

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

**DISMANTLING AND ANALYSING MALICIOUS ENTITIES IN SUDHA MURTHY'S *HOUSE OF CARDS***

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Article Received: 16/09/2021

Article Accepted: 29/10/2021

Published online:09/11/2021

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.9.4.96](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.9.4.96)

**Abstract**

Sudha Murthy is an acclaimed writer in English and Kannada. Her books have been translated into all the major Indian languages. She is a technocrat with innovative and skillful mind. She has been honored with awards for her literary productions. Her writings are truthful and touches the reader's heart and gives them immense pleasure. Her writings depict the life of Karnataka villages and the people. Her female characters are powerful like herself and it stands testimony to her feminisms. She has a coveted place among Indian writers in English. She combines the old and new in her writings and gives an insight into our epics. People from all walks of life in India including the underprivileged and the downtrodden find a place in her works. One of the most prominent themes in her book includes greed for money. Very few people withstand the power of money. Capitalism has provided a lot of opportunities to the young Indians to pursue higher studies and amass wealth thereby. But on the other hand, it created tensions at home and at society. This research paper focuses on Sudha Murthy's novel *House of Cards*, where in the lives of all the major and minor characters embroiled for the greed of money, power, and position and finally how they come out clean unscathed.

Keywords: Greed, Money, Power, Capitalism, Corruption

**INTRODUCTION**

The most common and sustained notion of patriarchy is power and privilege. Power is similar and closely related to privilege. In a patriarchal society, to be more precise, our society entitled more power and privilege to men than women. The concept of patriarchy from the ancient times itself, has been passed down through the elder males. As times passed, patriarchy achieved the status of division i.e.; traditional and modern patriarchy. In traditional patriarchy, the elder men in the family attained highest position and privilege than younger

generation of men. In modern patriarchy, there is no distinction between elder and younger. The person with highest authority is perceived as having power and privilege.

Feminism, which has expanded and elaborated its theory and political stance, also described the systemic prejudice against women. During the 1960's feminists analyzed the households headed by women, and they were concerned about whether this was common or not. But the truth lies in the fact that, since 1960's, the power and privilege handled by women in both house and workplace is

considered and perceived as uncommon, exceptional and not normal. If we examine age old civilizations history, we can't trace the so-called notions of patriarchy. Because, then men and women equally shared the power and privilege. Subjectivity, bias, and expulsion were not features of a society then. Not only women were trapped and suppressed, but many other groups in society were also subordinated. For instance, peasants, colonials, slaves, minorities, first nations people etc. but the difference is, the latter voiced and developed their own theories for their liberation about their struggles, outcasts and their rights which were denied. Such types of movements from women's part happened only after a decade.

Patriarchy is just a collective and constructed notion, which is against the laws of nature and universe. It was created by both men and women. Today, through many examples, we are witnessed that, even women are supporting and carrying the tradition of patriarchy as a way of life without any shame. Patriarchy has now rooted in the ideologies of women and are finding it hard to combat, to understand and to eliminate. Gradually, with patriarchy came the division of sex and gender. So, all these divisions and notions are not at all trending issues in our society. Today, not only the female writers but male one's are also reporting these issues. They are successfully continuing their journeys with their creative contributions to the Indian Literature. Indisputably, India Literature is the perfect medium for depicting uncommon issues. Among them, the works of recent writers like Shashi Deshpande, Bhavani Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundathy Roy, Manju Kapoor, Mahaswetha Devi and Shobha De carved their own unique place and portrayed the very sensitive issues.

Among this unending line of writers, the most successful and distinguished writer is Sudha Murthy. She was awarded the Sahitya Academy award in 2006. She has been considered by the mainstream writers as a unique personality. Because of her perceptions, viewpoints, and themes. In many of her works, she had stressed the importance of living a peaceful and humble life. Her most notable works includes *Mahaswetha* (2000), *Dollar Bahu* (2003), *Gently Falls the Bakula* (2008), *The Bird with*

*Golden Wings* (2009), *House of Cards* (2013), *Three Thousand Stitches* (2017).

*House of Cards* is a novel which stands out from the group because of its unique theme and portrayal. In a world where materialism is given more importance, the people are not thinking about how it would affect their relationships. It is not only the life of Mridula and Sanjay, but also about many other innocent and corrupted 'so called' intellectuals.

When Mridula (protagonist) was born, Bheemanna (father) chose the best name for her. Because its very uncommon. she was a bright student and her mother Rukuma Bai told people that Mridula had inherited her genes from her side of the family. She was always happy with what she had before her marriage. As far as she was concerned, nothing mattered her and was a free bird without any bondage. She was also a bright student and scored a rank. Her teachers insisted her to study engineering or medicine. Unlike other parents, Bheemanna was different. And that difference says it all that freedom begins at home.

Bheemanna did not take any decision just for the sake of status in society. He left the decision to Mridula and she insisted on becoming a teacher.... Bheemanna advised Rukuma, 'Times have changed. We can't tell children that you should become a lawyer or a doctor or marry a person of our choice. Education and marriage should be according to our children's wishes, because these are forever. Afterall, it their life and they have the right to follow their heart and make decisions by themselves. (P.3).

This kind of transformation and rethinking from family's part is essential for the elimination of patriarchy and inequality. De Beauvoir's contribution to feminism include this key point. "Women should take responsibility and must choose for themselves" (P.35).When women choose for themselves, they choose for the entire society. That means women's decisions also had a great impact and influence on society. To be more precise, they play a crucial role in the society more than men.

Mridula was very well talented not only in her studies, but also in craft, art and putting intricate mehndi designs. She was very helpful and even assisted with miscellaneous jobs at marriage locations. She was like her father. She wouldn't say 'no' to anyone. Today human beings are obsessed with money and they are not ready to share their time, health and money to anyone else. Such selfishness is not a feature of Mridula and Bheemanna. Bheemanna taught her to be equal to both humans and animals and also to share and show gratitude to both. Mridula remembered an incident from her childhood,

When an animal in the village fell sick, her father immediately took medicine from the plants in his garden and treated the animal without waiting for the animal's owner to call him. After the treatment, Bheemanna was given a bowl of rice and jaggery and five one – rupee coins as his fee. He never kept the fee from treating animals for himself. He would offer the coins to Lord Hanuman and say, 'Mridula, grind all the rice, jaggery and coconut together. Then, add some ghee and give it to the cows. Its is good for them' (P.3).

Bheemanna's family is content and rich. But still he can make a lot of money from such services (as mentioned above). But he is not concerned about it. What really mattered is love for all. He advised the same to Mridula and said that sharing is what makes humans human. So that distinguishes humans from animals. Today, parents are advising children to make money through whatever ways they like. Human beings are killing and fighting each other. Before them, Bheemanna and Mridula are showing what it feels to be the inhabitants of earth.

Champa Bai Kamitkar, a seventy-year-old women, who was a neighbor of Bheemanna, had a huge garden with lots of flowers. The only person she gave permission to pluck the flowers was Mridula. Unlike others, she took great care of each plant in her garden and plucked each flower and shared it with other people as well without any hesitation.

Unlike Mridula, Sanjay, her husband was a different person in attitude and behavior before their marriage. Both met during a marriage function. At the first meeting itself, Sanjay mistook Mridula as a thief. But later on, he felt sorry for his behavior. This misunderstanding led Sanjay to a huge ditch. He was not rich as Mridula nor had as much family assets as her. His sister married a bank clerk and his mother had a small shop at T Narasipura.

Sanjay was also very bright in his studies like Mridula. He scored good marks in the school – leaving examinations and also obtained excellent marks Pre – university exams and became a teacher. He felt a deep love towards Mridula, but stepped back. He thought he was not eligible to marry her. He was also handicapped and believed that he was not up to her level in terms of family assets and looks. But he was very hardworking and honest. The patriarchal rules, and what society would think if he marries a girl from a family of high status. Society rules and decides whether two families are eligible for marriage. This difference and inequality and ruling are key to the smooth relationship between men and women. People like Bheemanna are torch bearers of society. Money rules and destroys relationships. So, this fear instilled inside Sanjay, which is evident when he says;

She can definitely find someone better than me. She is good – looking and idealist. She has never seen poverty in her life.... My mother has a small money lending business. How can I expect Mridula's family to give their daughter? (P.33).

Sanjay met with an accident and lost his hands power. Even his family members and a girl whom he had a crush on earlier made fun of him. But Mridula liked him and she did not care if he had money or family assets. All she was concerned was his behavior. Mridula replied about it;

If Sanjay met with an accident that left him handicapped after we got married, then you wouldn't hold that against him. So, I don't have any objection to the alliance if both of you are okay with it. (P.43).

Bheemanna never objected any of his daughter's decisions. He knows that parents' job is not to decide their children's future according to the societal rules, but to let them live and walk on their own.

Status plays a negative role in every family. When Sanjay announced his love towards Mridula to his parents, his mother did not bother and accepted it. But his sister Lakshmi objected to it not to Sanjay, but to his mother. Lakshmi was so much concerned about their status, because Sanjay is a doctor and marrying a doctor from a reputed family especially rich was considered as perfect and as a rule. Lakshmi's behavior, attitude and observations are a clear reflection of the society. Nobody can blame Mridula, because she is a government school teacher. She has a stand of her own and she is not going to depend on Sanjay. Education and job are necessary for both women and men, so that women can act according to free will. Her opinions and viewpoints will get respected. Other than perceiving women as irrational and other, she will be considered as an individual.

Nancy Chodorow in her famous classic work "*Reproduction and Mothering*" (1978) pointed out that the 'core' identity of women are narcissism, lack of self – control and weak ego – boundaries. Lakshmi's behavior and observations are a clear embodiment of Nancy Chodorow's analysis.

A crystal-clear example for patriarchal existence in the society is rules in marriage. Marriage expenses are huge bride's family when compared to grooms. people including groom's parents expect a great deal of money, gold and family assets from the girl's side. There the rules and regulations are not ending. From there onwards the girl is expected to be a servant and a joker for her mother – in – law. Mridula's case is not less, but the same.

Starting from Sanjay's family, his father was wandering from house to house with Lakshmi's horoscope. In hope for an alliance. Though Lakshmi was beautiful, she was rejected by everyone, not because the horoscopes are not matching, but their lack of money. So, after lots of disappointments, Ratnamma herself found Shankar. The sole reason behind his acceptance is that;

Shankar was a distant relative. But there was an age difference of ten years between Lakshmi and him. Fortunately, he did not have parents who would demand a lot of dowry. So Ratnamma had begged Shankar and he had agreed to get married to lekshmi. (P.48).

Not only lekshmi, but Ratnamma is also a symbol of greed and money. She was running a moneylending business and her life experience gradually transformed herself into a greedy person. She was not ready to spend money for Sanjay, Lekshmi, or Mridula. But instead was expecting a great deal of money from Mridula's family.

Usually, the girl and her parents take care of the wedding expenses. The boys side hardly spends any money. Mridula's father is a landlord. He can give whatever he wants to his daughter.... Anyway, this girl is not going to give me gold for the moneylending business. If her family wants to give me a sari, then I will tell them that I want cash and not sari. I will also let Sanjay know.... All the negotiations will be left to Lakshmi, Shankar and Sanjay. (P.54).

Some families demand money and luxury once the proposal gets fixed. Such kinds of movements are usually seen as a tradition. Such traditions are a part of domination and that leads to physical and moral violence. This is collective consciousness. Such collective consciousness are considered vital for every marriage. That's why Lakshmi's husband Shankar reminded Mridula's Family about their customs. As Shankar is very greedy and shameless, he did not feel hesitant not even a little bit. He said, "Oh! It is our custom that the boy gets suits, silver vessels for the entire kitchen, a silver puja set, saris for all women and shirts and trousers for all men, a gold chain, a watch, a ring...." (P.59.).

The concept of money takes different steps if we examine the major characters of the novel. Money for Ratnamma, Mridula. Lekshmi, Bheemanna and for Sanjay is a life giver and life saver and sometimes life demolishing aspect. Sudha Murthy projected the patriarchal issues as well as

issues related to money very well. Today the complications, disputes, murders and divorce cases are severe and are not coming down. People are getting more educated, and are more aware of these situations. But the issues remain the same. The complex realities remain the same. People's consciousness remains the same. Their outlook and mindset towards these issues have changed but not improved. Once, Virginia Woolf said, women need to be financially independent if she wants to be somebody in her life or if she wants to achieve something in her life. But financial independence is not alone a factor for her success. If we take the case of Ratnamma, money has a different place in her life. Her husband Narasinga Rao was good at prescribing medicines. But he was hesitant to ask for money. His false beliefs turned him into a poor man. Ratnamma was always worried about how she would take care of her children and run the house. So, she took a stern decision to look after the family and as a result she decided to look after the fields and opened her own business.

Ratnamma was very much concerned and gave over emphasis to money than her son and daughter. She won't waste a single rupee unnecessarily nor she spend it for her children. She also cared about Mridula and Lakshmi spending money unnecessarily. She was direct, especially when it came to money matters. She was expecting more from Mridula's family when Sanjay got married. Ratnamma was a woman of heavy criticism. She always criticized people. When she came to know that Mridula gave ten rupees and betel leaves to those older ladies who were sitting in the temple, she thought, "What does Mridula know what the value of ten rupees is? Blessings are not proportional to money. If blessings had that power, then the world would have been different" (P.69). Her life experiences and hard work made her believe that if, the woman of the house is a spendthrift, then her son's life would be result in vein. This is the only time she thought about her son. Apart from this, she was woman of power. Her dedication and determination brought enough money to the family. That paved the way for her empowerment and her family's wellness.

In a patriarchal society, usually some mother-in-law's are problem creating tools. It says, if u want to be happy, then you should make them happy first. Its very pitiful to think that the daughter-in-law's life and happiness lies in their in-law's hands. But Ratnamma was not interested to indulge in Mridula's personal life. She was always busy with her business. When Sanjay enquired about how she would spend her time, she said;

I have plenty of work. Every week, I get supplies from Mysore and I must keep accurate accounts. That takes time. Moreover, there's intense competition among the shops these days. If I close my shop even for a day, I'll lose my customers. Getting workers to help in the field has also become difficult. Now, I have started the chit's business too. There's a meeting every month. This month's meeting is tomorrow, in my house. (P.70).

From these conversations. Its clear that she is a business woman, who is concerned more about the trends and tensions in the field. Ratnamma once advised Mridula about saving a part from her salary rather than spending soo much on everything. This advice rather helped Mridula in building a life of her own and for finding out her happiness. Thus, Ratnamma is a half role model for society.

Another important negative embodiment of money power is Lakshmi and her husband Shankar. Shankar was not ready to marry Lakshmi, though she was a beautiful girl. Just because he was a distant relative and didn't have parents who wouldn't demand dowry, Lakshmi got married to him. Both husband and wife are a spendthrift and lured by money and status. It was Shankar, who demanded a luxury wedding to Mridula's parents. Shankar wants everything what his brother Mahadeva has. There's so much competition among the brothers and their wives. It is not about who spends more, rather than who earns. Shankar is just a bank clerk and one can easily imagine the salary of a bank clerk and its limitations. But Mridula was astonished at the luxurious life of Shankar. Mridula thought, "It had all the modern amenities and expensive furniture and equipment, which even a

rich person like Mridula's father did not have in Aladahalli". (P.73).

When Mridula and Sanjay once visited her in laws, they welcomed her grandly and Lakshmi was wearing a Mysore – Silk Sari, and lots of dishes were served. Not only that, they visited different places at Shankar's expense. This shows that they are lavish and showed off that they have money and everything they need despite his low salary. But Mridula and Sanjay thought they are kind- and good-hearted people. on the contrary, Lakshmi was expecting some precious and costly gifts from Mridula. But because Mridula was simple and kind, she gave a synthetic saree and some vegetables in return.

When money flows endlessly, the relationships also end with it. This is not a rare fact, but it's a truth. Sanjay and Mridula's family life is a great example for that. When Sanjay had nothing and when he was just walking the initial steps, Mridula did more than what she had to do. Sanjay has been through many tense situations when he started his career as a doctor. He was dragged and tortured by people who are less talented and less efficient people, just because he had no power and money. He begged for recommendation and visited long hours to see ministers. In our society, people who are famous, rich and power will be given priority. If anybody stands in their way, then they will be wiped out from whatever place or position they are in. that's why Sanjay has been transferred to Bangalore. He was shocked when he saw his transfer list. Then he thought;

Is this the reward for sincerity?... Had I been making money practicing in a government hospital and skipping my duties, I wouldn't have been thrown under the bus like this. Dr Lata is insincere and skips work but she keeps talking about her connections so, people are scared of her (P.114).

Dr Lata is a symbol of power, money and aggressiveness. People like her show off their influence on common people like Sanjay. So, nobody questions her even when she does wrong things. Life experiences like this made Sanjay not to believe in values, truth, sincerity and honesty. In today's

politics, everything was an act but no actor was permanent. You need money to be in power and you had to be in power to make money and fame. The fact is that why would anyone act Sanjay. This is the reason why Sanjay was not offered help. So, the Health Minister who denied Sanjay's request was named in a corruption case after a few months and was replaced. Another Health minister who was incere and honest like Sanjay was appointed to his place. But the people who hate sincere one's severely criticized him by saying that he was not a dynamic person. If you are honest, then you should be ready to face criticisms. If you are not, then you must be ready to become corrupted.

When Alex, Sanjay's friend came to know about his situation, Alex insisted him to start a nursing home. Even though Sanjay was hesitant at first because of money, but Mridula supported him. Other than Lakshmi and Kantamma, Mridula was not a spendthrift or greedy person. She was very simple and confident about everything and always made people happy. She said to Sanjay;

Sanjay, don't worry. It's better to be out of the frying pan. Alex is with you and I support you. Even if you don't earn anything, I can manage. We have our house and I have a steady government salary. I have gold jewellery that my parents gave me during our wedding. I don't wear much gold anyway. I can sell it. I'll ask appa for some too. We can borrow the remaining amount from a bank. (P.128).

The only character in the story whose behavior and values have not changed a bit and who remained what she believed is Mridula only. The only person responsible for all the fortunes of Sanjay was Mridula. Because even his mother Ratnamma didn't help him when he needs money. They knew that, the only thing that they can expect from his mother is blessings. She was very cunning in money matters.

When money came in abundance, Sanjay also changed his behavior. There lifestyle also changed. But not Mridula. Mridula always criticized Sanjay's lavish behavior. Initially Mridula was given the charge to operate all the bank accounts. She

continued to give Sanjay pocket money, because he was only at the earning stage. But when situations changed, he handed over that duty to his sister Lakshmi and that too by playing a disguise. He could have told her the truth. He became blind due to his richness and unnecessarily helped Lakshmi and her family. He was playing with his family life and forgot how he his wife helped and stood with him in crucial and critical situations. He broke Mridula's trust. A simple example for this is when Mridula asked about what help they could give Lakshmi, he said;

Mridula, we don't have that kind of money. I've lived in their house for two years and seen how they live. They show off too much. I don't want to give them a loan because they'll never return it. If Shankar agrees, I can give him a job at the nursing home with a monthly salary. But they must stay separately and not in our house. I can't help them more than this, that's my final say. (P.139)

With growing fame and money, Sanjay's honesty values and perceptions changed. When Sanjay was teaching at the government medical college, he used to tell his students to perform c-section only if it is necessary and urgent. He preferred normal delivery more. Because he believed that, it is good for patient's health and nature's law. He was not concerned about squeezing patients for money. But years later, his ethics changed and taking more money and consulting time will make people think that he is the best doctor and this thought made him to revise patients fee every year. It is not only Sanjay's fault, but VIP's preferred C- section. This has actually become a status symbol. Moreover, if we examine metropolitan cities like Bangalore, people like software engineers, doctors and others earned more each month. So they don't mind spending more on maternity homes. Sanjay even handled black money with alex. He used to buy the factory and sites using the same money. But Mridula was not aware of the situations and illegal handlings. Earlier he used to share everything with Mridula. But now he has changed to the level of a dishonest person. One of the most unbearable and painful situations faced by

Mridula was when Sanjay made fun of her job. He said,

Why do you still work? I spend more money than you earn on our cars, cook, and driver. If you stay at home, it'll be cheaper for us! (P.141).

Sanjay was thinking that, without Mridula's help and support, he couldn't have reached such glorious heights. We are reminded of her father's words that, it's the speaking and thinking capacity which distinguishes humans from animals. Sudha Murthy is warning us that one shouldn't forget his roots. Sanjay is standing at the peak of success and he doesn't care about Mridula nor her sacrifice and support. What he had done was clearly the undervaluing her work. Patriarchal behavior of undervaluing women's work is not an unusual attempt. From the ancient period itself, whatever was done by women was considered as inferior and insignificant. Sanjay's behavior is not a new case.

Not only that, apart from being a failed husband, he was also a failed father. Sanjay measured every relationship in his life only in terms of money. He used to give wrong advice to his son Sishir.

Sishir, when you start practicing medicine, you must have an infertility centre and a test-tube baby centre. There is a lot of money to be earned from these. Childless couples are ready to spend any money to have their own baby.... You should exploit their weakness and make money. (P.151).

Mridula did not like these conversations about money. She kept her thoughts to herself. Sishir was living a luxurious and uncontrolled life. Just like his father, Mridula used to give advices to him. But his father always supports him and takes offense against her. She was worried that there was no discipline in Sishir's life. She tried to talk to Sishir about how she was loved and respected by her parents. But his attitude and behavior were just the opposite. His scornful behavior is evident when he says, "oh Amma, that's your old thinking of Aladahalli. It doesn't work here in Bangalore."

(P.151) and Sanjay always agreed with his son that hurt Mridula tremendously.

Mridula and Sanjay, both quarreled for trivial matters. What Sanjay was doing just the opposite of what his mother had taught. In his life, there were setbacks, there were disappointments and yet he was not understanding what money can really bring and what it cannot. As far as he was concerned, money is everything. It brings fame, respect, and he can also play revenge and show off with it. He was not even aware that except Mridula, everybody including his sister Lakshmi was playing disguise. When Mridula found out that Sanjay was helping Lakshmi and hiding everything, she felt bad. Because her husband had more faith in his sister than his wife. Mridula was feeling desperate and vacuum in life. She was feeling suffocated in that big house. She had everything like money, government job, a brilliant son, and a rich husband. But nobody to love her, care her and console her. She couldn't even raise her son the way she wanted to. Her husband did not understand her.

Sanjay always justified his actions as well as Lakshmi's. he was not ready to perceive anything from Mridula's perspective, but only Lakshmi's. he acted like an honest husband, but stabbed her in the back. Even after twenty- five years of completed marriage life, she felt like trapped.

Mridula shared her thoughts to Anita. But when she visited Kantamma, who looked after Sishir, consoled her. But what she said is not words that should be respected but be opposed.

Ups and downs are a part of life. But women must have more patience. Only then there is peace at home. She suffered a lot but she persisted. Look at Draupadi. When goddesses themselves suffer so much, what are we? You know how my husband is. He was a principal for a long time and was strict at home too. My children never cared. But I had to obey him no matter what. (P.188).

From Kntamma's statement, it's clear that the family life should be adjusted and that too women must adjust with everything good and bad.

Why is it only women's responsibility? Why should women alone must adjust and suffer. This single incident implies that social norms, religious practices, values and laws are imposing, demanding and expecting certain codes of conduct from women. In most of the situations, women had only little choice. If she didn't, she would be treated and labelled as freak, arrogant, monster or witch.

When Mridula visited Anita, she was feeling relieved. She revealed that it was not money that she was concerned about, but faith in her husband. She believed that Sanjay destroyed her faith and marriage life. She finally sought doctor's help for achieving mental peace. As per the doctor's advice, she was asked to bring Sanjay for the sitting. But he never visited and not only that, he thought it would bring disgrace to his family and nursing home. So, she took a final decision and understood that there was no point in staying with him. Restoring the faith was impossible and also, he was not ready for a compromise. If she wants to live a happy and content life, she would have to leave the place. Because he ridicules and dominates her and it affects her confidence terribly. She left the place during their anniversary day bidding farewell to him. He arranged a grand party with Lakshmi's consent. But when Mridula left, he understood for the first time in his life that he lost something terribly. When she was leaving, she said,

I 've spent twenty-five of my most important years with you, and yet, I never felt like I belonged to you or your family. I'm still an outsider.... 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. (P.218).

Sanjay believed that he could buy anything with money. But when she left, he understood that his thoughts are wrong. His beliefs strengthened when his staff Rosemary's husband gifted her a simple bouquet of flowers. That moment he realized



that, never in his life he had gifted flowers or anything Mridula liked. With his money, he can buy anything, but not Mridula's love and heart. Because she is one unique personality.

When Anita visited Sanjay, she revealed every truth that he hesitates to accept. She was Mridula's close friend and can understand Mridula's situation more than anyone else in the world. Because her husband Alex had also cheated and had been through it many times. She said;

I don't want to tell Mridula to comeback. She won't get any happiness from you. Sanjay, you were lucky to get married to her.... Now that you've lost her, all the money you earn from your nursing home is of no use.... Yes, you have friends in high positions. They'll be nice to you and smile but they'll laugh at you behind your back. I've known Mridula well for the last twenty-three years. She's shared all your difficulties. Your mother or sister or son can't take her place. Sishir will marry and have his mother, less said the better.... Nobody can match Mridula in terms of simplicity, innocence and affection.... (P.222).

Sanjay knew that what Anita said was completely correct. Though he spent only a few minutes every night with her and she fought with her on every trivial matter and rejected her, she was an integral part of his life. He was recollecting every single moment spent with her. He looked around and saw the old clock in the room that had been bought with Mridula's first salary and the old scooter that they had travelled together. Though the memories are old, they are the most cherished one's in Sanjay's life. He thought about their failed marriage and remembered that despite his handicap and poverty, he was loved by care without any expectations.

What Mridula has done for her own happiness should be a model for other women as well. The term 'sacrifice' has been taken granted by patriarchal society. It's a stereotyped notion that women are born to sacrifice for their family and men are not. Every woman is capable of achieving her

own dreams and happiness. They should take charge of their own choice. They should not bow their heads for any kind of subjugation. They should be their own subjects instead of being the 'other', negative and inferior. There is no point in suffering alone and suffocating, when there's a life ahead.

Sishir also had the same kind of realization like his father. By giving wrong advices unknowingly, he also adopted the same kind of attitude and perception. He started measuring everything, even relationships from overflowing money. He was very arrogant and overconfident about his richness. Like his father, he thought that money, richness and fame brings everybody towards him. Every girl in his college admired and waited for him to love. When he met Neha, all his perceptions changed. She was a life changer because, not a single girl in his life dared to say 'no' to him. When she reacted the opposite way, he got disturbed.

How can anyone say 'no' to me? He thought. I'm handsome, rich, intelligent and have achieved a lot. My father's a big man. He owns a nursing home. We have great prestige in society. What else does a girl want? He couldn't believe his ears. He had never heard the word 'no' in his life. He had got everything he wanted through his hard work, intelligence and money and, at times, through his aggressiveness. (P.226).

Sishir felt very jealous about Neha. Because her perceptions, outlook and ambitions are not like those girls who are obsessed with money. She had a clear vision about what she really wants in life. She was aware that Sishir's upbringing is different from hers. In a short span of time she understood and grasped everything about Sishir. A family life is not the responsibility of wife alone. The husband too has a responsibility even in household chores. Sishir's life and perceptions are shaped by his parents. When he examined Mridula, he realized that her presence and influence are not at all concerned by anybody else in his house, not even his father. Both son and husband also made fun of her and she was forced to obey them. So, such pictures and experience made him believe that women are expected to remain as a subordinate. Despite

modern education, his mindset never changed and expected Neha to follow the same. But Neha was not like Mridula. She has very firm decisions. She said,

You expect a woman to remain a subordinate. She should adjust under every circumstance. Her compromising nature is considered a virtue. I don't want to live like that. I don't want to be a doormat. (227).

Sishir sensed his mother in Neha. For the first time in his life, he realized the value of concern and love and saw his mother from an altered perspective. He called his father and said that he misses home and his amma. Finally, he advised his father that, "She's great like you too, but in a different way". (P.230). Sanjay and Sishir understood the real meaning of life. With great hope, Sanjay reunited with Mridula.

#### THE SOCIETY SUFFER WHEN MORALITY IS TRAMPLED UPON BY THE POWERFUL MONEY MINDED

If money, women and land can ruin relationships then the same money, power and corruption can destroy the whole society. Parents, who are rich always prefer English Medium Schools in the city, so that their children will be provided with high level education. This situation is not a new approach. But it's very pitiful to say that people won't change, no matter how educated they are. Our government schools are facing such a huge neglect. When Mridula was transferred to Yelahanka High School, the situations are not less the same.

When the students had a choice of schools, the best often chose not to study in a government one. The English – Medium private schools were popular even though they were more expensive. The teachers attitudes were also different. In a big city like Bangalore, some business on the side and were more interested in running the business than in teaching. Most of them did not consider the earnings from teaching to be their main source of livelihood. They thought of it just as an appetizer to the main course. So, there was no personal

connection between the teachers and the students. (P.62).

Education is not simply imbibing informations in the text. It should be used as a tool to reform the society. If money power, corruption, greed and privatization operate these institutions, then how can a society be reformed. If teaching become a business and teachers become business people, then how can one expect Sishir like boy to perceive a relationship from moral side.

Sudha Murthy has clearly distinguished the situations, changes and results announced with government and private schools. Aladahalli High School was different from Yelahanka.

The school was not just a building. It had a huge playground and an open-air theatre. It had its own kitchen garden which was under Mridula's supervision when she was working there. It was compulsory for all the children to work in the garden atleast two hours every week. The vegetables grown there were used for cooking and the children were given a midday meal with the help of the villagers. So, students were polite and listened sincerely to the teachers. It was like a big joint family and it was a joy for Mridula to be a teacher in the school. (P.62).

This is clearly the perfect model for education. The students are learning theories from the textbooks and are acquiring both life skills and lessons by putting it into practice. Only from practicing such models, one could reform the society. Unfortunately, most of the government schools were looked down and the buildings were not maintained and furbished properly. The concerned authorities and teachers were blaming each other instead of upgrading. Institutionalized corruptions are increasing day by day. Not only school, but hospitals are also misusing it, and the huge impacts are suffered more by the poor people than the rich. The authorities and doctors are hand in glove with politicians. So that they can earn as much as they want. People would easily fall into such traps. Dr Lata is an apt example for such doctors.

Sanjay and Lata were the two assistants working under Dr Kamala. Lata's father was a senior IAS officer. Just because of this and for some other reasons, everybody praised her. She was good in studies but not very efficient and talented like Sanjay. She belonged to a rich family and never been to a village. Her husband was an income tax officer. Rather than becoming a good doctor, she was more interested in publicity. Though she was more experienced than Sanjay, her knowledge was hollow and was not good enough to handle major and emergency cases. The sole reason why Lata was continuing her service at the same hospital was because of her father's and husband's influence. Dr Kamala and Sanjay wouldn't oppose Lata's inability because;

She ensured that people who didn't help her had their income tax audited and their house raided. Everybody was scared of her. Dr Kamala remembered that a few years ago, Lata had wanted to go to Singapore and asked for a six – week vacation. Dr Kamala had refused because the department was short – staffed. The next week, the income tax department had audited her. There was something wrong with her income tax filing, but multiple visits, verifications and waiting had caused a lot of irritation. (P.90).

Dr Kamala was aware that the hands behind such an act was Dr Lata. But she was forced to keep quiet, because she had no support from the hospital.

#### **PURSuing ONE'S VOCATION AND DERIVE MENTAL PEACE FOR SELF AND THE FAMILY**

Empowerment does not merely mean, giving them or providing them extra power or ability. It is ingrained already in them. It is weaning them away from the customs and conventions that are embedded in them or generations. Both empowerment and equality has much more to offer than just career and education. No matter how educated and successful she is, in the end she has to go through and suffer the patriarchal norms of our society. But the women characters in the novel such as Kantamma, Mridula and Health minister, despite

their family situations, they became successful in their lives through empowerment. They found a way to step outside and perceived it as a medium for healing their mental traumas. Sanjay was scornful of his mother working as a business woman and wife as a teacher.

Even though Kantamma was uneducated, she was a smart lady and bold woman. She was never bothered about false status symbols and perceptions. She had a lot of knowledge about famines and agriculture. Unlike Mridula, Kantamma talked less and her decision was the final one in her family. Once Sanjay advised her to close the shop, not because he was concerned but because he thought it would be below his dignity. But Kantamma knew her son very well and she was not ready for such a false movement. Because for her, it's not only a business but a source of income and power. Ratnamma had thought to herself,

It really isn't too much work for me, but the truth is that he doesn't want me to run a small shop. He must think that it is below his dignity. But I don't worry about such false status symbols. (P.46).

Years of experience molded her into a successful and cunning businesswoman just like her son, who knew every nooks and corners of business secrets. She was also very talented in convincing customers and she knew how to make them buy anything from her shop. That efficiency is clear when she says that,

Yes, things are much cheaper in Mysore. We buy goods from there, load them in a bus and pay for the bus and a coolie. We also take money from a money lender to invest in our shop. We don't have much choice. They may look similar to Devaraja market in colour but you may not have checked the quality. One has to pay a price for good quality. Please see the quality of the towels and the mugs and buy them only if you are convinced that they are good. (P.47).

Kantamma had clear and sharp calculations about spending money. Even though she had enough money and assets, she was not ready to improve

their living conditions by spending it unnecessarily. If we perceive this from a positive viewpoint, this tendency and attitude is appreciable. Because, she doesn't have to depend and pester her children for money. The word empowerment becomes meaningful only then and there.

Mridula, like Kantamma was an independent woman. In the novel, it's evident that the only person behind Sanjay's happiness and success is Mridula. Just because Mridula had a job, Sanjay became one of the successful businessmen and doctor in his field. It was with Mridula's salary, Sanjay did the private practice and he has fulfilled his dream of putting up nursing home. Not only she was teaching at school, but also was taking private tuitions in order to meet both ends. As far as Mridula and Sanjay was concerned, her one and only government job provided a relief and support to their family. Initially Mridula was financially higher than Sanjay. When Sanjay made fun of her job by saying that he was spending and earning more money for their cars, cook and drivers, Mridula replied with a sudden temper.

That's impossible. You were able to start the hospital because of my salary. My pay has helped me in our difficult times and I enjoy and respect my work. I'll never leave it. It is oxygen to me and not just a source of income. (P.140).

From this single comment, it's very clear that job and education are an important aspect for both men and women. It is a sign of independence and liberty. Mridula achieved mental peace in both family life and career, just because she has financial assets. She also rose to the position of a school principal. And one of the most important aspect about Mridula was, she was very sincere and passionate in her profession and considered teaching as a pious and noble act.

Another embodiment of power and empowerment is the health minister. She is very similar to Kantamma, because she was uneducated. But still she was handling a power packed position with her leadership quality and political experience. When Sanjay enquired about how she had been

managing her job without any education to the clerk, his reply astonished him.

She had people under her to help manage everything. But I really appreciate her courage and aggressiveness, especially she's a woman. She doesn't get perturbed even in stressful situations. There are many people more educated than her, but they're standing in front of her in a queue for request for the cancellation of their transfers. None of them has the guts it takes to be a minister. (P.121).

### CONCLUSION

Sudha Murthy's exposure of sensitive and critical social issues like lust and greed for money, power, position, corruption, fame etc. shows her great concern and awareness on the matter. Misusing all these concepts results in trampling their lives. Through the work, she has provided a chance to criticize these issues which are occurring globally and rarely touched by other writers. Apart from the past research papers which are focused only on common issues like patriarchy, subjugation, quest for identity etc, this study has attempted to prove misuse of power, institutional corruption and its impacts, not only on the main characters like Mridula and Sanjay but also on every other major and minor characters.

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