own daughter.

Additionally, when discussing Shama's life challenges, Gouramma experienced another shock when she learned about the life of the immigrant couple, Radhakrishna and Savitri. They arranged a marriage for Shama, their eldest daughter, at the young age of twenty-one. Savitri explained that they were fearful that Shama would engage in improper relationships or find a boyfriend, hence they decided to find a suitable match within the Indian community. Antonio Lebron (2017, p. 126) quoted in Bodley (1999) who adds...

Three basic components of culture, namely: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. All forms of culture exhibit unique ways and value systems that aid and affect individuals in their perception and reaction to different life circumstances.

Radhakrishna and Savitri shared a common concern. They were deeply troubled by the potential judgment of others if their daughter were to choose her own life partner. In order to avoid this, they hastily arranged a marriage for Shama. Unfortunately, Shama's marriage fell apart because her husband was more interested in acquiring her parents' wealth and material possessions than in fostering genuine love and

happiness. Following the dissolution of her marriage, Shama entered into a live-in relationship with a Brazilian boyfriend, which further tormented Gouramma. In response, Shama defiantly declared, "I will live my life on my own terms. Don't you dare interfere!" (97). Gouramma was left bewildered and filled with an unsettling fear as she contemplated her granddaughter's future in a foreign land, especially after learning about Shama's current situation and the challenges faced by her parents in that foreign land.

Gouramma experienced a third shock when she unexpectedly crossed paths with Tara during her time in America. Tara's life story served as yet another surprise for Gouramma. Tara had married Ramesh and had come to the US after their wedding. In order to fund her extravagant wedding, Tara's parents had sold their property. However, after the wedding, Tara was shocked to discover that Ramesh was already married in a foreign country and was leading a double life. Ramesh had married Tara due to family pressure, without disclosing his secret marriage in America. Gouramma couldn't help but draw parallels between Tara's situation and her own daughter's married life, leaving her concerned about the potential unknown humiliation that her grandchildren might face in the future.

Asha Patil's delicate relationship serves as another example of how globalization has dehumanized the traditional Indian psyche. Gouramma was taken aback by the cultural shock that Asha Patil's life story brought. Asha Patil's parents had arranged her marriage to Sathish Patil, believing him to be a successful businessman. However, it turned out that he only owned a *bhel-puri* cart, and Asha Patil suffered cruel assault from his family members. This traumatic experience pushed Asha Patil into a deep depression, and she faced numerous challenges in her attempt to overcome her difficult circumstances. Gouramma was greatly shocked by the collapse of Asha Patil's marriage, as she had believed that life in America was far more luxurious and comfortable than in India. However, witnessing Asha Patil's struggle for survival made her realize the immense difficulties and complexities involved. According to Adrian Furnham (2010, p. 87) as quoted in (Ward *et al.* 2001), cultural shock can be defined as...

Surprise, anxiety, even disgust, and indignation after becoming aware of cultural differences. Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment.

The disintegration of family relationships in India is a growing concern that can be attributed to the rise of industrialization and globalization. These factors have brought prosperity to many middle-class families, but they have also fueled a materialistic mindset that prioritizes wealth and status over human values.

Thus, Sudha Murthy's novel "Dollar Bahu" serves as a poignant depiction of this phenomenon. The protagonist, Gouramma, is deeply troubled by the differential treatment of her daughters-in-law, Jamuna and Vinutha. Jamuna, who is married to a man with a high-paying job in the United States and comes from a wealthy family, is given respect and admiration by the rest of the family. On the other hand, Vinutha, who is married to a man with a lower income and comes from a less affluent background, is mistreated, and looked down upon.

Despite Vinutha's modesty, simplicity, and genuine care for her family, she is constantly overshadowed by Jamuna's

arrogance and showiness. The emphasis on money and material possessions over human values like love, affection, and care is evident in the way the family treats these two women.

The rise of industrialization and globalization has undoubtedly brought economic prosperity to many families in India. However, it has also led to a shift in priorities, where the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of a luxurious lifestyle have taken precedence over nurturing and maintaining strong family bonds. In this materialistic mindset, individuals are judged and valued based on their financial success rather than their character or the love and care they provide to their family members. This has resulted in a deterioration of family relationships, as people become more focused on their own personal gain rather than the well-being of their loved ones. The disintegration of family relationships in India is a complex issue that cannot be solely attributed to industrialization and globalization. However, these factors have undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping the values and priorities of Indian society. It is crucial for individuals and society as a whole to recognize the importance of human values and prioritize them over material possessions. Only by doing so can we hope to rebuild and strengthen family relationships in India, fostering a sense of love, affection, and care that transcends monetary considerations.

The novel also delves into the theme of cultural identity and the struggle to balance traditional values with modern influences. Gouramma's journey highlights the challenges faced by many immigrants as they navigate between their roots and the new world they find themselves in. The clash between Eastern and Western cultures is evident in the conflicts that arise within Gouramma's family, as they grapple with the changing dynamics brought about by globalization. Furthermore, "Dollar Bahu" sheds light on the impact of materialism and the pursuit of wealth on familial relationships. Gouramma's son, Chandru, becomes consumed by his desire for financial success, leading to strained relationships with his mother and wife. The novel explores how the pursuit of money can erode the bonds of love and respect within a family, ultimately emphasizing the importance of values such as compassion, empathy, and understanding.

Overall, "Dollar Bahu" is a thought-provoking exploration of the complexities of modern Indian society, the challenges of globalization, and the enduring power of family and tradition. Through Gouramma's journey, readers are invited to reflect on the true meaning of happiness and fulfillment, and the importance of staying true to one's roots amidst a rapidly changing world.

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