Chapter III
Manifestation of Wisdom Depicting Values: Literary Analysis of Indian Values in the Selected Works of Sudha Murty
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3.1 Preliminaries

Storytelling has been the most effective way of teaching children the art of true living and problem-solving as these stories show how people face up to life’s challenges and surmount obstacles to achieve their cherished goals. Stories, in fact, influence our behaviour and shape our society and culture.

The vignettes in Sudha Murty’s books depict moral values; during conflicts and challenges in life these narratives reinstate values according to the changing socio-culture. Her stories related to the nation, its famous personalities, culture and relationships in a family have helped in shaping an individual’s attitudes towards self and towards the society. These stories are effective in influencing the way children and adults behave and think because favourite stories are often read and re-read repeatedly owing to the profound influence felt. Sudha Murty known for her tremendous contribution in the field of inspirational and motivational literature in India through her inspiring short stories, anecdotes and novels, which teach us valuable lessons and insights into life and human nature.
3.2 Sudha Murty as an Inspirational writer

Stories help a person analyse the decisions of the literary characters and later apply it in their lives while making judgments and decisions in their own lives. Readers are able to identify and reflect more when the stories are personal relating them to their lives than to those narratives that are unrealistic.

Sudha Murty writes that she was brought up in a village in North Karnataka. In those days there were no modern gadgets of ‘entertainment’ at home – gadgets that we take for granted today like television, music systems or VCD players. The only luxury that was available to her was books. She was fortunate to have affectionate grandparents. Her grandfather was a passionate reader. He was a linguist and knew many Sanskrit texts by heart. He was also an excellent storyteller and would often narrate to her stories from the history of India, from epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, enhanced by whatever appealing things he had read that day from the newspapers and magazines. These tales taught Sudha Murty the first lessons in life.

Tales from the *Kathasaritsagara*, *Arabian Nights*, *Panchatantra*, stories of *Aesop*, *Birbal and Tenali Rama* that were narrated to her made the nights memorable nights. During those nights her imagination would soar across time and space in the battle field of Haldi Ghati in Rajasthan where she cried for the dead horse Chetak. She could rejoice over the victory of Rajasthan in the battle of Haldi Ghati and was moved to tears through the stories of the large-heartedness of Raja Ranjit Singh.
She wept when she heard her grandfather tell her about the first war of Indian Independence, which the British described as a mutiny. She became an Arab and changed her dress as she visualized herself in the Arabian tales intercepting the thieves with the Wazir-e-Alam of Baghdad. As she laughed and cried, she was also learning valuable lessons from these narratives and the inimitable stories of Aesop, Tenali Rama and Birbal the Wise. She found that as the years rolled by, the joint families had turned into nuclear families as in the West, where children rarely get to live with their grandparents.

The arrival of television, computers and other gadgets, she felt, had undermined the power of children’s imagination in the modern era. In an article she wrote, Sudha Murty expresses the view that the great oral tradition of story telling is not an easy art and requires modulation of voice to create an atmosphere of horror, surprise, humour and peace. Deeply appreciative of her grandfather’s influence on her childhood, she has tried to re-create some of those experiences in life in the book, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*. It would be true to say then that the stories she heard from her grandfather in her childhood have been a basic source of inspiration for her later writings.

In the course of her work for the Infosys Foundation as well as in her capacity as a teacher, she travelled extensively within India as well as across other countries, meeting many people, young and old, each one of whom, she felt, had enriched her life in some way or the other. She was inspired to pass on these experiences to the younger generation in the hope that these narratives would inculcate in them the insights and values that she found in them.
Good and bad are relative terms. Anything that is considered superior by one can be dreadful for another person. If eating non-vegetarian food is considered a sin by one, it is considered good in nutritional terms for another. But the basic moral, cultural and traditional standards of a country tend to indicate what is good and what is bad in relation to the social and cultural norms of that nation. Sudha Murty’s stories are poignant as they reflect the harsh realities of life of the lesser privileged instigating a person to be thankful for the happy life they are leading. It inspires one to be empathetic to those who are not leading a blessed life like the reader.

Sudha Murty’s book *Wise and Otherwise: A Salute to Life* presents fifty-one vignettes offering multiple shades of human nature. This book narrates various true life incidents which occurred during the course of her social work and teaching, as she went about her chosen task of helping the needy, recognizing true merit and originality or facilitating the pursuit of careers of one’s choice to the intellectually capable. The experiences and the values they embody are firmly rooted in the Indian context.

The radiance of a lamp can never ignite another lamp unless it continues to smoulder in its own flame. A teacher too, like a lamp needs to nurture a strong willingness to learn, before she can influence others with her ideas. Sudha Murty, whom many of her students regard as an ideal teacher, learnt early in life that it was a vocation that could help her shape the world. A teacher must not only inform, but also inspire. If the inspiration dies out, it is only information that gets accumulated. The mind is like a garden which has to be nurtured every day with inspiring thoughts so that the weeds of impure thoughts and actions are taken care of.
Every person aspires to reach great heights in life; those of us who fail to achieve our goals are often forced to give up our dreams due to lack of encouragement. A good teacher can be a tremendous source of encouragement and inspiration to her students. Sudha Murty plays a vital role in moulding a person into a good human being with works to improve the lives of others. Sudha Murty’s commitment to her chosen vocation of teaching has also served as a strong base to her writings. As an educator and as an individual, Sudha Murty communicates about life and love for others.

She did not seek publicity for all the good work she was doing. She did not make any public announcements to accompany her work. She went into the tribal areas, forests, into hamlets ravaged by poverty, into communities devastated by disease where she discovered the deserving who needed help. She assisted the poor and the needy with supplies during natural calamities as Tsunami. Frustrations, obstacles or human greed never dissuaded her from her mission. She performed her duty in the true spirit of a *karmayogi*, thanks to the values inculcated in her by her parents in her childhood.

A majority of people would like to get more out of life than they have. A few achieve this goal, while many do not, probably because they do not try hard enough. Sudha Murty believes that achieving a rank in an examination is not merely an indication of one’s intelligence; it also indicates the hard work and the perseverance that the student has put in to reach his goal. As Sudha Murty was brought up in a professor’s family, she understood the value of a rank. Her own experience as a teacher also led her to place emphasis on such merit.
She empathises with those gifted students who, due to poverty, are unable to afford a proper education despite their intelligence. Sudha Murty feels that such students can achieve great heights of success if helped financially to pursue their studies and has made it one of her life’s missions to help deserving and needy students. Her great love for learning and her respect for industry and application in the pursuit of learning are infused into her stories.

Sudha Murty may be described as an admirable academic person who has been blessed with a susceptible mind, and a genuine impulse to help others. There are problems in human relations that can be solved by seeing them in a different perspective. Sudha Murthy told CNBC-TV18 in an interview:

"In life's journey, we all meet strange people and undergo many experiences that touch us and sometimes even change us. If you have a sensitive mind, you will see your life too in the vast storehouse of stories. For me, it is something very close to my heart.” [1]

Sudha Murty became an accomplished storyteller in Kannada owing to her inspiration in the human encounters and experiences of her own life as a revolutionary, educationist and as an insightful human being. She wrote for the first time in English to inaugurate a fortnightly column in the New Sunday Express. She chose to focus on her personal experiences, her travels and her encounters with ‘ordinary people with extraordinary minds’. [2] The column attracted attention because of its simplicity, spontaneity, novelty and openness.
Her readers could see that her writings were not superficial or shallow. She wrote from her heart. It was clear from the start that these anecdotal insights into human nature were very popular amongst the readers, offering much more than mere journalism could provide. She wrote of experiences that occurred during her travels in India and abroad while carrying on charity work for the Infosys Foundation. Her columns became well-known, and she was urged to compile them into a book so as to enable more and more people to read and be influenced positively by her experiences. Thus the book *Wise and Otherwise* was born.

The benefits we obtain by reading Sudha Murty’s books must not stop with the mere pleasure of reading; Sudha Murty’s books were written with the purpose of conveying a message to the readers. She turned the success of Infosys into an opportunity to serve the less privileged. She wishes to convey this message to others who are similarly positioned. Sudha Murty’s works will be truly complete when the tradition of grand foundations rises in India to helping the needy, recognize the originality, facilitate intellectually and inspire the people in the pursuit of greatness.

In this way, Sudha Murty may be hailed as a role model for every Indian citizen; indeed, as many of her admirers say, she is someone who makes us feel proud as Indians. As she continued to write her columns and publish her stories, Sudha Murty found that people enjoyed reading her real life experiences, though she altered names and places to ensure respect for people’s privacy. She is of the opinion that her stories are popular because they are simple and above all true to life. She finds that truth attracts everyone.

Sudha Murty’s writings are impelled by the urge to motivate everyone to become better human beings. She wishes that every person
gains in some way or the other, through her vast experiences in India and abroad. In this goal, she has been assisted by the power of language and words, as instruments of inspiration. After all, words have the same power as those thoughts that shape our attitudes.

3.3 An Overview of Values in Sudha Murty’s works

India has a rich heritage of story-telling texts, including the Jataka Tales, the Panchatantra and the Kathasaritsagara, which have been enjoyed by generations of readers and listeners. While they are fascinating as tales and narratives, they are invaluable as parables and allegories that convey moral truths. Sudha Murty says these stories enrich our morals and are the perfect means to introduce the right values to young people. She says that in every corner of the world, folk tales have been told to generations of children. Making a study of these world traditions, she noticed that Indian stories often featured gods, curses and boons; many of them also ended up with a marriage and the characters lived happily ever after. On the contrary, western stories emphasize logic and human intellect over other things, while Middle-Eastern ones have a lot of magic and supernatural elements.

Sudha Murty feels that there are various types of poverty besides an insufficiency of money. These are, for example, poverty of compassion, poverty of tolerance, poverty of concern and regard for others. There is also poverty of justice, of vision, of integrity, and of human understanding. There is a poverty of humility, of forgiveness, of loyalty. We find a vast number of people starving for love and understanding, especially the old, the disabled and the destitute.
Sudha Murty tackles human attitudes in many of her stories which teach lessons and at times astonish us at the mind-set of people who are educated and wise yet can be considered literate while there are illiterates like the villager in the story *The Old Man and His God* or in the story, *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk* displaying humanity and culture far better than the city bred and educated. Sudha Murty believes that the lessons of humility can be learnt from these villagers who do not feign like the rich and well-bred. Sudha Murty learns a lesson of reverence of giving from a villager Thandapa who refuses to accept the Sudha Murty’s help of school uniform’s and bottles, and umbrellas until she accepts a gift of fruit juice throughout the year from him. These incidents taught Sudha Murty lessons of hospitality ensued in India. She acquires humble admiration, and learns to accept the gift while teaching the readers another lesson on human feelings.

Sudha Murty depicts another set of human attitudes where children betray their parents in the old age to impinge their hard earned savings through the narration of the story of an old man who is brought by his own son to the foundation office with the intention of leaving his father in the old age home to retrieve his savings. Sudha Murty’s stories also depict the values, simpletons like villagers, bear towards the materialistic world, stating that the whole world, the earth, water in rivers, monsoon and other earthly things are out of reach of man, and so there is no meaning in being materialistic. It teaches a poignant lesson on sharing resources and leaving it after one’s use for the coming generation as these earthly elements are meant for everyone. Meeting people in the day to day life, and experiencing these values have suffused Sudha Murty with the pride of being an Indian leaning back on a rich culture.
These stories help in measuring, correcting and reinstating values by changing the attitudes in a society through ethics. Perhaps the deepest crisis of all poverty is a complete lack of sympathetic feeling for one’s fellow men, which is actually a dearth of brotherhood and poverty of sustaining beliefs. It would not be wrong to say that Sudha Murty’s books and her writings are committed to eradicating this ‘poverty’ of values.

3.4 Outline of Social Issues in Sudha Murty’s Books

Sudha Murty’s books address many social issues and gender issues like the issue the status of an Indian woman in the society. She cites a few examples where there is unending strife as a daughter in law through nostalgic memories of her childhood when her neighbour had ill-treated her daughter in law with the sole intention of retaining her supremacy in the house. When Narayan Murty and Sudha Murty got married, Narayan Murty’s grandmother took up the responsibility of laying harmony in their own house. Sudha Murty feels that if these problems are regarded like the general matters amicably and forgotten with the moving life the problem would never crop up again.

Sudha Murty’s stories also highlight the orthodox Indian society regarding women’s rights, in stories like Stove Bursts or Dowry Deaths, where the death of a twenty year old lady is later understood as a death actually related to dowry. The story reflects the social structure, dearth of sympathy and consideration, the common people, the bias based on gender discrimination and unemployment. These stories create wakefulness amongst people to readdress the society with universal values.
Many of the stories like *A Bond Betrayed on Rakhi Day* tackles problems of human trafficking like the protagonist Tara, who is subjected to prostitution by her own brother on the day, ‘Rakhi,’ a ceremonial thread is tied to a brother marking the lasting bondage between a brother and sister. Sudha Murty’s stories convey varied morals from modesty to compassion, from fairness to societal concerns which sensitize readers for being true, day to day experience to which people are able to associate easily as the stories reach the people of all the strata in a society. The protagonists belong to humble background like the tribal couple, or the tribal boy Hanumanthapa or the salesgirl in a local train. As a teacher her writings inspire and motivate professionals like her to raise their standard, a few inspired reader who have read her books review her work voicing her choiceful thoughts on Metro Reader as

“The greatest joy for a teacher is to produce students better than him.”[3]

The book *The Old Man and His God: Discovering the Spirit of India* consists of twenty five stories of Sudha Murty illustrating the lessons of optimism and happiness through the lives of routine characters, and through these happenings she conveys the lessons learnt to the readers. It includes the story of the blind old man in the Shiva temple, *Horegallu, True Shades of Nature* and many more…Readers experience the same feelings as Sudha Murty on reading her books and encounter a personal insight on reading each story which has been fabulously woven in eloquent English. It signifies the fact that she is well read and has travelled deep into places of poverty like those of the villages of Orissa and the flashy locales of America and other countries.
The stories are tiny threads of experience gathered to form a yarn of perceptions with time. Sudha Murty has the superb quality of unfolding stories which put life into the narrations through a delicate touch of experience. These narrations evoke the desired emotions within readers to contribute to the society in their own small ways just like she has done through her charitable organisation, the Infosys Foundation which was a branch of the software company Infosys. Sudha Murty diligently mothered the organisation and in due course of time discovered that she had grown into a smaller part of it as it grew leaps and bounds. She witnessed praise and criticism while covering miles together, holding its hands. The indulgence of many more philanthropists who wished to turn the world a better one in reality is most definitely an outcome of her literature, which evoked the sympathy and the grit among readers to pander to societal transformation.

Sudha Murty’s stories encompass a concern for the younger generation who remain hooked on to the computer and telephone. She writes about the misuse of telephone reminding us of the value of rationale in thoughts with technological progress. Many of Sudha Murty’s books portray her outlook which includes a feminine frameset of mind while describing saris, bangles, girly gossips at places, domestic chores, godly worships and many more signifying Indianness and Indian values, yet these books are able to engross men equally like women due to the witty, truthful and vibrant narration influencing readers to seek out innocence of thoughts and inner beauty of sympathising with the others.

Sudha Murty’s intention of writing narratives is not to publicise her deeds of charity, but of sharing her experiences of life which include the rich culture of rural, urban and tribal India compelling readers to introspect the significance of being in the humane world of humanity
guiding them in the right direction. Sudha Murty has consciously tried to blend some of these elements in her stories, while studiously excluding gods, goddesses and supernatural beings.

### 3.5 Sudha Murty’s Works

Some of Sudha Murty’s stories are those that she loved hearing many, many years ago, tales that portrayed men and women, boys and girls landing themselves in trouble and somehow extricating themselves from it, with effort and perseverance. They depict human emotions and everyday human activities. Sudha Murty has gathered these tales from all over the world, but has retold them in the Indian setting so that the Indian child finds it easy to relate to these stories. The book *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories* has stories that Sudha Murty had heard as a child and a few other stories that have been created by her.

Sudha Murty says that she realised the role of stories in the life of a child when she was blessed with a granddaughter Krishnaa, which motivated her to bring out her next book *Grandma's Bag of Stories* by taking her back into her childhood. Sudha Murty fondly remembers her grandmother who was popularly known as Krishtakka was very intelligent and loving and was a terrific storyteller. Sudha Murty says her grandmother preferred teaching them the values of life subtly through stories and never believed in preaching empty lessons understandable to a child. The stories had great impact on her life that she has not forgotten these stories or the values owing to the wonderful narration, to this day.

Sudha Murty spent untroubled and a hassle-free childhood with her cousins and grandparents in her hometown in north Karnataka named Shiggaon. She says that she could establish a wonderful bond with her
cousins owing to the strong bonding power of her grandmother while sharing everything with each other. These stories are a true manifestation of her childhood though there are a few changes made.

Sudha Murty feels that stories are vastly important while helping a child learn values, mould values and above all learning morals of life. The book includes stories over long summer days and nights, as seven children enjoy life with their grandmother in her little town. Grandmother has a bag of stories for each occasion to educate her grandchildren which includes tales of kings and cheats, monkey and mice bears and gods. It includes stories on laziness when a man refuses to work or put out fire till it reaches his beard. He learns that being lazy and pretending to be cool would never help a person in need. The true meaning of growing old is portrayed in the story When Yama Called, signifying grey hair and a stooped back were indications that time on earth would be ending for the person. The story poignantly reminds people to do well, to be remembered by one and all till posterity.

Sudha Murty says she is aware that industrialization, technological progress and scientific advancement are necessary to bring prosperity to our country but they have their own shortcomings. They create a whole set of psychological and sociological problems. Technological progress and high remuneration in the public sectors have made the modern generation focused and hardworking. The best part of people’s lives is spent in achieving career goals. This brings them material benefits, but they find themselves forced to compromise on emotional ties so as to win in every situation. Purely intellectual development without an internal strength of character makes as much sense as putting a high-powered sports car in the hands of a teenager who is addicted to drugs.
If science becomes all technique and technology it quickly degenerates into mindless power. The prime use of technological progress is to serve mankind. Citizens in the world over have become aware and concerned about the loss of social cohesion in their communities and are becoming increasingly concerned about promoting values to nurture character formation in this ‘tech savvy’ world. Sudha Murty is not only acutely conscious of this need, but also strives to set right the imbalance by the conscious promotion of values through her writings.

Traditionalists argue that nature has created men and women to carry out different functions. Man, regarded as the stronger, the bolder and freer of the two has been designated as the protector of the family and its provider; while woman, thought to be the weaker, dependent and timid of the two, requires the protection of man. Her sphere, they say, is the home, the care of the children and the nurturing of the family; but with time it was understood that women could perform the same functions and responsibilities as men without getting the same benefits that accrue to men. Sudha Murty being a sensitive and intelligent woman understands that social equality for all must come before individual freedom.

Women and women’s issues, thus become a central concern of Sudha Murty’s novels. On reading *Gently Falls the Bakula*, one can sense her feeling that innumerable couples undergo social and psychological problems; to find a solution to this, as a norm, it is the woman who has to make many compromises, even sacrifices, despite the fact that she may be as talented and educated as her partner. Many a times, it is she who has to forgo her job and become an uncomplaining shadow to fulfil the duties of the family. *Gently Falls the Bakula* was Sudha Murty’s first novel written three decades ago in Kannada, and translated into English recently. It is a tribute to the author’s insight and
sensitivity that this book still strikes a chord among today’s readers, and
captures the mindless rush for corporate advancement and career
promotion that has relegated marriage and human relationships to a
secondary position in the lives of the new generation of ‘technocrats’ and
upwardly mobile professionals. The book records in a sensitive way, how
marriages disintegrate as ambition and self-interest take their toll. The
novel remains startlingly relevant in its analysis of modern values and
work ethics.

To understand what compassion is, one must be emotionally
committed and should be capable of moral indignation when one sees
other victims suffering due to exploitation or greed or their own
misfortunes. One must be compassionate in carrying out one’s obligations
as a citizen to help build a caring and just society. These values have to
be constantly replenished for social harmony. “Yatra naryastu pujyante,
ramante tatra devata” [4] which says, “God exists where women are
respected” but very few women in our country exercise their freedom;
most of them are either oppressed or relegated to a secondary position.
Sudha Murty feels that education and financial independence are tools
that can not only help a woman face the situation, but also nurture the
confidence to move ahead in life.

The books Mahashweta and Dollar Bahu also revolve around
women and their tribulations. We find it easy to love those who are good-
looking, rich or those who are fun to have around. We do not like people
who intrude upon our conscience or make us feel uncomfortable. We
would rather stay away from people who are not healthy, smart or
beautiful as we are.
The book *Mahashweta* portrays the agony and trauma that a young girl undergoes on discovering leukoderma patches on her body after her marriage. The book portrays the ‘skin deep’ nature of relations that is revealed in moments of crisis.

“*Amid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, be it ever so humble, there is no place like home.*” [5]

The word “home” possesses a strange, compelling magic, but these days joyous, comforting families and family togetherness have become a thing of the past. Though we share the space under the same roof, the feeling of togetherness and inner harmony is missing. Will Durant once said: “*The family is the nucleus of civilization*”. [6] Life’s core values are best cultivated in a family. A broken relation in the family ultimately reflects the thoughts and deeds of an individual. Domestic harmony is the principal source of happiness and well-being.

*Dollar Bahu* is a story about dreams, aspirations, culture and the simple life in the context of an American background. The book reveals how money corrupts the way we look at one and another and how this attitude towards money tears a family apart. The book also portrays how liberating life can be away from the strict norms that govern a middle-class life.

The novel is essentially about middle-class Indians’ aspirations to grow rich with money from USA, often through a son. *Dollar Bahu* teaches us the valuable lessons that mere dollars cannot buy love and respect and that each one has a unique life that should not be spent vying others. Sudha Murty says of the book:
“It is the story of a mother-in-law who thinks the Indian daughter-in-law is not as good as her counterpart in the USA — the Dollar Bahu who lives in the golden land. The mother-in-law craves to be with her son in America and later when she herself spends a year there, she realizes that the problems most Indian-Americans face in the USA are similar to those back home and that the grass is not always greener on the other side.” [7]

Sudha Murty’s Book The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk is the fourth book of narratives based on her experiences as a teacher, a writer and a social worker. The book has twenty three stories and the stories are mostly based on the personal lives of people who have confided their problems to Sudha Murty. Sudha Murty says it is not unethical as these stories are actual experiences of people who wish these to be written so that they perform the role of lessons for those who face the same situation. A few of the people encouraged her to write the incidents using their names so that the readers learn through these narratives and do not behave foolishly like the protagonist Vishnu in the story Too Many Questions. Sudha Murty has taken an initiative to present the stories with the prospect of youngsters’ views due to her interaction with the new editor.

Sudha Murty too believes in these values and her works are not mere abstract moralizing. As we know, she herself made sacrifices to be a homemaker and look after her family and children instead of pursuing a career in Infosys; she had known at that time that this would have meant giving her a hundred per cent to work, and neglecting her home front. This compels readers to brood on the purpose of life. People can share experiences, but true and diverse experiences like Sudha Murty’s makes her narrations unique.
There are words of wisdom, sincerity, courtesy, respect, appreciation, humour, hate and thanks. There are words that are dynamic, gentle and kind, delicate words of love, all embedded with meaning. The words that flowed from the pen of great men have created history. Sudha Murty’s words of wisdom and her firmly held belief that the happiness one gains in giving is more than the happiness one receives, bring peace and harmony in the minds of the readers, portraying the power of goodness that makes man what he is truly meant to be.

Her poise, calmness of mind, or patience acts as a catalyst in bringing her closer to the readers through a clear knowledge of her relation to her fellow beings and to her social and professional work. Perhaps the greatest inspiration for motivational writers like Sudha Murty has been their own beliefs and life experiences that provide the raw material making their writings authentic, genuine and powerful.

These stories have also been included in the main course books in the C.B.S.E curriculum in standard 9 (Oxford Press Book Publishers, *Skyline Course Book 7*) and in the undergraduate courses in various states in India, as these stories can influence the child’s imagination with the help of a sensitive teacher. Sudha Murty’s books have a positive impact on readers. The values generated from her books help people become more civilized and help to raise caring communities. It helps a teacher to reduce negative student behaviour and improve academic performance by inculcating positive values and the right attitude towards life. They help people to become responsible citizens and productive members of society.

People are able to connect to Sudha Murty’s writings easily as her narrations emerge the reflections of a common person. Her association with the charitable trusts in spite of heading one of the richest companies
and leading a grounded life makes her exceptionally loved and respected amongst her readers. Sudha Murty uses simple and lucid language without any attempt at glamour. Sudha Murty’s books have been translated into Kannada, Marathi and many other languages leading to wider reading that associates the goodness in her books.

Sudha Murty has the innate ability to remain grounded in spite of having money; perhaps this imparts the austerity in her writings, reflecting her straightforwardness in life.

3.6 Analysis of Indian Values in the Selected Works of Sudha Murty

Sudha Murty’s books Wise and Otherwise: A Salute to Life, The Old Man and His God: Discovering the Spirit of India’, The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk, and How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories are her most popular works. These stories and anecdotes touch a cord in the hearts of many readers through the realistic hues of the human nature they portray. Sudha Murty’s books represent life and the social world. These writings are close to the reader while evoking a sense of oneness with the simple, lucid language and characters who are none other than the people one encounters. Adults, especially teachers, due to the vital messages they carry, appreciate Sudha Murty books, though written specifically for children. How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories have been a source of inspiration for the forty-minute film called Meri Pehli Chatra in the year 2006. This book too imparts crucial human values, while teaching us the priceless lesson on the importance of doing what one believes is right and having the courage to realize one’s dreams. Sudha Murty feels her books can bring changes in the country with it being dedicated to the citizens of tomorrow.
The book *Wise and Otherwise: A Salute to Life* consists of fifty-one short anecdotes, each one imparting vital human values. Most of Sudha Murty’s books have stories that are no more than four to five pages in length and have been narrated in simple words without any lavishness. Many of the stories deal with issues of what is right and what is wrong in life and give valuable insights into life through the nondescript people who have influenced Sudha Murty in the course of her social work.

A few stories reflect how life can be unfair to a few, teaching us values like compassion, empathy and humanity.

We figure out the largeness of heart in Sudha Murty as she helps the needy, recognizes originality or facilitates the pursuit of careers by the intellectually able, even as she goes about her social work and teaching duties. On one hand, some of Sudha Murty’s stories reinforce the right values while on the other hand there are narrations that depict the evils in the society, warning us subtly against the ills that are consequential while showing the right path. The values associated with these narratives can be classified as positive values, negative values, forgotten the values that condemn social evils.

### 3.6.1 Positive Values in Sudha Murty’s Books

We find most of the stories carry positive values as follows:

1. **Emphasis on Merit and the Integrity that goes with Hard-won Awards:**

   In the narration, *Honesty comes from the heart*, Sudha Murty says:
“Experience has taught me that honesty is not the mark of any particular class, nor is it related to education or wealth. It cannot be taught at any university. In most people, it springs naturally from the heart.” [8]

Stories like Life’s Secret Lessons convey the value of honesty of speech in the little boy who tells Sudha Murty that her writings are better than the way she reads the stories. The story The Deserving Candidate depicts the honesty of a candidate who appears for an interview, but refuses to accept the travelling allowance saying that he was staying with his aunt. The story is in fact recognition of merit, truthfulness and honesty where a candidate wants a higher pay to donate a part of the pay to a trust, which funds the education of bright students. The rich background of his parents had not robbed his honesty or simplicity.

2. Humility:

Sudha Murty writes about lessons on humility in accepting gifts at the hands of the uneducated like the tribal chief in the story In Sahayadri Hill. The story teaches a philosophy of life which says, ‘give when you take’, to enlighten the grace of accepting a gift. The story Too Many Questions, illustrates the grace of accepting a gift. Sudha Murty says that a gift should not be valued on its price as it is the thought, which is more important. This story teaches a lesson of humility in the workers who bless Sudha Murty with good health and prosperity.

Through the story Uncle Sam, Sudha Murty illustrates an example of false prestige and lost relations leading to regret. Her narration helps us understand the lessons in humility, prestige and dignity through the
protagonist Ramesh’s life in one’s own land while the life of Mahesh pictures how pride leads to a fall.

2. **Gratitude:**

Stories like *Three Bright Young Men* and *Oh Teacher, I Salute Thee* depicts the value of gratitude. The student remembers and respects the teacher whose only attachment is to knowledge rather than to materialism. It also reflects the qualities of a teacher who arouses the interest of the pupil by being a fellow traveller in the exciting pursuit of knowledge.

The story *Bombay to Bangalore* depicts Chitra a young girl who escapes from the clutches of the evil and travels in the same bogie as Sudha Murty, who pays for her ticket and sees that she continues living in the orphanage while pursuing her studies. Chitra grows into an independent person and settles in America. The story depicts the gratitude of Chitra who pays the hotel room’s bill of Sudha Murty in America as a mark of gratitude for having bought her ticket to Bangalore. She feels that Sudha Murty had transformed her life by paying her fare and giving her an opportunity to pursue her studies.

*Gowramma’s Letter* portrays Gowramma who has only words of gratitude for a student like Sudha Murty, who gives her the acknowledgement that her own children didn't give. The story depicts flawed relationships and ingratitude where a biological set of parents is put to disgrace in spite of their selfless service towards their children. Sudha Murty acknowledges her art of storytelling to her childhood teacher Gowramma who taught her wholeheartedly.
The story *The Grateful Tenant* is a story, which depicts the gratitude Ramesh the protagonist feels for an old couple Shyama Rao and Kamala Bai, who support Ramesh's education, stay and food in Dharwad motivating Ramesh to acknowledge this by naming his house Shyamkamal as a gesture of his gratitude. Ramesh says that the old couple not only gave him space to live, but also shared the food, paid his fees from their meagre pension. Above all Shyam Rao's encouraging words lifted his spirits.

4. *Diligence*:

In everything we do, create or produce, there is an invisible ingredient, and this makes the difference between the good and the best, the ordinary and the extraordinary, the good and the excellent. The invisible ingredient is devotion or dedication. Any work can become a prayer if performed with the sanctity of devotion. The human value of selfless dedication towards work is dealt in the narrations of *Each Mop Counts*, and *An Old Man's Ageless Wisdom*. The story *Each Mop Counts* illustrates the diligence of a nurse who does not allow the doctor to carry on with his work till the number of mops used tallied with the number of mops recovered.

*An Old Man's Ageless Wisdom* depicts the sympathies of the old man, with human beings, while saying no one owns land, river or mountains, they are the gifts of God, and a small piece of paper called rupee turns a man's life upside down. It depicts the wisdom the old man has that is greater than those who have internet around their fingers. The story *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Children* depicts Amba Bai the paternal grandmother, who spends her time fulfilling the responsibilities of looking after a large family. Though she was widowed,
she cared for women’s education, family planning, and the way the society treated widows. Though she was uneducated she had the diligence, and the ability to help women while delivering children. She was meticulous with deep faith in her convictions.

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. The title story *How I Taught my Grandmother to Read* is actually a real-life incident where Sudha Murty teaches her grandmother to read when her grandmother was sixty-two years old and had an ardent wish to learn reading and writing. The story illustrates that determination can overcome any obstacle in life. It also exemplifies that learning is a continuous process and every person does well when he has the willingness to learn. Sudha Murty’s grandmother teaches her the value of determination as she says

“For a good cause if you are determined, you can overcome any obstacle. For learning there is no age bar.” [9]

5. *Attitude towards Resources, Money:*

Resources are common for all. Each one uses as much as he or she wants and leaves the rest. The value of one’s attitude towards resources is illustrated in the story *An Old Man’s Ageless Wisdom* where the old man considers natural resources to be God’s grace.

The story *Life is an Examination* shows the attitude of a rich couple towards money. While one resorts to philanthropy, the other derives pleasure in spending money lavishly. The story, *My Money, Your Money* depicts the financial independence of a wife and husband due to their jobs. In the process of earning more, the wife Anita forgets to respect
her husband, illustrating how values change with the change in income. Here Sudha Murty says:

“Money is a double-edged sword that can be used to cut a fruit and also to kill a person. It is important to earn money, but much more important to handle money.”[10]

Attitudes towards resources like those as money illustrated through the story The Rainy Day imparts an invaluable lesson of saving money for a rainy day and the importance of money.

Sudha Murty’s narration Life’s Secret Lessons expresses the poverty and helplessness in people displaying a lack of confidence. Money can be earned in life, but confidence and self-esteem are easy to lose and difficult to gain. Sudha Murty’s encounter with the victims of flood, drought, hurricane and other natural calamities in various parts in India taught her that there is a limitation to human power and achievements when any amount of money cannot help a person, as it cannot substitute many things in life. The approach of a rich woman seeking funds from the foundation taught Sudha Murty that Money has the capability to challenge values and change a person.

The story Freedom of Speech illustrates the rights of a person and attitudes of people towards money where husbands spend the money earned by their wives without acknowledging the fact.

The narration A Tale of Two Brothers illustrates how money has the ability to divide people and rarely unites through the story of real brothers who quarrel for a piece of property while the unrelated far away people unite in the bonds of brotherhood sharing the love.
Love knows no bonds when it changes strangers into brothers, while money sets boundaries changing brothers to strangers.

*The Business of Philanthropy* depicts Shri Hiralal Jain a successful pharmacist and a businessman who was kind hearted and believed in philanthropy in helping people with medicines. His son who carried ahead the business believed that philanthropy was the key to business promotion. The story speaks about the difference in the attitudes of people even when they are bonded by blood.

6. **Selflessness, Signifying Teaching as One of the Noblest Professions:**

*To Sir with Love*, reminds us of the noble profession of teachers depicting a teacher similar to a candle that gives light to all while burning itself out. It also describes how this value has changed through the self-centeredness of a schoolteacher. It also reminds us that the selflessness of teachers is slowly changing into a forgotten value. In the story *Salaam Namaste*, Zubeida a cancer patient gains fifty thousand for her treatment from the Foundation run by Sudha Murty. She asks her husband to return the three thousand rupees left after her death to be returned back to Sudha Murty. It speaks of compassion and selflessness as Zubeida feels for another person even in her pain and poverty.

The story *Horegallu* depicts the empathetic listening of elders under the Banyan tree without voicing a judgement as a let out for worries. The elders carried this act of social service of a Psychiatrist as these small acts of kindness gave them joy. The story *Do You Remember* teaches readers through a lesson learnt by Sudha Murty from Dr. Raj Reddy, who won the Alan Turning Award in the year 1994 for his pioneering efforts in Computer Science and artificial intelligence. Dr. Raj
Reddy tells Sudha Murty that true motivators in life are those who make a lasting impression in others’ lives as they share their strength, courage and values, which are the true prizes in life to cherish. A true endowment in life is not winning an award or a prize, but to make a mark in the lives of people.

7. **Positive Attitude or Optimism:**

*A Lesson in Life from a Beggar* depicts how Meena a pessimist changes into an optimist when she sees a beggar and his granddaughter laughing and clapping, and screaming in the rain seeing that there was no traffic that day owing to the rains. Meena envies the zest and the spirit in the poor, wondering why she could not sport that attitude.

*Think Positive and Be Happy* speaks of maid Girija who values all the things in her life while Vasanta the family friend of Sudha Murty cribbed and felt miserable by thinking about the uneducated. These stories help us develop a positive attitude and comprehend that life is still a great treasure if we are optimists – though we may possess nothing in material terms. Optimism generates a tremendous energy and enthusiasm for life, keeping us active with a renewed interest in day-to-day activities, which promote good health and happiness along with the zeal to work more efficiently.

The story *Life’s Secret Lessons*, guides readers to stand up for one and follow their heart. The narrative *The Journey* is a revelation for readers to understand that the theoretical discussions of the ideals of Karl Marx or Lenin are of no avail. The story depicts how Mr. Narayan Murty realized that poverty in our nation could be overcome by creating jobs, which could help people generate wealth ethically and legally. His
positivism in the tough situation transformed the communist self to a socialist capitalist.

_A Buddhist on Airport Road_ is a story related to the life of Sudha Murty’s friend Saroja depicting that the world is full of difficulties and unfulfilled desires, but Sudha Murty says that if one wants to be happy, one must try to change the attitude of perceiving and not the world. The story teaches values of positivism in a world of negativism.

8. _Values of Charity - an Initiative towards Social Service:

There is no greater joy in life than to render happiness to others by means of intelligent giving. We must donate generously to the poor and needy. The story _No Man’s Garden_ illustrates selflessness and a noble thought of cultivating vegetables for the poor in a wasteland without accepting anything out of the produce. It exhibits an awareness of nature’s resources and ability to judge others needs and a detachment from the produce. The story _Ganga’s Ghat_ illustrates that

“Money comes with an expectation and spoils the delicate equilibrium of social work.” [11]

It is the tale of a woman who begins providing hot water to beggars for a bath. The able bodied in the village appreciate her work and help her achieve the establishment of a bathing ghat for the beggars.

The story _The Day I stopped Drinking Milk_ is about the sacrifice of milk of the poor people of Orissa who believe in pleasing their guests despite their poverty. The gesture was a painful one for Sudha Murty, who decided to give up drinking milk. The story _A Mother’s Love_ depicts Sudha Murty’s thoughtfulness towards victims of flood in Odisha while
bestowing her wisdom in these situations on abandoned old and children. Books for at least one Library, The Red Rice Granary, A Heart of Gold, and Balu’s Story enlighten with the nobility of charity. Sudha Murty says

“When donating do not think twice or put off for another day. Nobody has conquered time. Time is not in anybody’s hand.”  

Sudha Murty’s talk to a cab driver in the story Life’s Secret Lessons depicts that

“When a person becomes a compassionate leader like Mahatma Gandhi, Gautam Buddha, Martin Luther or Abraham Lincoln they do not belong to a country, they transcend man made boundaries and are recognized as leaders of the world.”

The Business of Philanthropy depicts the joy of giving, charity and faith in charity and in Hiralal Jain’s organization, which carried it. Though Hiralal Jain began with a donation of medicines worth ten thousand rupees initially, he increased it to fifty thousand as his business flourished. The narrations Where There’s a Will, An Unknown Benefactor from Chennai, and The Noble Prize depict the cardinal virtue of charity through the life of Alfred Nobel who considered the globe as his own village and made them the recipients of his wealth through awards that are international. These stories remind us about the nobility of Alfred Nobel who gave away three million dollars in charity. Alfred Nobel instituted prizes for Literature, Peace, Chemistry, Physics and Medicine. Sudha Murty says:
“Nobel sowed the seeds of ‘Helping Mankind’. Nobel remains as strong as the Himalayas in his deeds and symbolizes the love for peace and mankind.” [14]

Through these stories, she shows us that the one who gives in the true sense will make a donation in the most confidential manner where the left does not know the “Daan” given by the right hand. There are a few who contribute very little but make a huge hue and cry about their contributions while there are the others who genuinely wish to do good for others without revealing their identity.

The story You Should Have Known on one hand exhibits the nobility of Rakesh a manufacturer of bags who had agreed to donate school bags with a manufacturing defect to the needy. It also depicts the arrogance of people who want a confirmation though they are sure about the donation to satisfy their ego. Sudha Murty’s sayings remind us of Swami Rama Tirtha saying

“As charity given with a narrow heart yields, but little fruit, so work done half heartedly, brings no good reward.” [15]

Humility in success and power, patience and perseverance in failures, are great things one has to learn. Sudha Murty in her narration Life’s Secret Lessons conveys that adversities in life teach us that there is a limitation of human power too. There are situations that beyond our control where any amount of wealth cannot help changing the situation. It also helps understand that when we collect material things; it becomes a burden for the next generation. She says that it is better to reduce the cache while we are alive. A person with a compassionate heart and sound judgment can be a philanthropist. The books portray other human values
like empathy, compassion, hard work, truthfulness and a strong desire and willingness to learn.

9. *Patience and Perseverance to Achieve Success:*

The story *Idealists at Twenty, Realists at Forty* depicts Ratna’s courage playing with customer satisfaction and learning through experiences. It shows how a woman who is a plain Jane climbs the ladder of success through hard work in the field of business and works for the satisfaction of the customers rather than for self-satisfaction.

The story *Life’s Secret Lessons* includes incidents where people take advantage of the Foundation’s name and Sudha Murty’s position to gain financial support teaching her a lesson of patience while recognizing people’s intentions.

10. *Simplicity and Innocence of the Poor:*

The story, *Powerful Politicians and Unsung Donors* portrays how powerful politicians do not care to alleviate the sufferings of the people, while a poor woman donates for the good work done by the representatives of a charitable institute. The poor woman thanks Sudha Murty for gaining admission into the main hospital, though they could not afford the fees. She gives Sudha Murty a string of Jasmine flowers to acknowledge this kind gesture. The story *The Gift of Sacrifice* depicts the importance of the history of a place and the straightforwardness in the deeds of an innocent cowherd Gopala who sacrificed his life for his land without being a soldier. It helps to comprehend the values in people that prevent them from commercializing assets.
Rahman’s Avva is a poignant story where Kashibai raises Fatimabi’s son Rahmaan after his mother’s death with his own religion but loves him like her own son. The story is a depiction of human values amongst people belonging to a humble background who nurture compassion and a magnanimity in heart depicted through the pictures of Mecca and Krishna on the same wall.

The story Three Ponds depicts three stories related to the construction of three ponds. The first is a stand on Rama Gowde’s promise of constructing a pond for the people of Navalgund to please his daughter Neelima. It includes Bhagirathi’s sacrifice of life to stand on a promise of providing water to the people. Her husband joins her in her sacrifice. To mark the simplicity in people we understand that their love is depicted as flowers, which bloom in pairs.

The story May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Children is the story of Ambakka in a village having the simplicity of a villager and great warmth in loving people. She is able to handle the chores at home and in the fields. She is able to assess the state of health of the cattle or the water in a well. She believed in serving people helping young women in delivering children, even in the toughest state. The story depicts that even though she had delivered ten children her hands had helped her delivering a hundred making her life a meaningful one.

11. Making the Most of Opportunities:

The story Bahut Kuch Hota Hai depicts the wait of a software engineer for a good opportunity while an angler’s son helps his family financially by catching crabs. It depicts that mere vision without action is
a dream as vision with action is needed to change the world. Sudha Murty quotes the well-known saying:

“It’s better to light a candle rather than curse darkness.”[16]

The story Bombay to Bangalore signifies the importance of one-step in the ladder of success. Sudha Murty shelters a young girl on the train and helps the girl in her studies through the foundation.

The enthusiasm in the girl named Chitra to be independent in life helps her accomplish a better life in America. Sudha Murty believes that the one-step in the ladder of success helped the girl climb a number of steps on the ladder of success through her determination.

12. Dignity of Labour and Self-respect:

The story, Treat Me as a Human depicts a young couple in Ahmedabad, at the Law Garden road, selling embroidered purses, but they refuse to accept money given as a gift by Sudha Murty to their son as a gift for the first birthday. The lady returns the money portraying the values of self-respect and dignity in the poor.

The story Genes displays the irony in the values of honesty and self-respect. Grandfather Anant, who is a mere assistant is honest and believes in returning a loan, but his grandson Hari, who gains admission into Indian Institute for Technology forgets to repay the loan from his fat salary.

The story, The Old Man and His God, depict an old couple who are happy and contented with what they have and wish to lead a life of dignity though they were poor. They did not want money given to them as
a mark of pity, but were contented to live on what they believed was rightfully theirs. Though blind, the old man could sense that Sudha Murty had given him a hundred rupee note. He returns it back to her saying that the money was far more that what one normally gives as a payment for the services of a priest.

13. **Willingness to Learn and Frankness in Accepting Things:**

The admirable qualities of adaptability and willingness shape the story, *Willing Candidate*, while the story, *A Journey through the Desert* is about two young boys who work at a service station. Their lives change due to the values they imbibe on listening to the stories told by Sudha Murty.

“A student's life is like the desert, examinations are the hot sun, difficulties are like the warm sand and study is like hunger and thirst. As a student one has to travel all alone collecting knowledge and skill to lead a better life.” [17]

14. **Self-reliance and Confidence:**

The story *Crisis of Confidence* teaches lessons on these qualities like self reliance where Sudha Murty observes that education makes a person economically independent and self-reliant as,

“Life is an exam where the syllabus is unknown and the question papers are not set.” [18]

The power and strength of hard work are depicted in the story *I Will Do It*. The story illustrates how a bright boy has to forego an engineering seat in IIT as his father was not in a position to pay higher
fees due to financial and social responsibilities. The boy consoles himself, saying that it is not the institution ultimately, but the individual who can change his own life through hard work. Through hard work, without the help of caste, community or political connections, this boy became a pioneer in India’s software Industry. He turned out to be an entrepreneur credited with the first wave of Information Technology in India.

He earned wealth legally and ethically. He believes in the motto *Powered by Intellect and Driven by Values*. This became the tag line of his company, Infosys. He is none other than Sudha Murty’s husband, Nagavara Ramarao Narayana Murty; Founder of Infosys who remained the Chairman and Mentor for long. This story has been an inspiration for many youngsters to comprehend that success at its best is a product of hard work.

15. *Empathy:*

The value of understanding and compassion for others is illustrated in the story *A Wedding to Remember* is the story of a young man who refuses to marry Malati the protagonist as she develops Leucoderma, a skin disease. The man changes his perception and marries Malati on reading the book ‘Mahashweta’. The story *Salaam Namaste* depicts understanding where a poor cancer patient donates the money left after her death for the cure of a needy person afflicted like her. The story *Mother’s Love* teaches one to empathise with a mother who first wishes to give away her unwanted child to a rich couple, but the mother in her refuses to do so after the child’s birth. It also depicts the story of another mother who leaves her helpless blind child as she was blind.
The word ‘Horegallu’ means a stone that can bear weight. Sudha Murty speaks of the Horegallu stone in the story *Horegallu* as an empathetic listener where a weary traveller of life could lower the burdens of life. The Horegallu could refresh people and recuperate their strength to carry on after they lowered their physical and mental agonies here. It reminds Sudha Murty of the clerk Ratna who would listen to the problems of people with sympathy delivering no judgement that used to act as an outlet for worries reducing their burden.

Sudha Murty empathizes with her friend in the story *Freedom of Speech*. The friend is a good orator, but is unable to stand up to fight for her rights. The story emphasizes assertiveness and value of empathy in understanding people and their feelings. The story like *Wretched of the Earth* teaches one to empathise with the poor, neglected and ill looked after people suffering from contagious diseases like leprosy who are treated worse than animals, left neglected and unattended.

16. **Sharing and Bonding:**

The story *Helping the Dead* is a poignant narration reminding one of the goodness of contributing to a cause. An uneducated, jobless gang resolves to help the poor in performing the funeral of their kith and kin. The initiative of ‘Muktisena’ is purely voluntary, while performing the funeral of the dead, whose caste is not an issue, the only thought being the disposal of the dead body of the poor person, whose family cannot afford the funeral.

The story *Horegallu* depicts the ability to share problems to regain and bounce back to life just as ‘Horegallu’ a stone that bears the weight. It teaches the fine art of sympathetic listening while rearing the ability to
keep secrets maintaining their consideration. The story, *Sharing with the Ghost* is didactic in approach emphasizing the value of sharing. Sudha Murty says sharing is a quality that binds people and a society survives on sharing. Games like cricket teach sharing while Tennis teaches individualism. The story is about a man who refuses to share knowledge. On his death, he gets transformed into a ghost with a condition that he would obtain salvation only if he would share his wealth and knowledge. There were many to accept his wealth, but Bharavi who later became a critic of poet Kalidasa shared the knowledge. The story *An Officegoer’s Dilemma* is a story based on talking out disagreements. It speaks about Teamwork and Disagreements focusing Shanti the protagonist’s case. Sudha Murty says

> “With good attitude you can create heaven around you and a good leader can bring about remarkable changes in a team.” [19]

17. *Love and Affection towards Fellow Beings:*

The stories *The Red Rice Granary* and *A Heart of Gold* teach us lessons in helping people without expecting anything in return. Money can buy many things in this world, but one cannot buy love. We have found lacking these human values, which God has mercifully gifted us. Sudha Murty urges us to give, but to give the world kind words, happiness, sincerity, without expectation, without making dependants helpless, without caring for caste, creed and religion, to the needy and deserving so that the receiver may prosper. She says:

> “When you donate something give the best and not the second best. God is not there in the temple, mosque or church.
God is within people. If you serve them with whatever you have, you have served God.” [20]

Friends Forever is a poignant story of friendship, bonding, relations and friendliness with a bond greater than all. Economic status among friends Radha and Rohini distances them, but their teacher understands and bonds them. A value of love, bonding and dedication towards a job depicted through the Story of Two Doctors teaches us about love, bonding and above all a dedication to our profession.

The Story The Old Man and His God speaks about contentment and service. The story pictures an old man who helps two unknown people but refuses to accept any money from them stating that it is service and that they were contented. Though blind, the old man refuses to accept money from Sudha Murty saying that her devotion was more important than money. He tells her that the kind people in the village give him rice in return to the adoration (puja) he performs.

The story The Line of Separation is a poignant tale on the value of bonding across India and Pakistan. It relates the experiences of the protagonist Roopa Kapoor to her native place Pindi in Pakistan before partition. She finds that a line drawn across India and Pakistan had made them homeless and left them in a new place whose language, food and culture were unknown giving them the pain of having been uprooted.

A Foreigner Always, is a story based on bonding and perception of thoughts where Sudha Murty realise7s that Partition of India and Pakistan has divided the countries forever where she being an Indian is called a foreigner in spite of similarities in language and culture, and the love for Bollywood movies.
17. **Knowledge and Wisdom:**

Sudha Murty observes that in this world of mortality, everything perishes over a period. To quote it in her words:

> “In this life, everything perishes over a period of time, whether it is diamonds, beauty, gold or even land. The only thing that withstands this destruction is knowledge.” \(^{[21]}\)

She mentions billionaire Andrew Carnegie in the U.S.A. who willed his wealth to build libraries in as many villages as possible. These stories further signify that life is uncertain; anything can happen at any moment. If one wants to give anything, one should give it immediately as time is never in our hands. We become richer with what we give, rather than with what we receive.

The story *Real Jewels* teaches us the value of education. Sudha Murty says that education can bring the radiance of confidence in one’s face and this kind of a beauty is real as it lasts forever. Through the story, she also conveys the truth that an educated woman is able to educate and fend for her entire family.

18. **Values of Humanity and Compassion:**

The narrations, *Amma What’s your Duty*, *Who is Great*, *My Biggest Mistake*, and *The Secret* show the sensitivity in young adults and the way they can be moulded through good teaching. Sudha Murty says technology changes everyday and good books are always there in the market, but the values imparted by her as a teacher are not prescribed in any syllabus nor will they appear in any examination but these human values are essential qualities to do well in life.
Learning, she points out, is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity, and a provision in old age. As we read her stories, we become conscious that these values are a precious legacy, which has to be imparted to the next generation with the same love and affection. The story *A Mother's Love* pictures a mother’s unconditional love while deciding to leave the invalid child during floods when the choice is between the physically fit child and the disabled one. Sudha Murty says that

“Decisions are taken depending on circumstances, but still, I believe that a mother’s love is the most unconditional in the world.” \[22\]

*India the Holy Land* is a story of warmth and love despite the distances picturising the hospitality and goodwill by embracing cultures across the borders. An old woman in Tibet thanks Sudha Murty for being an Indian whom she could thank for being a part of that compassionate land which sheltered Dalai Lama. People in Tibet share their affections with Indians as they believe Indians nurture the value of compassion. India is termed a compassionate land because the people of India sheltered Dalai Lama, the ocean of knowledge. This incident also reminds us of the numerous times Indians embraced people of various religions and sects like the Jews, Zoroastrians owing to their kindness.

19. *Simplicity and Steadfastness to Achieve a Goal in life:*

The narrations *Salaam Abdul Kalam* and *Appro J R D* epitomize Sudha Murty’s experiences with two great personages, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and J.R.D. Tata. Sudha Murty tells her readers that the good qualities like simplicity, steadfastness, deep desire for the pursuit of
knowledge on various issues, humility, love for learning, and belief in hard work, which have helped A.P.J. Kalam to be successful in life. While referring to her meeting with A.P.J. Kalam, we notice the humility in Sudha Murty’s attitude as she says

“We had nothing in common. It would be like a meeting between a Himalayan peak and the peak of Unkal Hill.” [23]

A.P.J. Kalam is a great scientist who has dared to spell his comprehensive Vision 2020 for our country. He fought his way through poverty, hard work, setbacks and disappointments to work his way to the top of the scientific community in India. As the President of India, he was conferred with the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India. The secret of his success is his courage to dream and the determination to turn his dreams into reality. J.R.D. Tata was the head of a huge industrial empire. He led a very simple life. He launched service institutions like the first cancer hospital and research centre in India and was the pioneer of civil aviation in India. Simplicity, was his badge and enterprise his breath. He stuck to the principles of justice and equality. He believed in the concept of trusteeship where the money earned was held in a trust for the welfare of people. He did not keep the wealth to himself, but devoted it to the welfare of the people.

Sudha Murty was the first lady to join TELCO on the shop floor at Pune after completing her post-graduation (M.Tech.) from the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore when the Tata Trust was run by J. R. D. Tata. Sudha Murty found a role model in J. R. D. Tata, and was greatly inspired by his generosity, kindness and the care he took of his employees. J. R. D. Tata conveyed to the world that the most important lesson we have to learn on the path of success was that one must forever
strive for excellence or perfection in any task, however small it may be; and that one should never be satisfied being second best. He advised Sudha Murty while starting Infosys to give back to society, whatever the company earned as profit, not only in terms of money, but also in terms of goodness. Sudha Murty remembers him for his words of courage, which helped her, start Infosys Foundation with confidence, rather than diffidence. We see from Sudha Murty’s account, how she gained valuable insights into leadership and philanthropy from her association with J.R.D. Tata.

20. *Fairness and the Power to take the Right Decisions*

The story *Doing What You like is Freedom*, teaches us how children imbibe the values of fairness and right decision-making power, when the necessary freedom is given to them in the growing stages. The story *Hassan’s Attendance Problem* teaches lessons in punctuality and the effects of being chaotic in life. The narration, *Who is Great*, talks about viewing a problem from different angles as the decision we arrive at is bound to have its impact on many people.

The story *The Way You Look At* depicts the sense of responsibility of Sharanamma towards the community while asking Sudha Murty’s help in getting toilets built for the villagers. It also teaches lessons related to the attitudes of people who look at it as a business venture. *True Shades of Nature*, includes the shades of man’s selfishness and Sudha Murty’s approach inculcates values of fairness and decision-making. The story depicts the self-centeredness of man in canvassing their deeds of charity with the money collected for helping the Tsunami victims. Another instance in the story depicts the attitude of the victims who feel Sudha
Murty is only a source of the contributions made by people. Sudha Murty tackles the situations with wisdom while advising them saying

“Your behaviour today will determine how the world behaves towards you later.”[^24]

The story *Village Encounters* depicts the sincerity in doing what one likes and making life a pleasant one in a village. The story depicts the reluctance of Krishna Murty to live in a village. It also illustrates the purposeful life of Guru Prasad, who decided to live in a village doing what he liked without giving into the pressures of a city life contributing his abilities in the growth of the village. Sudha Murty hopes for a change in one’s attitude of looking at life in villages as a breath of fresh air in their village. She also says that the future lies with such people and many others like Guru Prasad.

### 3.6.2 Changing Values with Changing Times

#### 1. Patriotism and Integrity

There are a few stories, which remind us of the values like *patriotism*, and *integrity*, which we have largely forgotten. The story *Forgetting Our Own History* depicts Patriotism as forgotten value. The well-being of a country lies in being united despite political differences. People should give importance to the unity, integrity and well-being of the nation and, in John F. Kennedy’s memorable words, think more of what they can do for the country as a whole, rather than constantly harp on what the country can do for them.

On one hand, we have great personalities like A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, who have spelled a vision for India and her development in
technology, defence and in the welfare of its teeming millions, while on
the other hand, we have the modern youth of India who lack even basic
knowledge about India, and know little or nothing about the country’s
history. *Changing India* depicts the changing view of India from a
poverty stricken land of snake charmers and elephants. The contribution
of Indians globally has brought a change in the ideology of people.

2. *Matrimonial Alliance and Material Affluence*

The story *Alliances Invite* shows how people change in life with
the changing circumstances. It depicts matrimony, alliances, and the
preferences of the present generation and young people’s choice of
nuclear families rather than joint families even before they get married.

*Sorry the Line is Busy* is about material affluence spoiling normal
life. It shows how youngsters prefer being hooked onto the telephone and
the Internet, chatting rather than paying friendly visits to friends and
neighbours. It shows the forgotten value of respect and affection for
people. It also depicts how the present generation tends to abuse
technology and gadgets.

3.6.3 *Vices and Evils in the Society Leading to False Values*

Man has tamed wild beasts, has conquered the oceans and
mountains, and has reached the moon. True happiness and contentment
cannot be found until man tames and disciplines himself. The lack of self-
discipline leads to addictions and development of wrong habits. Sudha
Murty has written about the *vices and evils* in society, making readers
aware and conscious of the need for self-reform.
1. **False claims to Prestige:**

One of the deepest of all our needs is the desire to be appreciated. While it is unfair to hold back appreciation, a few stop at nothing to gain appreciation. The story, *Human Foibles* is a revelation of how people try to gain an appreciation through falsehood. It portrays the shortcomings in a man who desires to gain popularity by fabricating his success story, which is unfortunately revealed false.

The story *A Man too Clever by Half* also speaks about falsehood. Sudha Murty speaks of the writer who tries to bully her into ordering his books for the Infosys Foundation library. Sudha Murty feels that an honest human being can be a better writer because of the convictions the person carries. The story *Bad Help* describes the story of disapproval of help from Sudha Murty by a postal worker’s intelligent son who obtains his education in Engineering at Pilani through the Infosys foundation. This economic need based scholarship turns into a cause of shame for Satish. Sudha Murty says

> “If a person is not comfortable with the help given to him, it becomes a lifelong burden for him to carry.” [25]

2. **Callousness towards Parents and Elders, Self-centeredness:**

Desire resides stealthily in the senses, the heart and the intellect. When desire overpowers the intellect, man becomes deluded and starts to sin. In the narrations *In India, the Worst of Both Worlds* the self-centeredness of human beings is reflected through Sudha Murty’s narration where a son dumps his seventy-year-old father in an old age home without revealing his identity and comes back after the old man’s death to claim the money left behind. These stories teach us not be callous
in life to our own parents and serve as a startling revelation as to where we are heading in this materialistic world. The story reminds us of Mother Teresa’s popular saying that one of the worst diseases is the feeling of being ‘unwanted’. Today’s generation fails to realize the harsh truth that the old need love and compassion rather than money. Sudha Murty says

“In India, we have the worst of both the worlds: children neglect parents, and parents routinely leave their property to their children.” [26]

Sudha Murty says that the ‘Proportionality of grief to the usefulness of a person’. She portrays how death is ‘celebrated’ as a welcome development when a stroke patient dies, in the story Death without Grief. She describes how grief has become proportionate to the usefulness of the loved one we have lost. She says that ‘death’ solves the ‘problems’ of maintaining dependent relatives!

4. **Lack of Empathy and Sympathy:**

The story Insensitivity Index depicts the lack of empathy and sympathy. The story A Helping Hand depicts the lack of empathy and the attitude of people in a calamity. The story depicts how a rich man refuses to let the trunks of relief material of the Tsunami striken to be kept on his plot, whereas a poor man donates a day’s pay of rupees hundred and sixty and guards the trunks. Sudha Murty says

“It is for people like these, who open their hearts and put their faith in us.” [27]
The story *Hundred Percent Free* speaks about thanklessness of a young boy who sold dusters. Sudha Murty volunteers to pay him the money earned by selling dusters if the boy studies and shows progress. Her kind gesture makes the boy ungrateful, while forgetting the need to work and earn more. Sudha Murty realizes that the person who has the extended help should gain its realization and so only, a part of help in the form of money is extended.

5. **Technological Effects on the Society**

   Stories like *Living through Change* and *Changing India* portray the social aspects of software, which Sudha Murty calls Software Sociology. The former speaks of the dwindling values with technological growth where people escape being hospitable even during festivals by leaving on a holiday rather than spend time with their loved ones. The latter shows how Indians have made a name in the world way different from their age old tarnished image of dirt and poverty. Sudha Murty says software has made the boys eligible grooms before their maturity while the girls have turned choosy in life. *Insensitivity Index* shows the degrading values with technological progress. The story *Sticky Bottoms* depicts people with plugged ear phones in the train having no time to speak to fellow passengers.

6. **Injustice and Betrayal of Loved Ones**

   The stories *A Man Too Clever by Half*, *A Bond Betrayed on Rakhi Day*, *Sorry the Line is Busy*, and *Is Life Fair* depict injustice, betrayal by loved ones, disobedience to elders’ advice and self-centeredness. The story, *Sticky Bottoms* is a gentle guidance towards people’s privacy which demonstrates people to reform themselves instead of imposing themselves
on others as an ‘annoyance.’ It helps to comprehend the value of thoughtfulness for others. The story, *Two Faces of Poverty* is a readdress of courage and generosity of a poor woman Leela, who adopts a child to share its responsibilities in the crushing poverty of life keeping humanity alive. It also depicts the self-centeredness of Ramappa who uses the money collected through charity to cure his son affected with cancer as a source of income to build a house.

7. *Misuse of Services:*

The story *When Telegrams were Bad, The Red Rice Granary* shows the misuse of services. The story *Bad Help* illustrates the attitude of a postmaster’s son who receives help from the charitable trust of Infosys Foundation and forgets the help rendered by disconnecting himself from the trust at the end of his course.

8. *Materialistic approach of Teachers:*

The story *Oh Teacher, I Salute Thee* depicts the changing values where a teacher turns materialistic and puts material gain above knowledge. *Foot in the Mouth* depicts lecturer Savitri who believes in gossiping rather than doing some constructive work in the field of education.

9. *Social Insensitivity:*

The narratives, *On Column Writing* and *True Shades of Nature* teach us about social insensitivity and make us understand how man is insulated in his own world, and so does not find time to feel or think about others due to greed and jealousy; but then Sudha Murty attributes even these as human qualities. She wishes to subtly remind us that the
power to do good for others exists always within us. We need to develop it by the proper means.

3.6.4 Social Evils

Sudha Murty has condemned many social evils in our country. Her stories on these issues create awareness and motivate us to put an end to these social ills.

_Hundred Percent Free, A Life with Dignity, Unwed Mothers_, and many more stories depict numerous shades of social evils in the Indian society. Many of these stories also depict the strength with which a person can rise above these evils and demolish these.

1. Women and Women’s Issues

Sudha Murty has dealt with women and women’s issues in the stories _Stove Bursts or Dowry Deaths, Price of Jealousy, Crisis of Confidence_, and _A Life with Dignity_. She feels that women are competent individuals. They must be encouraged to be self-reliant and confident. She feels that though women are becoming economically independent, many of them are bonded with the shackles of emotional and social dependence.

“Education and financial independence are tools that can help any woman face difficulties but confidence in the self is the one which helps the most.” [28]

Sudha Murty deals with the social issue like poverty as a factor more powerful than motherhood in the story _A Mother’s Love_ with the example of a mother who refuses to part with her child after giving birth in dire poverty.
She also includes the story of Meera who was blind and had been abandoned by her parents as a young girl as she was pronounced to grow blind soon. Poverty forces the parents to abandon Meera in the city reminding one that poverty is more powerful than motherhood, leading a person to great acts of desperation and deception of love.

2. Social Status of Women in India

Through her story *Unwed Mothers* Sudha Murty expresses the view that the social status of women in other countries is better than in India. Women there enjoy economic, social and political freedom, whereas India is male-dominated. It is to their credit that Indian women have learnt to live and excel in such an environment. A story like *The Perfect Life* depicts a life of pretence in the contemporary world, where Neeta the protagonist does not acknowledge her sorrows with an inner strength. She depicts an untainted beautiful picture for others. The story *Shraddha* depicts hope against age old traditions to many Indian women. It bestows them with an ability to perform rituals after the death of a near one for the peace and salvation of the soul of the dead by a woman.

3. Rehabilitation of Women

Her stories *A Life of Dignity* and *Light as Many Candles as Possible* depict the need to rehabilitate women caught in commercial sex, to help the destitute and the downtrodden.

Sudha Murty quotes the example of the Head of Sutturmath Mysore who understood the meaning of compassion. He donates half a crore worth of land, and another half a crore rupees for women’s rehabilitation. Sudha Murty feels everyone should know his or her strengths and capacities. She says
“Keep your feet to the ground and work around you as there is so much misery and gloom that it is better to light a candle than to remain in darkness.” [29]

4. Dowry and Associated Evils

The evil of dowry, female infanticide, female foeticide and greed for material wants, early marriages and illiteracy are dealt with in the story Stove Bursts or Dowry Deaths.

5. Abject Misery and Poverty

Sudha Murty’s stories Wretched of the Earth and Salaam Namaste also speak about dehumanizing poverty. The story Wretched of the Earth is associated with those affected by leprosy; it illustrates a poor old lady reduced to bones with no clothes on her body. Sudha Murty who is shell shocked feels that the barbaric necessities are rare in the poor. Sudha Murty says

“The sight of abject misery often prods us into action, even if it is just an impulse. Those of us who have a generous share of God’s blessings must do what we can, to help the poorest of the poor who are wretched through no fault of theirs.” [30]

6. Technological Evils

The narration IT Divide, Living through Change, and Changing India, speaks about the digital divide and rule policy in operation of the software and non-software workers.

7. Destructive Evils like Gossiping and Pretences

Price of Jealousy speaks about educated women who never appreciate others and give a feedback that is not constructive.
The story *Foot in the Mouth* speaks about the gossip in the workplace. Savitri, a lecturer teaching with Sudha Murty, could never restrain speaking ill about others. Sudha Murty feels this kind of gossip destroys relationships in a family. *The Perfect Life* is a revelation that speaks about a life of pretences in a workplace. Neeta has a difficult time with her husband and in-laws, but pretexts to have the best family leading her to depression for the lack of ability in sharing her grief. The story teaches the acceptance of problems and overcoming difficulties. Sudha Murty says

“We can live our lives in happiness only when we acknowledge our difficulties and failures and try to overcome them with our strength of character.” [31]

8. Evils of Social Stigma and Callousness

*A Wedding to Remember* speaks about human relations beyond external appearances and reveals how social stigma is attached to diseases like leukoderma; it also imparts a lesson in humanity. *The Business of Philanthropy* speaks about the self-centeredness of the younger generation. It illustrates the callousness of the son who feels the money donated by the father was a mistake and a waste of money, but Sudha Murty tells Hiralal Jain’s son that business and philanthropy are two different things when he tries to combine philanthropy as a part of business. The story of Yellamma and Madha, a very poor couple, illustrates the unique relationship in their marriage in the story *Made in Heaven*. The couple believes in sharing trust and happiness in their life full of hardships in a society where marriage is treated as a security measure and wedding ceremonies as a social event.
9. Evils of Rich Hospitality Affecting Health

The story *Sweet Hospitality* carries an important message on food and the restraint on eating. The story illustrates the protagonist Suman visiting India on a vacation. The hospitality of her friends, making Suman eat sweets and food in large quantities saddens her as hospitality is making a person comfortable, but the excess of food forced on her had turned the same food deadly almost like poison.

Sudha Murty says Indians must not be just modern in attire, but must be modern in thought and deed. Inspirational writers Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone also support the fact that the happiness we give is far more valuable than the happiness we get by saying,

“One of the surest ways to find happiness for yourself is to devote your energies towards making someone else happy.” [32]

When we read the lives of great men in any field, we find that they are known for their dedication, devotion and commitment to their chosen task. Demosthenes, Julius Caesar, Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte were all different from one another in their intellectual and moral qualities, but they were all hard workers, which helped them work as perfectionists and leave a mark in this world as great men.

3.7 Conclusion

Sudha Murty’s works helps us reinforce human values so that we as human beings who are described to be the crown of God’s creation are able to prove our worth over lesser living beings by setting civilized goals
and achieving them through the right means. We also apprehend the beauties of nature and humankind that are responsible for the opportunities in life to serve others through. Her works make one aware of the fact that each new day is a gift, which is given exclusively to us, with its inestimable opportunities to work towards human happiness.

Each narration of Sudha Murty is akin to precious gems, which impart the light of wisdom and values. A writer’s personality and attitude have the ability to reinforce the values they inculcate: humility, genuineness and spontaneity, thoughtfulness and compassion, tolerance and a spirit to live. A writer’s individuality shines in their works inspiring us to make the most of our lives through their inspirational words.

The next chapter includes the analysis of Indian values in Ruskin Bond’s selected works taking us back to the good old days. It includes the age old values, the universal values, ecological consciousness and the ability to love nature as one’s own kith and kin.

Notes and References


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