

Devaluation of Family and Human Behaviour in Sudha Murty's *House of Cards*

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Abstract

The research paper entitled "Devaluation of Family and Human Behaviour in Sudha Murty's *House of Cards* aims to explore the tendency of human relationship. Sudha Murty is one of the most realistic woman writers in India who strongly clutches the values throughout her writings. She penned the characters in an elegant way. In the novel *House of Cards*, Murty expresses how the family system gets disturbed due to urban life. This paper analyses the family dysfunction owing to several changes in humanistic values. When the people start migrating from rural areas to urban areas in search of their livelihood, they adapt the changes in their life style as well as their behaviour. The author pictures the struggles faced by the common people through the protagonists Sanjay and Mridula. When Sanjay admires materialistic life, he loses his moral values and becomes a victim of social injustice. But Mridula never changes her beliefs and behaviours. There are some people who adopt themselves to the urban life and some get changed in their behavioural pattern. It is Mridula gets adopted to the changes, but stays constant and Sanjay gets changed in his characters and values. It is a heartwarming story of a woman's journey towards empowerment and independence, and the obstacles that she overcome along the way.

Keywords: society, behaviour, trust, relationship, and love.

In Indian literature women writers receive great appreciation for their writings. They exhibit sufferings of women and their struggles in the patriarchal society. Sudha Murty is one among them who strongly pictures the pain of women in Indian family system. In the past, women being the slave to men, they struggled for getting education, equal rights, and not receive equal respect. In modern days, women are free to express their feelings and emotions and they have become strong enough to manage both their families and jobs. Yet they do not get equal respect from their family members. Sudha Murty in her novel *House of Cards* tries to express that neither men nor women are superior to one another. Both men and women are equal and men should not underestimate the thoughts and ideas of women. when men treat women equally, the love between them never fades away and they could lead their family happily. This would happen only when men respect women's feelings. This novel is simple yet powerful, making it accessible to a wide audience. The characters are well developed and relatable, making the reader empathize with their struggles and triumphs. Throughout the story the author manages to the reader to be engaged until the end. Sudha Murty portrays the characters in a realistic way so that the reader could indulge themselves with the flow of reading. Sudha Murty uses very lucid language and that helps to immerse in the book and the readers get connected towards the happenings in their lives. The characters in the novels seem to be very personal and that happens in and around the world. Sudha Murty once again proved that she is one of the most respected authors in India, and her contribution to Indian literature is invaluable. The paper showcase the family system in India and its getting destructed in modern days due to the admiration of materialistic life style and how the human's nature gets changed has been discussed in the paper.

Sudha Murty was born to Dr.R.H. Kulkarni and Vimala Kulkarni in the year 1950 on in Shiggaon at Karnataka. She is an eminent business woman, teacher, orator, social worker and a skilled writer. She is also a kind hearted person who is very humble and down to earth. She works for the betterment of the society and for the development of youngsters. She has completed her B.E in Electrical Engineering in B.V.B college of Engineering and Technology. She pursued M.E. in Computer Science from the Indian Institute of Science. After her studies, she has become the first female engineer in India's largest auto manufacturer company TELCO. After getting married to Narayana Murty, she has become the chairperson of Infosys Foundation.

She is one of the leading successful women writers in Indian English literature. Her works are the realistic portrayal of the socio-psychological issues faced by the contemporary Indian women. She writes novels, short stories, travelogues and autobiographies. She explores new things and she would include in her writings that help her content seemed more realistic. She never uses uncommon vocabularies in her works, but she uses very simple words that even a tenth standard student could read her books without using dictionaries. She says in one of the interviews with Shashi Tharoor at the time of publishing her book *Here, There and Everywhere* "I should write in such a way that they should feel comfortable without a dictionary because when they are reading in a cooking they are reading next to that, they can't go and bring the dictionary, so let them read. That's the only reason." This makes her readers more comfortable in her writings.

In the novel *House of Cards*, the author expresses the importance of family bonding and the significance of moral values such as love, respect for each other, parenting, honesty and purity. The protagonist Mridula holds the moral values throughout the novel, her love for her family members made her a supreme character. When she is not respected by her

husband Sanjay she is affected psychologically and struggled by depression, finally she decides to leave him permanently. In Indian family system it is believed that the wives have to adjust and be flexible to her husband in anyway. Similarly, Mridula adjusted herself to the core, but her husband disrespects her often and did not consider her as equal. Whenever he speaks, he ill-treats her even in front of their son, Sishir. Once Mridula came to know that Sanjay has hidden bank account she decides that she cannot live with him anymore and leaves her family and moves towards to her native to lead her life. Through the character Mridula, the author pictures the struggles of women in a family and the depression she faces due to dishonesty of her husband. She has painted the character Mridula as a strong woman who is devoted to her moral values and indestructible will power. Mridula is a typical Indian woman who hails from a middle class family and was being a strong support for her husband to reach a high status in society. The entire novel speaks on her emotions, feelings and trauma she faced psychologically.

Sanjay and Mridula are the protagonists of this novel, Mridula has grown up under a caring father Bheemanna and her mother Rukuma. Her father develops her in a such a way that she should be open towards her elders and she must not hide anything to the loved one. Once Bheemanna had a conversation with her, he said "You must always be open. Don't hide. Hiding is a sin" (3). She follows her values and grows up in a friendly and an honest atmosphere. From her childhood she does what she is fascinated with and she lives her life in her own way and enjoys every minute that keeps her always in a happy mood. She was very good student in her school days, so that her teachers advised her to go for medicine or engineering but she loves to become a teacher and she is firm in her decision, she follows her dreams and not fall for others' words.

Sanjay is a man of dedication, hard work, smartness and hard hearted person. When he was young his father died and his mother struggled to raise him up. She was a money lender and Sanjay was developed only by his mother's only income. He studied hard and became a Gynecologist. He was very dedicated to his job that made him forgot the outside world. When Sanjay met her for the first time he fell in love. He met her in his friend's marriage and he mistook her as a thief and later felt sorry for her. That day he could not come out of her thoughts, he keeps imagining her visuals. He thought "He had seen beautiful and innocent girls in the movies and read about them in books, but it was difficult to meet such girls in real life" (31)

They married with their parent's support and started life together. After her marriage her life changes drastically. She has to contend with a manipulative mother in law, an intensive husband and a society that expects her to conform to traditional gender roles. In the initial stage though they possess less amount of money they tackle their life successfully and Sanjay used to give his entire salary to Mridula and she takes care of her family financially. When compared to Sanjay, Mridula earns more than him yet he has no issues in it. Sanjay in his hospital faces so many issues and feels disappointed with society badly. He is clear that a man who has power and money can rule the world. Though Sanjay is honest, he is loyal to his work, and has good academics he is not selected for the government scholarship which makes him feel down. He thinks of his friend Alex's suggestions to start a business but he is not strong enough to take decisions. Mridula makes him cool and gives him full confidence to prevail over frustration that he comes cross of government hospital politics. She welcomes the idea of starting Nursing Home, and ready to sell her gold jewels. She says "As long as you earn money legally and ethically, I'm with you. I'll help you in your struggle. You can earn money illegally too, but I'll never approve of that" (128). This shows how Mridula gives importance for her ethical values.

Sanjay started his own nursing home and it acted well, they got back their jewels within a year, he became a trained person in money making and an expert business man. When money surrounds in; love between them departs, they spent very less time and their son become arrogant of his father wealth. When she tries to control his son, Sanjay opposed her and allow him to do anything that makes him happy. She is looked down upon by her son, he felt she was not the right person to talk about education. To illustrate, Murty says "He did not care for his mother's words when she told him that he should go to bed early and wake up early too. Instead he got irritated and said, Amma, stop it. You and I have different options. My mother is a broken record. She keeps repeating the same things over and over" (156). Mridula feels humiliated and unhappy with his words.

Mridula worried their affluence made his son arrogant and disdain. Sanjay encourages his son behaviour and advises him: "Money is the most important thing. Almost everybody has a price, Sishir everybody has a price at which they are ready to compromise their principles. For some, it is ten thousand rupees and for others, it may be ten lakhs. Money is most people's weakness. When I was in school, children made fun of me because of my arm. Today, the same people call me 'Sir'" (155). Sanjay firmly believes that money gives him power and confidence.

Mridula opposes him that children are innocent and asked him not to pour them negative qualities. In the childhood every child used to have fun of others and enjoy their days that did not give any sense at that time. She tries to direct his son to be humanistic but Sanjay forces him to be materialistic. He has faced injustices in his childhood and working place which made him conscious of money and believed that it is authority of power. Mridula amazed, once Sanjay was dedicated his life for poor patients and was so kind in nature but now has pictured as new a man.

The pursuit of wealth and material possessions can overshadow the importance of emotional connections within families. When man prioritize money, marital relationship can become transactional rather than based on love, care, and mutual support. The erosion of emotional bonds can lead to loneliness, and a lack of fulfillment within the family units.

Money, though essential for survival and prosperity, can sometimes act as a double-edged sword. Once his friend Alex says to Sanjay, "Money is a useful tool. It's like a knife – you can either kill a person with it or you can cut an apple. It's up to you to decide how to use it" (109). While it has the potential to bring comfort and security, it can also wreak havoc on the delicate fabric of family relationships. When financial matters take center stage, emotions can run high, leading to conflicts, resentments and fractures within families.

Day by day clashes between Sanjay and Mridula arise higher. Her trust has broken down totally, when she comes to know Sanjay has a secret bank account. She is unable to believe her husband has large amount of black money. He is selfless towards his duty before he starts his nursing home, he has dedicated his life for his job and always concern for the poor as his father advised him "the foremost duty of a doctor is to take care of his patients. As a doctor, you should understand a patient's suffering and serve him the same way that you serve God. God doesn't stay in just T. Narasipura's temple. He also comes in the form of a patient" (101). He had followed the words of his father as a doctor, being a business man his inner quality completely changed and social politics has also played a great role in his behavioral changes. Despite his knowledge and talent, he missed government scholarship which makes him feel bad. To enunciate, Murty says: "Though we talk about equal opportunities for everyone, practically, in our country, it is community, language and connections that are important" (49). Thus social structure also plays an eminent role in an individual's life. His inferiority complex makes him become an arrogant and dominant person owing to the circumstances he faced in his life time.

Mridula's heart sinks and got depression. once filled with love and trust, their marriage now tainted, by the illicit wealth her Sanjay had selfishly gained. She spent sleepless nights, worried day night, hidden from her husband vision and locked herself in the room. Even in her dreams she had not imagined that her selfless Sanjay would become such selfish and disloyal man.

. "Mridula felt that there was an intense vacuum in her life. The huge nursing home, this big house and its servants were of no consequence to her. Money had taken away her happiness. She could not even raise her son the way she wanted to. Her husband did not understand her. What was the use of life? (170)".

The above statement from the novel proves that she is no longer happy in her life. Darkness filled in her days, to light her ways she met Dr. Rao helps her to get rid of her depression. She attends many sessions and felt relaxed. She understood that "money brings out the best and the worst in people" (213). She is sure that she cannot change Sanjay so she decided to leave him and move to her native. She gets transferred and leaves Sanjay to lead his life as he wishes and she moves to live on her own that gives happiness for her.

She leaves Sanjay not because he has a secret account "it is not about money. Money can be earned and lost. It is about faith that a wife has in her husband. That's more valuable than money and gold. Faith sustains a marriage and brings joy to the family. Without it, we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith and trust I had in him?" (186). To maintain any relationship faith and loyalty deserves the fore most place. There are so many factors that affect a family relationship like poverty, occupation and so on. Faith and trust is the pillar to sustain in love, but when trust is broken between the couples their intimacy slowly degrades and they become two separate walls.

Life is to live not to stay in a four closed walls. Money, of course is an essential part, but preference has to be given to the relationship. Wife expects love, care, time from her husband more than husband's earnings. The author clearly exhibits: "When a girl gets married, the extent of her happiness depends upon the husband's commitment and communication with her. A few kind words, a little appreciation and small gifts like flowers can make a girl feel special. But Sanjay just wanted to show that he was the boss" (214). Open communication, mutual respect, and empathy are keys in navigating the complexities of money within the family unit.

Some people believe that money brings everything in their life, that can be appropriate in today's society but the reality is that money can't provide everything to an individual like love, compassion, kindness, caring and happiness. Women expects love and care from their husbands rather than heaping up wealth. To prove this Murty says, "Every woman wants to change her life but no man understands how. He showers his wife with gifts that he likes but not with what she wants" (211). Sanjay presented a costly car to Mridula but she was not happy with that instead she wished to spent time with him and talk each other from their heart.

This article shows the family ties are shattered due to several changes in the human behavior and the struggles women come across in the marriage life to withstand as a wife. Here the protagonist took a vibrant decision which the typical woman would not choose to do. That shows women can be independent and they cannot be forced to lead a relationship with a man who disrespects and dominates women. The author presents Mridula as a majestic, frank, resolute, and assertive rather than passive and subservient.

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