

## Cultural Clashes in Sudha Murty's Dollar Bahu

By:

A. D. Akhade

Assist. Professor in English  
G.T.Patil College, Nandurbar

&

Dr. S. D. Sindkhedkar

Professor in English

P. S. G. V. P. Mandal's S.I. Patil Arts,  
G. B. Patel Science and S. T. K. V. S.  
Commerce College, Shahada,  
Dist- Nandurbar, (M.S.)

**Abstract:** Highly educated and well-skilled youth dreams for economical betterment. They are attracted to foreign country where they can find highly-paid jobs. But, at the same time, they have to accept and live in the way of that country. They are habituated to be conformed to both cultures— one from their own mother land and the other one from the foreign land. But the problem lies with those family members who are left in their motherland. When such members go to see their children, they have to suffer from the cultural clashes between the foreign and their own.

**Keywords:** Indian culture, American culture, traditionalism and cultural clashes.

**Introduction:** The researcher focuses on the character of Gauramma, the mother of the protagonist, Chandru in *Dollar Bahu*. The researcher explores how Gauramma is unable to be conformed to foreign culture, unlike her son and daughter-in-law; and, how the cultural clashes makes her return to India, and not to go back to America again.

In India, Gauramma could enjoy the life in her own way. The cultural clashes begin when Gauramma arrives in America. As per the Indian tradition, we go to receive the guests as a part of showing the respect to them. Gauramma is disappointed to see that her daughter-in-law did not come to receive her (only her son came) at airport. Gauramma asks why Jamuna did not come. In reply, she gets another shock, knowing that, Jamuna, though she is in her advanced stage of pregnancy has to work in office. This is the first shock and, further, one after another things come to disappoint and hurt her.

Seeing the amazing America for the first time, Gauramma is so excited that she wonders: 'The Hindu epics describe different kinds of worlds like 'nagaloka', 'yakshaloka' 'kinnaraloka'. what kind of loka is this?' (Dollar, 81). The excitement makes Gauramma forget what Jamuna did. But this does not persist for long. She reaches at the door of her son's house. She is happy to see her son's big house which looks like a palace. But, again, she is astonished looking at Jamuna when the door opens. 'Where was the Jamuna whom she had last seen at Surabhi's wedding, in a silk sari, decked in gold and gem-studded ornaments? She looked so strange with her short hair, a loose gown, and neither a bindi nor her mangalsutra!' (Dollar, 82). Gauramma expects that

Jamuna would touch her feet as per the Indian tradition, but Jamuna just enquires about her journey, standing at the door.

Gauramma rejects to take coffee before having bath. She is shocked to see the bath- cum- toilet room. She demands an another place as a bathroom where she can perform her pooja (rituals). She fears to bathe in the bathtub, so, she asks for a bucket. Chandru tries to make his mother understand that she cannot find the things like in India. But it is hard for her to accept the ways of American life.

Gauramma wants to perform a ritual where the mother-to-be is given her the food and gifts that she likes the most. Gauramma says Jamuna to invite women to attend the ceremony. But, Jamuna dismisses the idea of her mother-in-law. In Jamuna's opinion, she would call the people at once, when she delivers the baby. She is right to say that the people in America would not attend any ceremony on working day. Gauramma wants to show how she is a good mother-in-law, but she is hurt knowing that Jamuna did not bother even to open the gifts.

Gauramma expected that she would be with her daughter-in-law, at the time of her delivery, but Chandru says her to stay at home. He says that he would be in the delivery room for he knows how to nurse one. Gauramma wonders how a man is allowed in delivery room when there is a skilled woman like her.

Gauramma is happy to know that Jamuna has delivered safely, but she does not like the idea of keeping such a new born baby alone in a room. She scolds Jamuna that if they have no time to be with the baby, she would stay with it. Jamuna disallows her to do that. Gauramma is stunned by such rude rejection from her daughter-in-law. Gauramma has a scientific view that for a proper growth of a baby it should be massaged with oil, and then be bathed. But, Jamuna condemns the Indian ways of treating a baby. She says: *'No I don't like that sort of thing. It's all right in India. Here the bathing tub will become oily. Everyone will laugh at us. I shall follow the childcare book to raise my baby.'* (Dollar, 88). Gauramma is fully hurt with the treatment given by her Indo-American daughter-in-law. In India, she is famous in her neighborhood for delivering the babies and giving massage and bath to them.

A naming ceremony is arranged for the baby, but it is not in religious manner in the view of Gauramma. No one appreciate Gauramma's gifts brought for the baby. The ceremony is finished in a little time, but the party culture is seen till late in the night. Gauramma does not know English, so, she feels alone even in the crowds most of the times.

In India, a daughter-in-law dares not to go against the wish of her in-laws. In America, Gauramma sees how Jamuna (her Dollar Bahu) dominates in the house. As Jamuna has to go out for her job, she has the freedom of living in her own way and decide on everything in the house. In Bangalore, Vinuta also, has to go out for her job of teaching, but she cannot violate the ways of Indian life.

Listening to the story of Chandru's friend that his daughter does not listen to her parents, Gauramma advises that the father must punish his daughter for her arrogance. Chandru put the

fact saying: *'Amma, in this country you cannot "punish" children. They will call the police. Being Indians, we do not like our children to be like American children'* (Dollar, 91). Chandru does not like such condition of domestic relation in America. He worries about his own daughter's future, though she is just child now. Though, he has conformed himself to the American life style, impact of Indian culture on his mind is ineffaceable. He is somewhat half Indian and half American, as Pramod Nayar says in his 'An Introduction to Cultural Studies', *'Everyday life today is a hybrid of the local and the global. No pure local culture exists in metropolises any more....'* (Nayar, 33). It makes Gauramma, also, worry about Manasi.

There, despite of her duty time, Vinuta, takes time for her baby. she comes home to feed her child at her breast. But, Jamuna does not find it convenient that she could spare some time for per child. She tells Gauramma to feed the child with bottle. Gauramma dares not approve this. She insists on to feed the child at breast which is not the natural and healthy for the growth of a child. Jamuna regards neither to the genuine worry of a grandmother for her grand-child nor a mother-in-law's affection-cum-order to a daughter-in-law. The American daughter-in-law asserts her own say— *'I will pump my breast milk and keep it in the fridge. You can warm it and give it to the baby at the right time. And by the way, I do not want to follow Viruta's example in everything. This is America.'* (Dollar, 92).

It becomes unbearable to Gauramma to subdue continuously to the arrogant assertion of Jamuna. The amazing life in America becomes monotonous and unbearable. She misses the life in Bangalore. In Bangalore, she would have scolded Vinuta, had she been like Jamuna. But in America, she dares not to speak about the wrong with Jamuna. She thinks that "the house is big but the heart of the house is small".

Gauramma has kept Hindu calendar to keep with her fasts and pujas (rituals). A clash in this regard happens between Gauramma and her American daughter-in-law. In Karnataka, Ugadi is celebrated as Kannada New Year. Gauramma is excited to plan to celebrate the auspicious day in America. She says to Jamuna to invite her friends for lunch. She says that they would go to the temple on the day. Jamuna has nothing to do with how Gauramma seriously regarded the day of Ugadi? She practically responds: *'It's a working day, Amma. We get only a few days leave in a year. We have to save it for emergencies. We cannot take leave for a festival. If you are keen, we will celebrate it on Sunday.'* (Dollar, 102 ).

In the knowledge of Gauramma, in India, one could take leave for the celebration of festival with its cultural significance. The Impact of Indian culture on the mind of Gauramma, makes her say with assertion that the festivals are celebrated only on the auspicious days as given in the Hindu calendar, and not on any other day as per the individual convenience. She insists on Jamuna that, though, the day falls on Thursday, the working day, they must take leave to perform ritual on the same day. To support her statement further she gives the example of Vinuta how she takes leave for such festivals. At this, Jamuna fires back: *'She is a government school teacher, which I am not. In any case, in India, people hardly work.'* (102). Now, Gauramm cannot find the words what to say. She mutely stares at Jamuna who walks off as if there is no serious issue.

Gauramma feels ashamed seeing her son sharing house works like washing dishes and ironing the clothes. She pleads her son not to do such works that do not suit to a man. She suggests him to hire a person to press their clothes. At this Jamuna intervenes, *'Don't pamper him, Amma. In India, you have servants.... Everybody has to share in the house work here.'* (103). Jamuna advocates that there is no wrong in sharing the housework with one's wife, and no matter of shame in working in one's own house. But, Gauramma's mind, cultivated with Indian culture for a long time, cannot be changed. She does not feel at ease when she sees her son ironing the clothes of his wife.

Gauramma suggests for the marriage of Tara, a deceived woman, with Chandru's friend. She thinks it normal as she feels sympathy for Tara. But Chandru explains how one should not even advise in the concern of others' choosing of life partner in America. He says that *'Even parents do not ask personal questions of their children.'* (Dollar, 113). He further explains that people in America can give up anything to keep their privacy. They do not like anybody to cross a line between the relations. When the children grows up, they live separate from their parents. Parents also feel that their children should be independent and face the life on their own selves. When the parents become old, being unable to be independent, they go to old age home. *'People here don't think of living in an old age home as punishment.'* (Dollar, 118).

Gauramma finds that in this world of self-centered people even a wealthy woman goes alone to the hospital during her pregnancy. Nobody has time to accompany her. *'She finds that, 'Everyone was just too busy with their own lives. Their dedication to their jobs was amazing. But the flip side was that loneliness was growing, human bonds were weakening.'* (Dollar, 119).

Gauramma's view of amazing America is changed. She urges to return to her motherland (India) where the people are not wealthy like those in America but seem more cultured to her. The Indian culture is cultivated in her so deeply that she could not conform herself to the American culture.

**Conclusion:** Gauramma is attracted to American ways of life. She takes efforts to send her children to America; and, also wants herself to be with them. But, the Indian culture in her is cultivated in such a manner that she cannot adjust with the ways of American life. The cultural clashes drives her back to India. She is disillusioned. She does not feel that she would like to go to America again.

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