Beyond Dollars: Materialism, Identity, and Emotional Bonds in Sudha Murty's *Dollar Bahu*

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Abstract
Sudha Murty's Greenback Bahu offers a poignant exploration of family dynamics, cultural struggle, and the pervasive impact of materialism on interpersonal relationships. Through the contrasting lives of two daughters-in-law, one embodying conventional Indian value of simplicity, self-sacrifice, and emotional care, and the alternative symbolizing modernity and fabric achievement. Murty evaluates society's growing obsession with wealth and standing. The novel delves into how the pursuit of material prosperity can erode emotional intimacy and deform familial hierarchies, in particular within traditional Indian families. By means of juxtaposing culture and modernity, Murty highlights the emotional and psychological effects of consumerism, particularly in shaping ladies' roles and identities within the family. In the end, dollar Bahu underscores that authentic happiness and fulfilment come not from material wealth but from love, empathy, and human connection.
Keywords: Materialism, Family Dynamics, Traditional Values, Self-identification.

Murty's dollar Bahu invites us into the intimate world of an Indian center-magnificence household caught between consolation and aspiration, tradition and modernity, love and money. At its center lies the assessment among daughters-in-law: one who lives in India, embracing the norms of care, sacrifice, familial connection; the other, the so-called "dollar bahu," located inside the USA, earns in greenbacks and plays popularity and deference at home because of her foreign residence and financial success. Through this dialectic, Murty probes the societal obsession with cloth wealth and exposes how that mindset reshapes identity, one's own family dynamics, and emotional fulfilment. The seeming enticement of dollars becomes a reflection via which the priorities of a family and certainly of society are discovered and questioned.

The radical begins in a modest Bangalore household in which Vinuta, married to Girish, the financial institution clerk, becomes the dutiful daughter-in-law. She adapts to her in legal guidelines' rhythms, quietly bearing the subtleties of the mother-in-law's countless reviews, and has a tendency to the house with constancy. Meanwhile, the elder son, Chandru, ventures to America. His return precipitates the marriage of Jamuna, the daughter of a real estate

developer, and as the own family glories within the prospect of bucks, the shift in interest far from Vinuta is rapid and stark. Murty writes, "greenback Bahu" turns into the symbol of aspiration despite the fact that what it brings in emotional terms is a way less certain (Murty). The mom in regulation, Gouramma, dazzled by the air of mystery of overseas income, starts to treat Jamuna as though she embodies destiny. Vinuta, by way of evaluation, will become the lesser half of this reordering of love. Murty suggests that material achievement involves overshadowing the normal labour of love that Vinuta embodies.

Materialism emerges as a valuable topic, no longer in grandiose talk, however subtle shifts, the mother-in-law imagines an existence of "gold and silver jewellery, vehicles, a big residence, servants" while she thinks of her daughter overseas. (Beg) The evaluation among the "greenback bahu" and the "rupee bahu" is not truly financial: it's far more emotional, symbolic. Murty uses this duality to critique the growing tide of consumerism in Indian society, in which global mobility and foreign profits grow to be repute markers. As one scholar puts it, Murty's novel "evaluates the commodification of relationships, where family ties are reduced to financial transactions." (Sharma) The metaphor of the "dollar" is freighted money is not the most effective way, but an identification, a degree of real worth. The daddy-in-law's moving choice from the daughter-in-law who sends greenbacks to the one who quietly maintains domestic equilibrium indicates that economic contribution turns into a form of love-currency. But the charge paid is emotional distance: Vinuta's fitness begins to go through; the home's equilibrium is unsettled.

Ladies' roles within the family function as a prism through which those dynamics monitor themselves. Vinuta represents a greater traditional feminine ideal in Indian society: care, sacrifice, selflessness, nurturing. Jamuna, the "dollar bahu," in a feel embodies modernity and economic fulfillment but also emotional isolation. A feminist study of the unconventional reminds us that each of those fashions restricts the girl's subjectivity, whether the dutiful daughter in regulation or the overseas earning showpiece, the female is described by her relation to her own family and cash instead of by means of autonomy. Research into the radical lady characters argues that Murty explores "the psyche of girl characters to apprehend their mind, behavior, and persona" and, in doing so, highlights how ladies internalise cloth and emotional expectations. (Gupta & Tiwari) Furthermore, a feminist attention reading unearths that the depicted mother-in-law-daughter-in-law dynamics reveal entrenched patriarchal structures: the mother-in-regulation's favouring of the "greenback bahu" is perhaps about social prestige as a lot as affection. The unconventional, then, isn't absolutely a critique of money, but a critique of the way gendered roles are mediated via economics and status.

The intergenerational war between tradition and modernity is visible not simply within the daughters-in-law but inside the worldview of the circle of relatives's elders, and inside the diffused cultural conflict embodied in the U.S. sojourn. While Gouramma visits her elder son and daughter-in-law in the USA, she encounters a life that is ostensibly prosperous but emotionally hollow. She observes "how releasing life can be far away from the strict norms" of Indian middle-class existence, but she additionally senses what's lacking: connection, belonging. The picture of the yank home gleams with the trimmings of fulfillment, however Murty makes use of that comparison to remind us that what is earned in greenbacks won't purchase what became as soon as taken as a right, the warm temperature of domestic, the belonging of ritual, the small predictable patterns of normal lifestyles. Students argue that the novel uses the anxiety between Indian rootedness and Western mobility to critique modernity's illusions. As Kanwar writes, the Indian fascination with "the dollar global" is juxtaposed with a "common Indian's resistance to American liberality, in particular within the context of matrimonial relationships." (Kanwar) This dialectic highlights a broader cultural tension: is the migration toward modernity and cash certainly a step forward or a detour from emotional fulfilment?

Importantly, Murty reminds the reader that real happiness isn't always the buildup of wealth, but the affirmation of relationships. The climax, while Gouramma realises that her emotional bond with Vinuta has turned into something deeper and more meaningful than the admiration she heaped on Jamuna, is tender in its revelation, the recognition that material wealth can not replace emotional care. The author presents not a moralising sermon, but a gentle human tale: the mother-in-law, the son, the two bahus, each grapple with what they have valued. The emotional and psychological fees of materialism turn out to be seen, the forgetting of Vinuta's emotional labour, her fading peace of mind and fitness; the daughter-in-law abroad who, despite the dollars, finds herself remote from the house she once married into. In this manner, the unconventional raises questions about identity: Does being a "greenback bahu" grant reputation or erode identity? Does success measured in forex undermine the core of what makes someone worthy in a familial context?

The family shape in the novel, rooted in Indian upper-class traditions, is under pressure. The daddy in regulation, once content, will become enthusiastic about the greenback-earning branch of his circle of relatives; the mother-in-law's shifts in desire ripple through relationships and adjust the emotional geography of the home. Murty demonstrates how the price machine of the family adjusts when cash turns into the axis. Values which include recognition, love, and care that were once given as subjects of path, now end up conditional. The culture of searching after every other, of pleasing roles because they're roles of one's own family, is challenged by means of the new logic of trade, dollars in, repute up, rupees best, deference down. In essence, Murty shows that after wealth becomes the arbiter of love, the relational material weakens.

Materialism right here is not certainly about having money, but about what money signifies: mobility, modernity, strength, status. And these signifiers shape the characters' identities. Jamuna, although inside the U.S. and earning or connected to earning dollars, remains remote in relational phrases; she is curated as status but not embedded as intimate. Vinuta, although economically modest, remains the one with emotional intensity and connection, but she is undervalued. This inversion of opinions, the social emphasis on money and outside achievement, emphasises the internal foreign money of care, belonging, and emotional labour.

Some other layer of interpretation uses a Marxist lens: the unconventional can be read as an observation on elegance, labour, and economic mobility. One examines factors out that the impoverished or economically modest aren't honestly missing in cash, however, within the "forex" of social capital respect, affection, and validation. (Milcah) In dollar Bahu, the conventional bahu's domestic labour is unremunerated, invisible, yet she provides relational price; the "greenback bahu" brings visible cost (in cash), but relational cost remains minimum. Murty thereby exposes how the house turns into a site of economic trade, how money disentangles care from labour. In that experience, the radical invitations readers to keep in mind the price of migration, of overseas income, of popularity, whilst relational expenses increase. Even as the radical is accessible in style, its implication is profound: the emotional toll that materialism extracts from regular lives, and especially from ladies, emerges in quiet moments: Vinuta's fitness struggling, the mom-in-law's inner guilt, the younger daughter-in-law's loneliness. Murty invites compassion for all her characters; there's no demonising of Jamuna, but rather a gentle critique of the device that treats her as a trophy and ignores the price to her identity and relationships.

In the end, Dollar Bahu, by means of Sudha Murty, offers a rich exploration of materialism, identification, gender, and family in modern-day Indian society. Through the contrasting trajectories of its two daughters-in-law, the radical reviews the social elevation of money at the cost of emotional bonds, and displays the transferring roles of ladies and intergenerational expectancies in a globalised world. Emotional fulfilment emerges now not from the accumulation of greenbacks, but from love, connection, and mutual respect. With the aid of bringing a micro-family situation

into communication with wider societal shifts, migration, international income, and changing gender roles, Murty crafts a story that speaks to the coronary heart of current Indian sensibility: anchored in tradition, but unsettled by way of the lure of modernity. In doing so, she reminds us that the genuine measure of worth lies not in wealth, but in the warmth of human relationships.

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