

From Silent Suffering to Emancipation: An Analysis of Sudha Murthy's *House of Cards*

¹Shipra and ²Dr. Monika Bhatnagar

¹Research Scholar, Meerut College, Meerut, U.P.

²Associate Professor, Department of English, Meerut College, Meerut, U.P.

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 15March2019

Keywords

Silent suffering, patriarchy, loneliness, emotional Independence, emancipation

Corresponding Author:

Email: shipradahiya907@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

With the spring of Indian Independence, there has been an advancing transformation in the perspective and attitude towards women. It was genuinely discovered that India could not make complete and remarkable progress in numerous aspects without elevating the relegated gender. Sudha Murthy, an eminent Indian women writer in English, draws her pen on the palpable issues connected to women in the contemporary era of globalization and their strive for freedom in traditional Indian society. Her protagonists are intelligent, assiduous, as well as vulnerable. They conventionally move to entire succumbing; however, the core of self-regard remains with them eternally. But when this self-esteem is attacked frequently and vehemently, they eventually metamorphose themselves into a defiant, notwithstanding, in an amicable way. This paper throws light on the journey of female protagonist Mridula, who was manipulated, choused, and ignored by her spouse. Moreover, the breach of trust and frail marriage made her nonplussed and aghast. This feminine mystique of Murthy's protagonist emancipates her from silent suffering by establishing her individuality and emotional Independence. Initially, she suffers silently but ultimately emerges from the suffocating and mundane corporality in the hunt for a meaningful life and serenity.

Introduction

Sudha Murthy remains a colossus among Indian women writers in English. She is a philanthropist and a woman of various aspects as she has drafted many ultimate novels, short stories, and technical books. Furthermore, she has been awarded the Padamashree and R. K. Narayan awards for her endowment to literature and philanthropic works. She has tried to comprehend how social constraints affected women's lives and how it has affected their relationships. Moreover, through her novels, she encourages women to be bold and courageous in challenging situations. Her stories explore the social and ethical values, human relationships, conjugal relationships, importance of education, the conflict between emotionalism and rationalism, patriarchy, and the male-female psyche. Her female protagonists are unique in themselves as they are educated, courageous, and have a bold spirit to face the challenges in life. They break the chains of restrictions imposed by the male-dominated society and lead a liberal and purposeful life. She plunges deep into the mind and hearts of characters and concentrates on the preposterousness going on in them. She rivets her creations on the environment of regional adorn so that the readers become closely acquainted with the dwelling of Karnataka and the gander of the townlet. A critical study of selected novels of Sudha Murthy will be evidential in this respect.

The novel *House of cards* by Sudha Murthy is a sensitively portrayed story that explores human relationships, self-discovery, and breach of trust in conjugal life. It explores the inner and cerebral journey associated with the predicament and internal conflicts encountered by contemporary society. This novel was published in the Kannad language as "Paridhi" in 2004 and subsequently translated into English in 2013.

Mridula, the protagonist of the tale, hales from Aldahalli, a hamlet in the Indian state of Karnataka. She has huge gorgeous eyes and long black hair, and she follows a systematic approach. She is intelligent, kind, and fair in her behavior. She possesses immense avidity for life and boundless vigor for reading, cooking, and sketching. She savors each moment of life, professionally working as a teacher in a government high school. Her family was well affluent, gentle, and gratified. Unlike numerous prevalent Indian parents, her guardians gave her the liberty to decide about her education and choose her soulmate. As her father says, "Times have changed, we cannot tell children that you should become a lawyer, or a doctor marry a person of our choice. Education and marriage should be according to our children wishes because these are forever. After all, it is their life, and they have the right to follow their heart and make decisions by themselves" (*Murthy 3*).

Two hearts, Mridula and Sanjay, met and got enamored with each other in a marriage ceremony in Hubli. Dr. Sanjay was tall with well-defined features, curly hairs, a muscular physique, and dedicated to his work. He also had an armed deformity, but Mridula chose him as his soulmate irrespective of that short arm deformity. She believed in once genuineness and honesty, not physical appearance and affluence. She opines, "I don't mind marrying a men with less money. I can also work. But the boy should be good natured." (*Murthy 22*). Finally, both Mridula and Sanjay tied the knot without ado. After marriage, they got settled in Bangalore, where Sanjay got a job in Victoria Government Hospital.

While Mridula was serving as a teacher in a school through the life from Aldahalli to Bangalore was challenging to

Mridula, new place, new people, she tried very hard adapting to a new city with sweet-sour experience. She worked hard, earned savings, and managed things but remained balanced and gratified. Both Mridula and Sanjay talked about all problems and matters and took decisions together. Ultimately, Sanjay completed his Masters in Gynecology as joined as a doctor and lecturer in Government hospital Bangalore. Walking through the ebbs and flows in his field Sanjay transfigured himself with a new atmosphere. Eventually, he decides to start a private nursing home in collaboration with his friend Alex. Mridula lived and supported him, considering his dream as her own. She even mortgaged her jewelry to support her husband in the new venture and has always been a pillar of strength for him emotionally and financially at challenging times. She worked diligently, and even she did not spend any money on the hired vehicle, opting instead to walk to her destination in the hopes of achieving financial stability in the future. When success and money started to pour in, it changed the conduct and attitude of Sanjay towards Mridula and Life. He became negligent and discourteous towards her spouse while refining and courteous to others. He made a mockery of Mridula's monthly income disremembering its significant part in forming his career and goal in the past. Mridula believed in the core ethical values, e.g., love, compassion, contentment, and peace, to keep life and relationships meaningful. She was crestfallen, seeing life dazzled with materialism.

On the other hand, her husband Sanjay became a vital part of the malefaction. He kept tainted as well as fair money. Sanjay was extensively involved in fraudulent operations at his nursing home, and he did so without informing Mridula of his involvement. When Mridula got to know about it, she found a contradictive approach in their idealism. She was taken aback when she heard Sanjay's philosophy; He said, "Nothing is black or white in this world. The cow gives milk for its calf. But we drink that same milk. isn't that wrong? Trees have life but we cut them down and use their wood. isn't that wrong too? Mosquitos and bugs are also living creatures. Don't we kill them because they trouble us? A big fish always eat the small fish. Is that Right?" (Murthy 176). Mridula was flabbergasted by Sanjay's hierarchy of verbal conflict and was compelled to re-evaluate her feelings for him.

Mridula was astounded once again when she realized that Sanjay transferred ten lacs rupees to his mother managed to make his black money white. He also assisted his sister Lakshmi in purchasing an apartment, and he also donated a vehicle to his nephew Anil, all while keeping all of this information hidden from Mridula. Once when Mridula asked about the car Sanjay gifted to Anil he said, it was the company's car. This dubious attitude of Sanjay shook her; she thought when she had asked him to help his mother and sister, he discarded her opinion while at her back he has done all this secretly. Mridula felt cheated and manipulated. "At that moment, something inside her shattered into pieces. When the foundation of trust cracked, how can a marriage remain the same? Mridula felt like she was drowning. Her thoughts haunted her" (Murthy 183). Conflicts between emotionalism and practicality created mayhem in their marital life. She expressed herself in front of her friend, "Anita, 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 marriage and brings joy to the family. Without it, we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith and trust I had in him?" (Murthy 186). Sanjay instilled uneasiness in her as she felt like a cheater had stabbed her trust and faith. Mridula packed up her belongings, relocated to the guest room, and locked herself inside the room. She burst out crying and talked to no one.

When Sanjay discovered the source of Mridula's grief, he even didn't bother to clarify. Instead, he considered why he needed to get permission from others to give money and whom to not; after all, they are his mother and sister. Sanjay did not come to ask about Mridula whether she ate food or not. Mridula felt silent and numb. She isolated herself from everyone. But her husband didn't care about her feeling and heartfulness. He believes, "She has a good house, servants, plenty of money a great son and a famous husband" (Murthy 171). Mridula, on the other hand, is dissatisfied. Neither the rest of society nor her spouse can comprehend her dissatisfaction.

After several days Mridula's anguish started heading towards depression, so her student Vani pleaded with her to visit a psychiatrist, Dr. Rao. As per her request, Mridula visited Dr. Rao and disclosed the reason behind her stress. She felt a sense of awakening when Dr. Rao walked into her well-defined and cloistered life as he tried to understand her pain and made her realize how to overcome from all these adversities. Dr. Rao demonstrates, "There is nothing wrong with you, Mridula. In India, when you marry a person, you also marry his family by default, people expect you to adjust to the Husband family. When a girl become a daughter in law, she's subjected to unnecessary criticism, irrespective of good qualities but look on the positive sides." (Murthy 213). Mridula thought, "How did I live with Sanjay for such a long time? Today, he's given me money and position in society, but he does not share my sorrows. I've held his hand and walked next to him on the thorny path to success. 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." (Murthy 214). Eventually, Mridula, who was suffering silently in that suffocating environment, decided to free herself from the fragile threads of those relations that were stifling her. The silence between Mridula and Sanjay was causing discomfort, especially for Mridula. The silent suffering of Mridula was in quizzical silence where she was introspecting about the foundation of their relationship and finally decided to put an end and flee away. Staying home to lick her wounds is not an option for her. So she left the house and all callousness towards her and came out of the family walls on a path less traveled by women in the patriarchal society.

The journey she embarked on discovers herself because staying in this suffocating environment was like walking on glasses. Mridula was yearning for the feeling of love and being respected in their relationship, but she got the opposite. Sanjay made her feel unimportant, unvalued, and unnoticed in the big picture, so Mridula chose not to give up her

self-respect to please her husband's ego. She didn't divorce her husband; she divorced the painful feeling he gave her.

"Mridula came out in a white cotton saree with a glow of peace on her face. She said, no, I've spent twenty-five of my most important years with you and yet I never felt like I belonged to you and your family. I'm still outsider. My father's House now belongs to Vatsala and I don't want to be a burden on my brother and her. Sishir is independent and you can take care of him better than I can. My duty towards both of you is over. I've fulfilled all my duties as a wife, mother, and daughter in law. Now, I want to live for myself. I have my job, my school, and my village. You don't have to worry about me any longer. You and Sishir can visit me whenever you want." (Murthy 218).

This way, Mridula moves from silent suffering to emancipation.

Sanjay and Sishir both felt a hollowness in their life after Mridula's departure to her parental home. Sanjay lost all interest in his nursing home and his life. They begin to realize how much precious relation they have lost. Even though Sanjay's ego doesn't permit him to submit his mistake in front of Mridula. Sishir said to his father, Sanjay,

"When I was there, I never realized how important she is. When I see women here I realize amma's selfless sacrifice.

She's great like you too, but in a different way. Without her help you would've never built such a big empire. She has been and is your strength.... Dad home is not made up of four walls and luxury items. Home is a home because of a father and a mother... Don't wait for her to call you. You should make the first move." (Murthy 230).

After two months, Mridula was shown swinging with the uncaged mind in her village. Suddenly, she sensed that Sanjay seemed to be gripping the swing in an effort to re-engage himself in the healing process to re-establish trust.

Sudha Murthy left the novel with such an open ending that Sanjay's presence was Mridula's delusion or reality.

Conclusion

Sudha Murthy has produced a compassionate portrait of the characters in *House of Cards*. She has portrayed the fundamental problem faced by the female in domestic and societal spheres. She delineated the female protagonist who suffered silently under male dominance for longstanding. But gradually, they have begun protesting for their rights and defending their dignity in a relationship. The unique viewpoint of modern women is picturized through the character of Mridula, who knows to manage relations, remain peaceful and dutiful even to surrender for the happiness of relationship but not at the cost of her dignity.

References

1. Murthy, Sudha. *House of Cards*. New Delhi, Penguin Books 2013.
2. Siddiqui, Jabeen R., *et al.*, "Patriarchal Dubiousness in Sudha Murthy's *House of Cards*: An Overview." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2015, pp. 42–47, <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-20414247>
3. Abraham, Anju Ann. "Fantasy and Realism: Explorations of the Female Psyche in Sudha Murthy's *House of Cards*" *IJRAR International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1196-98