

**Delicate Conjugal Relationship: A Study of  
Sudha Murty's Novel *House Of Cards***

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**Abstract**

The paper evaluates the marital relationship of Sudha Murty's character Mridula in the novel *House of Cards* (2013). Sudha Murty projects the images of modern Indian woman in her fiction. In a patriarchal society, woman restrains their dreams and desires for family but when she is ignored and deceived by the husband their conjugal relation becomes delicate and breaks. The present paper illustrates how the insulted, rejected, ignored woman tries to break the conjugal relation and leaves her husband to live her life on her own. Sudha Murty has presented such a delicate conjugal relationship in her novel, *House of Cards* (2013). The author also presents good relation between husband and wife, but it is destroyed by deceitful and selfish behaviour of male character and also due to the value of money and power. False appearance of male character has spoilt the trust in marriage as 'Trust' forms the basis of any relationship.

**Keywords:** Sudha Murty, *House Of Cards*, patriarchal society, delicate conjugal relationship, honesty

The novel *House of Cards* (2013) is centred on the male domination, subordination of woman, deceitful male and rebel of the woman in such an unsatisfied wedded life.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines relationship as "a state of being related or a relationship can be said as meaningful only when there is an emotional attachment between individuals".

In search of his pride, a man forgets to appreciate the sacrifices made by his woman. She suppresses herself, consoles herself, and reveals her false face of happiness outside. Most pathetically, all her sacrifices are neither realized nor valued by her man. In addition to that, when the trust is broken it is bound to have a negative impact and that her suppressed emotions may burst

like a volcano. Therefore, family and conjugal relationships at this point becomes meaningless and women wants to be independent and on their own.

Man forgets that there is a soul behind all his success. The worst thing is that when a woman tries to express herself, she is ignored by the actions of her man. At one point, the protagonist of the novel is not able to live normally but merely acts as an obedient being. This suppresses her even more, which leads to make a clear decision for herself.

Most of the Indian women identify themselves as a subordinate individual, as a mere instrument of man. This reduces their confidence level. Their roles began to get stereotyped as an individual accepting for herself as the daughter- wife- and mother images. They suppress their real feelings and it becomes difficult for them to untangle their true self from the existing social roles.

Sudha Murty clearly expresses through her character Mridula that the present age women have realized that she is not helpless but independent. The novel also shows how money, fame and power play a vital role in the life of a man which blinds him to his valuable relationship and results in the failure of marriage.

The aim of this paper is to bring out the delicate conjugal relationship in Sudha Murty's novel *House of Cards* which was first published in Kannada language as *Paridhi* in the year 2004 and was later translated into English in 2013. Sudha Murty describes selfishness and greediness of the male characters in this novel. The author shows how male character changes their attitude when they have more money and position. They behave differently even with their wife. Due to lack of love and ignorance of the male results in the isolation of his better part and thus the marital relation of husband and wife shatters.

Mridula, the chief protagonist of novel hailed from Aladahalli, a small village, was a very splendid and an energetic young woman. She was graduated and pursued her teacher's training at Hubli and joined as a teacher in the Government School at Aladahalli. She was also educated to respect elders, the value of life, the art of sharing and the worthiness of human relationships. It was the destiny that she met Dr. Sanjay her future husband in her friend's wedding and again in Bombay and decides to hold hands and walk in the life's journey. The couple settled down after marriage in Bangalore where Sanjay joined in a temporary job at Victoria hospital and Mridula got a government job as a school teacher in Yelehanka. Both of them were not very ambitious or avaricious during the initial stages of their marriage life. The trouble shoots and Sanjay quits his government job and starts an immensely private practice but Mridula stayed unselfish with her job. As affluence comes the never-ending ambition for more and Sanjay slides inevitably to corrupt practices. When Mridula came to know about the true colour of her husband who had sold his soul the truth hits her hard and thus started the delicacy of conjugal relationship between the couples.

Mridula, a simple woman was more pragmatic and matured enough to handle all crises with a positive attitude. Whereas, Sanjay succumbed to pressure since he lacked and did not have the ability

to handle it. He did not have the strength to deal with determination either the work pressure or difficulties he needed to face in the hospital. In the meantime, Sanjay completed his post-graduation by specializing in gynaecology at Vani-Vilas hospital with the sole help of his significant other Mridula.

Bonding and love go far in reinforcing the relationships among human beings. Individuals need someone in their life to share their delights and distresses, be it relatives or companions. Mridula was friendlier with an understanding nature and who was capable of keeping the relationships going with her easy and simple nature. Mridula might have grown up in a village environment without much exposure to the outside world, however when the occasion demanded, it was she who took a courageous resolution rather an essential one which eventually changed the course of their life. Mridula optimistically encouraged her husband Sanjay to agree to Dr. Alex, Sanjay's friend's proposal to start a new private hospital as a partner. She gave him the rational support and encouragement by saying:

“I know how difficult it is to stay in Bangalore even in my job. We aren't well-connected people. My nature is different, and I don't take life so seriously. But you don't share your feelings with others, and you take everything earnestly. So maybe you can resign and start something of your own.” (109)

She mortgaged her jewels to help her husband economically to invest in his new hospital. As Sanjay developed in his profession came the hunger for name, power of influence and money which until now was not known to him in his life.

Every individual has an ambition and desire in their life. It is just the way which they take to accomplish and achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations without hurting others in their drive for success especially their beloved ones. Sanjay, being a doctor, ought to have understood and realized that his prosperity and success was not just because of his commitment to his medical profession however it was mainly due to the sacrifices of the silent woman who remained behind him in his ups and downs like a rock, Mridula. With success and progression of prosperity in life, came the arrogance, superiority and corruption in Sanjay's life. Mridula was constantly worried with her son's conduct and when she came to know about her husband's misdeeds, it was not only a shock but also brought along the loneliness and feeling of insecurity. Mridula had never hesitated from her duty as an obedient daughter-in-law or open-handed sister-in-law. Actually, it was she who had requested Sanjay to help her sister-in-law Lakshmi's family financially and furthermore, to support her mother-in-law, Ratamma. It was Sanjay who had pretended not to regard to her suggestion and help his mother and sister however without the knowledge of Mridula, he had helped them economically and that too from the second account. When she discovered the fact and realized that her husband had deceived her by keeping her away from confidential financial matters, ultimately, at last, this break of trust broke the foundation of their married life. Her first reaction was:

“How can Sanjay open an account without telling me? The date of the first transaction is five years ago. I’ve been cheated for the last five years and I was not even aware of it. Isn’t this infidelity too? Alex cheated on Anita in one way and Sanjay has cheated on me in another. He’s the one who said, “I don’t want to handle money. You manage it and I’ll manage the nursing home.” I guess the apple really doesn’t fall far from the tree. When my mother-in-law is desirous of money even at this age, what else can I expect from her son?” (183)

It was money that has eventually changed the attitude and thoughts of Sanjay in the course of time. When Mridula comes to know about the reality of Sanjay, she felt he is a deceitful and unreliable person. Mridula lost all her confidence and was unable to accept and believe that her husband Sanjay had cheated her. Mridula saved and maintained the money for his PG degree and his clinic. She lives with an absolute faith. But the trust between Mridula and Sanjay was shattered. Therefore, Mridula shifted her bag to the visitor’s room and locked the door from inside. At the point when her friend Anita came to know about the situation. Mridula explains,

“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 a marriage and brings joy to the family. Without it we have nothing. How can Sanjay destroy the faith and trust I had in him?” (186)

Mridula thinks that she is deceived by her own companion. She thinks that she is trapped in marriage and defrauded by her husband. She became depressed psychologically and affected by the happenings in her life. At this point, Mridula was forced to consult a psychiatrist, Dr. Rao, who at last helped her to prevail over her problems which were caused due to the mental stress. When Mridula needed the help and support of her husband, he was not there, and she was left alone. The man who had held her hand with a promise to take care of her for the rest of her life failed in his duty as a husband when she needed his comfort, soothing response and assurance. In fact, Sanjay often wondered whether he had made the right choice in his life by wedding Mridula. But for Mridula, her entire existence revolved around only Sanjay and her son Sishir. This draws out the difference in characters and their point of view of a man and woman who had dedicated their life with each other.

The fact that finally made Mridula to take the radical decision of abandoning her husband and her married life of twenty-five years was the point at which she overheard the conversation between her husband, Sanjay and his partner, Alex.

“No, I don’t want to ask her. I’ve known her for almost twenty- five years. She doesn’t cooperate with us. In fact, she’ll create problems because she’s an idealist. Instead of her, I want Lakshmi to be the silent director. She doesn’t understand all this anyway. We can just ask her to sign papers whenever we want and, in return, we can give her some money.” (215)

The man with whom she had lived for twenty-five years did not have any desire to share with her his own personal matters and thought of her as an object of protest who was more of an obstacle to him. This to a certain extent helped Mridula to get back herself to gain self-assurance and take up her life once again. She could able to take a vital decision about her future, the future which did exclude her husband, Sanjay. This prompted her to leave him stranded, paralyzed, speechless and knocked him out entirely when they were to attend their silver jubilee celebration of their married life. When Sanjay asked Mridula as to when she would be back after seeing her with a suitcase, she steadily answered: "Never." When she gave the purpose behind her decision, it was an answer for which Sanjay had no answer to reply. She told him:

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

This answer reveals the disappointment and failure of their life which in point of fact in the later stages, was filled only with deceit and misunderstanding between the estranged couple. A woman who had no helps from either her parents or from her in-laws, had indeed taken a bold path after accepting the reality. Mridula left Dr. Sanjay's house and has her job as school headmistress in Hubali.

Success of marriage depends on the effective working together of both husband and wife and trust is requirement for any relationship. Here dishonest behaviour of Sanjay their relation becomes fragile. Woman can accept anything but not ready to accept disbelief and ignorance of her husband. *House of Cards* is all about the life of Dr. Sanjay and Mridula, the couple whose family life fell like a pack of cards unable to withstand the velocity of the wind. The reason being the ambition of one person, Dr. Sanjay, whose psychological craving for power and money led to the end of their married life. Thus, the article clearly brings out that when the trust not remains the relationship also shatters.

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