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## Addressing Gender and War in Sudha Murthy's Novel "House of Cards"

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### Abstract

The Purpose of the Paper is to Study the Gender and War in Sudha Murthy's Novel House of Cards. Several Indian novelists exposed the real picture of Indian Society and how women are oppressed. Indian English novels revealed the struggle of Indian women to create their own identity. House of Cards is the story of Mridula, a bright young woman with enormous enthusiasm for life who hails from a Karnataka village. A chance meeting with Sanjay, a talented but impoverished doctor, leads to love and the couple marry and settle in Bangalore. The more Mridula sees of the world, the more she realizes how selfish and materialistic people can be, but she does not take the ups and downs of life to heart and lives each day with positive energy. Trouble brews when Sanjay quits his government job and starts an immensely successful private practice. With affluence come the neverending ambition for more and the inevitable slide into corrupt practices. For a long time, Mridula has no idea that Sanjay has sold his soul. When the truth hits her, she has no recourse but to walk out on him, but can she really find a space of her own? This intricately woven novel explores human relationships in telling detail and holds up a mirror to our society with candour and with conviction.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Sudha Murthy, crosscurrents, flat & round characters

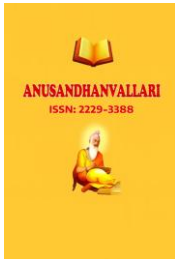
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### Introduction

Sudha Murthy was born in 1950 at Karnataka with a BE IN Electrical Engineering and an M.E in Computer Science. She was a gold medalist at both the graduate and post graduate levels. She was a gold medalist at both the graduate and post graduate levels. She was the first woman engineer to be employed by TELCO. She Married Narayana murthy, who is one of the founder of IT Company, Infosys. She is now the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. She has been awarded the Padma Shri and also been given the Doctorate Degrees. She has set at least 50,000 libraries, 10000 Public toilets, 2300 houses for the poor and needy. She has received "Attimabbee Award" from the government of Karnataka and on the whole, she is a recipient of 18 different awards for her social work.

### Outline Of The Novel

'House of Cards' is an account of a couple and their materialistic progress from the middle class to upper class economy at the cost of regress from happy, content couple to a couple at the verge of divorce and disagreement. Sudha Murthy minutely and sensibly observed the effects of globalization on economy, family values, psychology of the Indian society in general and the middle class in specific. The protagonists Sanjay and Mridula got married to reward their love and honest feeling for each other. She supported their family income by accepting a teaching job. Mridula upholds ethical values and family responsibilities during the struggling period of Sanjay. She staunchly supported Sanjay in traumatic situations and injustice done to Sanjay by the hospital management. In other words, Mridula became the backbone of Sanjay's life and career. The later phase of this fiction records radical changes at internal and external levels of characters. The novelist traced the devastating effects of money and materialism on the family values. The materialistic progress of Sanjay ruthlessly crushed



down sentiments, ethical values, mutual love and caring attitude towards family. This trauma ends in separation of Mridula from Sanjay.

As the title *'House of Cards'* implies vanity and temporality of materialistic progress by sacrificing family life. The palatial house which is a symbol of Sanjay's enormous wealth becomes the *'House of Cards'* on the segregation of Mridula. Sudha Murthy is widely read in the Indian reader community for her characterization close to Indian society, familiar settings and lucid Indianised English language expression. Familiarity has its own appeal is very much true in case of her works. The present novel is discussed at length in the marital relation between Sanjay and Mridula but the crosscurrents underneath are ignored. The researcher would like to focus on the following crosscurrents experienced in the fiction *'House of Cards'*.

#### **Ethical V/S Non Ethical:**

In modern India, money became the yardstick to measure one's success. Money became the parameter for a person's social reputation. Once upon a time, devoted Sanjay was glad to follow his father's word by serving the patients as they are gods. He has no complaint against taxing duty hours which he spent during the government hospital at Bangalore. He was restless only due to corruption and evil practice in medical profession. The same protagonist underwent drastic changes in the later part of the fiction. He became a money making machine through all possible ways. Sanjay's capitalist philosophy suppressed allegations made by Mridula against his unethical practice; he upholds his view by saying,

"Nothing is black or white in this world. The cow gives milk for its calf. But we drink that milk. Isn't that wrong? Mosquitoes and bugs are also creatures. Don't we kill them because they trouble us? Big fish always eats the small fish. Is that wrong?" (Murty, 2013, 182)

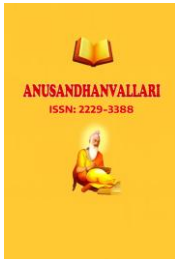
This crosscurrent can be traced at internal as well as external level. At internal level, the psyche of Sanjay became the battlefield for the strife between ethical and non ethical. At the external level, the novel sheds light on unethical external forces like bribe offered in different forms by drug companies to doctors, forced c-operations, selfish and money oriented, business minded hospital management system.

#### **Money V/S Family:**

Money took over the control of Sanjay's life and actions. Sanjay totally ignored his family for the sake of his greed for money. His caring attitude towards Mridula and son Shishir in the initial stage became rare now. Even Sanjay did not take of his own parents located far away in Aladhali. Sanjay advised Shishir to run infertility centre only for rich patients who can afford to pay handsomely. Shishir represented dry and fragmented attitude of the next generation towards family. His respect for his father and disrespect for mother is merely based on the parameter of success in terms of money. Shishir ridicules her, "My mother is like a broken record. She keeps repeating the same things over and over again."

#### **Past V/S Present:**

The initial part of fiction informs that Sanjay came from a lower middle class family located in semi urban area and used to render his medical services in the government hospital. 'Work is worship' was the motto of his devoted medical practice. Sanjay resisted the offers of corruption and injustice done to him by the hospital management. The same Sanjay feels no grudge to accumulate wealth by unlawful and unethical ways later on. Sanjay has no time to talk with Mridula to whom he used to share personal and professional matters. Now he found her unfit and impractical in today's world. Sanjay hid his unethical practices and asset generated through it from Mridula. She felt in love of truthfulness, innocence and ethical values of Sanjay before marriage. Gradually all these virtues stepped out from Sanjay's life at the arrival of hypocrisy, fame and enormous flow of money. The hospital is no more a temple and patient as a god to Sanjay.



Sanjay discarded Mridula's plea of ethical, charitable practice by saying, "This is not a temple. We have to give our patients whatever they need. After all they are paying us. Please don't try to teach me moral science." (Murty, 2013, 156). Sanjay somewhere resembles to Christopher Marlow's Dr. Faustus who signed the treaty with his blood for unlimited power of 24 years against his soul subjected to hell forever thereafter. Sanjay became successful from materialistic point of view against his blissful family life. Mridula was once the backbone of Sanjay's life and career, now turned drastically to a dustbin in the life of prosperous Sanjay. He made fun of her monthly salary by forgetting its role in his period of struggle. Mridula raised three lakh rupees to set up his hospital. Mridula has no place in this materialistic world of Sanjay.

#### **Flat V/S Round Character:**

The fictitious work comprises two types of characters. One is flat character who remains static and not influenced by external situations. Mridula is such a flat character as she clings to her social responsibility, significance of moral practice. She successfully defends her morality and self respect from severe blows of hostile behavior of Sanjay and harsh comments of her son Shishir. Mridula never gets victimized by tempting materialistic gains.

Sanjay is an epitome of round character. Initial Sanjay marred by inferiority complex, poor, innocent but honest and devoted doctor turned out to be a person with ego, superiority complex, prosperous, stubborn and commercial doctor running after money.

#### **Conclusion**

The research paper's findings are that Murthy's woman protagonist rejects and resists a patriarchal society's established norms. They try to find opportunities and equal status in society where they belong. The study also reveals how the patriarchal system generated in the community is responsible for the loss of women's existence. The paper explains how Sudha Murthy's characters break the female psyche and create a new woman that fights for her rights in a male-dominated society. The research paper would help to find out that Sudha Murthy's female characters are most robust and courageous, which helps to make women empower individually and collectively.

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