

Gouramma as Victimized Woman in Sudha Murty's Dollar Bahu

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 1

Month: August

Year: 2025

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Manoj Kannan, B., and
D. .. Bindu. "Gouramma
as Victimized Woman
in Sudha Murty's
Dollar Bahu." *Shanlax
International Journal
of Arts, Science and
Humanities*, vol. 13,
no. S1, 2025, pp. 32–36.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
sijash.v13iS1i1-Aug.9565](https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13iS1i1-Aug.9565)

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Abstract

The novels *Mahashweta* (2005), *Dollar Bahu* (2006), *Gently Falls the Bakula* (2008), and *House of Cards* (2013) are written by Sudha Murty. Sudha Murty's protagonists are unusual and they grow as individuals who break free from traditional limits and improve their identity in response to the changing social environment. These characters believe in traditional ideals and society systems, yet they choose to bargain for familial harmony rather than revolt and disturb family connections. Her novels are built on the traits of compassion, tolerance, and comprehension of human connections. The present research paper will analyse why the women are caught in the victim positions and reasons for their survival as people to highlight how the characters emerge as non-victims while preserving the Indian ethos and culture in the novel *Dollar Bahu*. The aim of this study is to examine the effects that victimizations on individual and society.

Keywords: Relationship, Dollars, Marriage, Cultural Contrast, Society, Victimization and Economical Status

Introduction

Sudha Murthy, a prolific author of Kannadian and English literature, has authored nonfiction, short story collections, fiction novels, travelogues, and children's books. Her books have been translated into multiple languages. In 2006, she got the R.K. Narayan Award for Literature and the Padma Shri, and in 2011, the Karnataka government honoured her with the Attimabbe Award for achievement in Kannada literature. She is currently the chairwoman of the Infosys Foundation, a well-known philanthropist, and a member of the Gates Foundation's public health efforts. She captivates readers with her straightforward and engaging writing style and in-depth representation of the characters.

Indian women are traditionally defined in terms of men in their families and societies. Women's writings offer an inside look at how Indian women handle adversity. Sudha Murty aims to highlight the challenges faced by women in the Indian culture, particularly those who recognize their intelligence despite societal norms and familial obligations. Murty's portrayal of female protagonists as

victims in their civilizations highlights the evolution of independence. The victims in position one are deceptive and unaware that they are being victimized; they often feel themselves to be privileged. While viewers identify with the character's position as a victim, the victims are quite comfortable and refuse to accept that they are victims. The victim in position one refuses to admit and acknowledge her victimization out of fear of losing the status quo, which gives her with a sense of smug satisfaction. She prefers to keep and remain in a safe zone of comfort and security as long as it provides her with special compensation that looks to satisfy individuals.

Review of Literature

M. Harsha vardhini, & S.Udhayakumar observe: "In the novel Dollar bahu, the writer brings out the troubles of a middle-class woman who is ill-treated by her mother-in-law. Money corrupts the way family members look at one another. The story delves into the complexities of family relationships, particularly the dynamics between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. It explores how money and societal expectations can influence these relationships, often leading to conflict and misunderstanding" (26).

G. Prasanthi points out: "Sudha Murthy's 'Dollar Bahu', projects the positive impact of the migration by well educated people from India to USA. The story of Gouramma and her family is a symbol of Indian Lower Middle class family. Their son Chandru is a symbol for the financial aspirant of the educated youth in India" (semanticscholar.org).

Victimization

The victim recognizes that it is a package and hence considers herself not as a victim. She is unable to accept the position and will lose the compensation provided by the dominant victimizers. The victims in this study do not explicitly reject their encounter because they seek to understand their victimization. Their victimization experiences are substantial enough to warrant further investigation since they become conscious of their victimization throughout the novels. The characters in the novel Dollar Bahu provide a profound insight into the feelings of Indian women, particularly daughters-in-law. "Life on earth is not a paradise, especially for women," according to Sai Mamata. She continued, "the oppressed female develops frustration and tries to prove herself" (Mamata). However, women face degradation and treachery that keep them in position one.

Gouramma married Shamanna, a kind-hearted and impartial school teacher. He is a husband with a normal middle-class attitude, as evidenced by his behaviour throughout the novel. However, Gouramma is dissatisfied with her husband's income and wishes to live lavishly like others. She does not want to reveal herself low in front of others, so she prays every day. Her struggle to raise three children alone on her husband's low wage, as well as negative comments from neighbours, inspire her to pursue a better life.

Gouramma's hardship has changed her into a greedy person. So she begins to envy others. Whenever she goes to a wedding or a family gathering, she would stare at the women in expensive silk saris and diamond jewelry with envy and tells herself that they are so fortunate. Shamanna's inability to achieve her aspirations has led her to instill greed in her first son Chandru, encouraging him to excel academically and work abroad. Chandru, who is raised by his mother's views, does well and try's to please her. Gouramma has become a victim of money yet manages to live unknowingly.

Gouramma dominates her husband and son, Chandru, since she is blinded by the opulence that Jamuna has brought with her on marriage. The truth is that Jamuna and her parents detect Gouramma's hungry thoughts and begin to disregard her and the rest of the family shortly after

their marriage. Jamuna pledges to return to her father's house, but has left for America to join her husband without staying with her mother-in-law or family. She says:

I am leaving for America tomorrow. I feel 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 good three months with you. (59)

Gouramma is happy with Jamuna's gifts and saris for Surabhi's wedding in a beautifully adorned box, unaware that Jamuna has used the saris abroad. Jamuna has wrapped the saris and gifts so that no one would know they are used. Gouramma has lauded Jamuna, unaware that she is a victim of her own greed and her daughter-in-law's deception. It is evident as: "Gouramma was dancing to the tune of dollar bahu." (69).

However, Gouramma's rise to number two is marked by a talk with her daughter, Surabhi, regarding dollars and Jamuna. Gouramma does not only control her daughter with Jamuna's and her son's lives, but she also emphasizes on the power of the dollar, demonstrating that she has recognized herself as a victim of dollars as well as international sophistication.

You will have to count every penny and try to save all the time. Look at Jamuna! She has two cars; she can spend money in lakhs because she has money in dollars. The Dollar is all-powerful. You know it is the Dollar that changed our lives! Have you seen the photos of your brother's house? You can lead that kind of life if you marry someone who is in the US or someone very rich in India. (59)

Her desire for wealth and a better life in the United States has driven her to move up to position two. Without recognizing her victimization, Gouramma, Vinuta's mother-in-law has used her authority to victimize her. Gouramma is an unbiased mother-in-law at first, but she becomes partial after the arrival of her new 'Dollar Bahu' Yamuna. Her money and false affection has misled Gouramma, who begins to compare the statuses of her two daughters-in-law. Gouramma becomes a victimizer in the process by injuring Vinuta, making her feel inferior as she has begun her married life without money.

Gouramma becomes a victimizer of Vinuta, neglecting her and making her feel as if she is not welcomed as one of the daughters-in-law, but rather as a member of the family responsible for household chores. Vinuta has never expected her mother-in-law's behavior to change after the advent of another bahu (daughter-in-law). Marriage is considered as a type of servitude for women because it acts as a stronger power than the individual. Women in marriage are conditioned not only by patriarchy, but also by cultural and societal taboos, as well as by the elder women in the household.

Gouramma has shifted to position two when she realized she was a victim at the hands of her daughter-in-law Jamuna. Dollars seem to be her ultimate goal in life. Her depiction of cash and greed is as follows:

... Dream about the dollar, that magic green currency, which could change her house and fulfill her dreams. It was the dollar, not Indian rupees, which could elevate her into the elite circle at social gatherings and marriage halls. The dollar was like the goddess Lakshmi, with the magic wand. (25)

Generally, Indian parents like to celebrate their oldest son's marriage first. Nonetheless, Gouramma wants her second son, Girish, to marry first. As Chandru begins to earn dollars, she has expected to receive a large dowry. She has planned to brag to her friends, relatives, and neighbors about her dollar-based lifestyle. Dollars governed Gouramma, and despite her awareness of her victimization, she feels joyful. She also makes no effort to break free from her monetary idea because she is content with being a victim in position two.

There are several incidences that has demonstrated unequivocally that Gouramma is placed in position two, where she is powerless and helpless yet accepted her status as a victim. The event in which Gouramma was insulted by Jamuna in America exemplifies how she is portrayed in her position. She declines to accompany Gouramma to the hospital during her delivery. Jamuna ignore her mother-in-law's desire to be with her, which is the primary reason for her vacation to America. Gouramma was reminded of her grandson in India and expects equal rights to care for the infant in America. However, Jamuna bars her from holding the newborn.

Another incident occurred when Gouramma's eagerness to perform puja was dampened by her 'dollar bahu' Jamuna in her home. Jamuna refuses to follow her in-law's proposals on an auspicious day because it is not practiced in western countries and she does not want to disrupt her home for a puja ceremony. Gouramma feels low in front of her daughter-in-law, but she console herself and does not respond because she feels powerless in Jamuna's house, demonstrating her recognition of her victimisation in America. Gouramma expresses her helplessness in the following remark:

In her heart, she was outraged by Jamuna's attitude. She felt that though this house was big, it had a small heart. If Vinuta had ever said such a thing, Gouramma would have scolded her until she was forced to apologize. But Gouramma did not speak her mind to Jamuna. She was, after all, a Dollar Bahu. (93)

These examples tarnish the reputation of a decent mother-in-law. Gouramma, despite being conscious of her victimization, chooses to glide in it for selfish reasons. Despite having the option of venting her rage on Jamuna, she has chosen to remain mute for fear of losing the riches and the sophisticated life she shares with her son and Jamuna in America.

Indian women live in a male-dominated, traditional, patriarchal culture divided by caste, religion, and class. C.Abinaya says: "Sudha Murthy also gives details about certain aspects of Indian tradition and the ceremonies that would strengthen the bond between humans and would help children to become better adults. Hence cultural values and modernity influence every person in this era and it is necessary to take the constructive ideas"

Despite caste differences, women are responsible for upholding the institution of marriage and maintaining an ideal family within their community's ethical guidelines. Though money, power, and a lack of affection contribute to women's victimization throughout their lives, women are conditioned by the limits of the community and the ideals of marriage that allow them to be in position one while participating in the institution of marriage. Some characters seek to overcome their victimhood after realizing it and identifying the reasons why. Sudha Murthy illustrates the underlying vitality in some of the characters as they mature. The following chapter focusses on dynamic characters who advance from positions one and two to positions three and four.

Conclusion

Women are compelled into conforming to the patriarchal framework of marriage, which is portrayed as a virtue. Furthermore, if women do not behave appropriately, they will experience denial and dissatisfaction. Victims are unable to recognize their victimization within the marriage structure due to this limitation. While Gouramma is transformed to position two after becoming a victim at the hands of her daughter-in-law, Vinuta's character is shown to be fixed in position two since she is conscious of her victimization inside the family.

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