

## Sudha Murthy's Contribution to Children's Literature: Morality, Simplicity and Cultural Values

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### Abstract

Children's literature serves as a powerful tool in shaping young minds, imparting moral values, and preserving cultural heritage. Storybooks are a great source of inspiration for the young generation and a powerful tool to lay a strong foundation for the future. In India, where the art of storytelling has been an integral part of tradition, many writers have played a significant role in bridging the gap between the past and the present through their stories. Their stories also been a source to project our vast culture and rich heritage. The children's literature genre encompasses a wide range of works, it includes *katha*, *kahani*, fairytales, fables, folktales, stories from epics, lullabies, graphic books for children etc. the purpose of these works is to entertain instruct, and engage the young mind into creative thinking and enlightening them. Sudha Murthy stands out as an engaging storyteller who combines simplicity with profound wisdom. Sudha Murthy is a widely-read author, her narratives are deeply rooted in Indian culture and everyday experiences, resonate with children across generations, making her one of the most influential contemporary writers in Indian children literature.

The present paper will explore how Sudha Murthy's books are more than just stories; how her stories are lessons in kindness, honesty, moral values, humility, truthfulness, and perseverance, the core ideologies of Indian philosophy, tradition and knowledge system. Majorly she draws her stories from Indian mythology, folktales, and personal experiences and crafts the narratives that are engaging and morally enriching. In a world where children's books are increasingly influenced by global storytelling trends, Murthy's works offer a unique blend of tradition and modernity.

**Keywords:** Children's Literature, Sudha Murthy, Indian Tradition, Mythology, Storytelling, Cultural Heritage, Morality etc.

Stories play a concrete role in building the character and transmitting the moral values to younger ones from generation to generation. Children's literature serves as a powerful tool in shaping young minds, imparting moral values, and preserving cultural heritage. Storybooks are a great source of inspiration for the young generation and a powerful tool to lay a strong foundation for the future. In India, where the art of storytelling has been an integral part of tradition, many writers have played a significant role in bridging the gap between the past and the present through their stories. Their stories also been a source to project our vast culture and rich heritage. The children's literature genre encompasses a wide range of works, it includes *katha*, *kahani*, fairytales, fables, folktales, stories from epics, lullabies, graphic books for children etc. the purpose of these works is to entertain instruct, and engage the young mind into creative thinking and enlightening them. Many Indian storytellers who have

made substantial contribution to this genre are: Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra*, Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagar*, Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha*, the storytellers of *The Jatak Tales*, Ksemendra's *Brihatkathamajari*, Narayan Pandit's *Hitopadesha*, Rabindranath Tagore, Sukumar Ray, Satyajit Ray, Munshi Premchand, Kamla Subramaniam, Ruskin Bond, R. K. Narayan, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Arup Kumar Dutta, Mahashweta Devi, Subhadra Sen Gupta, Devdutt Pattanaik, etc. are notable names in enriching the Children's Literature heritage of India. Among these great writers, Sudha Murthy stands out as an engaging storyteller who combines simplicity with profound wisdom. Sudha Murthy is a widely-read author, her narratives are deeply rooted in Indian culture and everyday experiences, resonate with children across generations, making her one of the most influential contemporary writers in Indian children literature. She has written widely in English and Kannada languages. She has received many prestigious awards and honours like the Attimabbe award, Karnataka Rajyotsava award, R.K. Narayan award, Life Time Achievement award, Padmashree award by the Indian Government, etc. She is also active member of Rajya Sabha.

Murthy's books are more than just stories; they are lessons in kindness, honesty, humility, truthfulness, and perseverance, the core ideologies of Indian philosophy, tradition and knowledge system. Most of the time she draws her stories from Indian mythology, folktales, and personal experiences and crafts the narratives that are engaging and morally enriching. In a world where children's books are increasingly influenced by global storytelling trends, Murthy's works offer a unique blend of tradition and modernity. Her characters from mythological heroes to common day to day people- all impart valuable life lessons in an interesting way.

Children's literature serves as a tool to influence young minds, offering entertainment while simultaneously instilling values, ethics, and social norms. Stories have been vehicles of moral instruction, teaching children about honesty, kindness, courage, and dutifulness. However, the way morality is embedded in children's literature has evolved over time, shifting from overt didacticism to more nuanced storytelling that allows for open-ended interpretations. Sudha Murthy's stories provide a cultural foundation while addressing contemporary social themes in an interesting way. Her writing is shaped by her experiences as a teacher, social worker, and philanthropist. Her stories often highlight core human values such as honesty, compassion, generosity, and humility. In her book *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories* (2006) presents Indian folktales with lessons on kindness, wisdom, and generosity. It is a collection of many interesting stories, one story from this revolves around a young boy named Santosh who discovers an old forgotten drum in his grandfather's house, he came to know that the drum possess magical powers, this has many other enticing stories, conveying deep lied values of Indian culture and tradition without preaching. They are not only filled with moral views but also show the importance of wit and intelligence to overcome obstacles in life, they have an ability to attract the attention of young readers. *The Bird with Golden Wings* (2009) imparts lessons to avoid greed and show gratitude in life to be happy and content. It tells a story of a young girl who is rewarded with lovely gifts when she takes pity on a hungry bird and feeds it all the rice she has, and what happens to the girl's greedy and nosy neighbour when he tries to get bigger and better gifts. Such beautifully narrated stories convey lessons on greed and its repercussions and how good deeds return in best ways to children.

Murthy's books also emphasize on the beauty of a simple life and high thinking. Her book *Grandma's Bag of Stories* (2012) portrays traditional wisdom through a grandmother's tales,

reinforcing the idea that happiness and satisfaction lies in small joys. She has made education and pursuit of knowledge her recurring themes because they are the way to achieve desired goals and get success in every field of life. In her book *The Magic of the Lost Temple* (2015) tells the story of a young girl's adventure in a village, blending curiosity with cultural exploration. Whereas, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read* (2004) is an autobiographical story highlighting the importance of education for all ages.

Murthy also addresses gender biases and promotes the importance of equal opportunities to all through her stories, *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree* (2019) narrates the stories of strong and wise women from Indian mythology. In *The Upside Down King* (2018) she tells the lesser-known stories of characters from Indian epics, including those challenging gender stereotypes. Her stories are a medium to introduce young readers to India's rich traditions, helping them develop a sense of identity and pride in their heritage. They introduce children to Indian epics and rich history of tales, folklores, and mythology in an engaging way. *The Serpent's Revenge: Unusual Tales from the Mahabharata* (2016) and *The Man from the Egg: Unusual Tales about the Trinity* retells the strange and unusual stories from the epic and the stories of Trinity- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in simple and accessible way to the young minds to imagine and recreate the rich tradition of story narration of India.

Her books emphasize traditional wisdom and values in modern digital world with contemporary themes to maintain the balance. Most of her stories and narratives revolve around the relationship of grandchildren with their grandparents, a way to link the present and past, they listen their stories and observe their surroundings. Many a time these young children explore the past and discover new things and get inspired by all this, they also imbibe values and deep lessons of life with these interactions with their grandparents. By doing this we gain insight into how literature can shape the moral compass of future generations while keeping them connected to their roots. Through her engaging narratives, she not only entertains but also imparts essential moral and cultural lessons. Her stories are like a bridge between tradition and modernity, ensuring that readers grow up with a strong ethical foundation and appreciation for Indian heritage. As children's literature continues to evolve, Murthy's works remain a cornerstone in shaping young minds with timeless wisdom and contemporary relevance.

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