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Enriching Minds and Cultivating Hearts: The Pedagogical Significance of Sudha Murty's Work

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Abstract:

Sudha Murty, a renowned Indian author and philanthropist, has significantly contributed to children's literature with her captivating stories that intricately weave cultural and moral themes. Murty's narratives carry profound messages that resonate with readers of all ages. Her work is popular amongst audiences for its real-life relevance and simple language and holds the potential to enhance literacy and language skills in children. This paper aims to evaluate the moral and social ideas in the stories by Sudha Murty and further understand their impact on the cognitive and moral development of the readers. Through an analysis of her selected works, this study seeks to explore how her stories promote diversity, inclusivity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, essential for nurturing a broader perspective in children. While reviewing these elements, we will also discuss the significance of her work in promoting the development of young readers, its pedagogical implications, and its role in enhancing readers' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Pedagogical value, Diversity, Inclusivity, Critical thinking, Problem-solving.

Introduction

Literature exposes children to different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives; it enables them to explore new worlds and ideas beyond their immediate surroundings. Children's literature serves as a gateway to the world for young readers, aiding in the improvement of their cognitive and problem-solving abilities, fostering imagination, and ultimately enhancing their capacity to comprehend complex real-world situations or concepts. Children's literature includes narrative or themes that caters to the imagination, emotions, and feelings like empathy,

kindness, and humility which helps the readers develop a broader understanding of the world around them.

India has the richest and most ancient history and culture. It is a land of diversity, of landscapes, languages, traditions, and cultures that we have inherited from our ancestors, and all generations have tried passing it on further to the new ones. Literature and storytelling have always been a medium to pass on the culture and long-surviving customs, and moral lessons are often interwoven to impart values and ethics in a culturally relevant context. The characters in the works of fiction, especially children's fiction like the gods, goddesses, kings, speaking animals, and the fairies are often portrayed as exemplars of these virtues, serving as role models for young readers. Through these narratives, children learn about foundational skills and values like the importance of respecting elders, showing compassion towards others, and the consequences of greed and egocentricity, through stories they are also exposed to the probable life situations and adversities, and the fictional characters then become their models of first perceiving the problems and developing solutions to these problems, this is how any reader develops their connection with literature and understands the narratives. In India children's literature also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of living harmoniously with nature. Overall, these stories not only entertain but also educate, instilling in children a solid moral foundation that guides their actions and decisions as they grow.

Sudha Murthy, the prolific Indian author has developed many heartfelt stories that are especially popular amongst young readers, all her stories are not just entertaining but enlightening too. Her writings are appreciated for the simple words that hold the power to generate language and literacy skills among young readers. Her characters are relevant to reality and foster a strong link with the minds of the readers. She is extremely popular amongst young children and preferred by parents and teachers for the same reason. *"Stories play a prominent role in shaping the personality of children from the tender age. Exposing to the stories will develop a broad sense and analyzing capacity. Sudha Murthy's stories are encapsulated with morals and ethical values. These stories orient them to build self-reliance and aesthetic sense. The characters in her stories motivate children and help them to acquire the traditions and culture of the modern generation. These help them to develop a positive attitude and familiar with problems, miseries, merits and demerits theoretically"* (Dr. Singla. P,2023)

Her stories revolve around simple yet profound narratives. She has always tried to instil values and respect for our diverse culture, and tradition and foster moral values like humility, empathy, kindness, tolerance, and respect in the hearts of the readers through her narratives, while also subtly introducing them to complex problems through the relatable characterization, that leads into fostering of rational decision-making and problem-solving capabilities. This style of storytelling style is popular amongst children as it gives them the scope to develop a perspective and find their voices in the stories. This paper aims to explore how the varied moral themes, characterization, and cultural representation in her selected work and identify their pedagogical value for the development of children.

Pedagogical Demands in Context to India

In India majority of the Indian parents have emphasized reading amongst children for the simple reason of developing language proficiency and literacy skills, previous studies have also highlighted the value of children's literature in promoting moral values, the introduction to these moral values in the narratives of the literature written has often been very didactic. However, with the new generation's reading preferences, the children appreciate a voice that represents them in the works they read. They do not like the idea of didactic lessons but rather appreciate the learning of all kinds of values and cultures in a natural way and when this is achieved the objective of cognitive development happens organically.

The writing style of the eminent children's author Sudha Murty has become popular because of all these ideas that she has effortlessly embedded in the narratives with simple language in her entertaining books. They hold the ability to convey complex moral ideas through entertaining characters, and relatable themes, and with a praise-worthy ease. Sudha Murty's works note the cultural and societal context in which her stories are set. Sudha Murty's writing has the quality of motivating the readers into action and make them fall in love with virtues, hate, and vices, it directs them towards courage to act and ultimately towards a transformative power of values.

Importance of Cultural and Historical Context for Indian Children

Sudha Murty's works are deeply rooted in the Indian culture and provide insight to readers across ages into the diverse and rich tapestry of traditions, customs, and values defining the Indian ways of life. Her works present the various facets of Indian life in a sensitive yet interesting way. Sudha Murty's works cater to Indian readers where readers are never disappointed and always feel the characters and themes relatable, this is because Murty herself

holds strong values and respect towards the Indian culture's roots and prefers to stay away from the Western influence despite her evolutionary thoughts. (Govind, 2019).

She has always celebrated and embraced the Indian culture and heritage. Her story "The Man from The Egg" from her collection "The Man from the Egg: Unusual Tales about the Trinity." introduces the readers to the idea of Indian culture and Hindu mythology through the character of Manu, the creation of the world by the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh, the traditional philosophical concept of life and death cycle and helps develop a sense of respect towards nature and the importance of living in harmony with all the expanses of the human being while at the same time it develops the children's understanding towards the Indian culture in the fast-paced westernized world.

Her writings are thought-provoking and reflect on the importance of preserving the rich Indian culture and customs in one of her books "The Old Man and His God" she suggests the idea of hope and belief, that holding on to the belief in the heart and remaining steadfast to it would always prove fruitful. In another story "How Far Would You Go" from a similar book she appeals emotionally to the readers to understand the human consciousness, that probably is slowly losing its grip with time. She mainly highlights the family values and love towards the elderly people, which has been an Indian way of living forever. In the story, she showcases the journey of a young woman who goes through great hardships for her grandmother's love and the wish fulfilment of her dying grandmother. This story touches the hearts of readers of all ages and primarily teaches the gradually vanishing emotion of love, respect, and empathy towards the family.

Fostering Vivid Human Values and Life Skills

B. Parinitha (2022) mentions in her article about Murty, "*Her children's stories dealt with the importance of family bonds and concern towards society and fellow beings*" Sudha Murty's work is popular amongst all ages and especially children for their thematic content, the entertaining narratives revolve around timeless cultural and moral values, social issues, and human experiences, all the necessary experiences required for the moral and cognitive development of a human being. Murty's work has always left a lasting impact on the reader's mind and has the ability to resonate with audiences worldwide. Her enchanting stories are a blend of fantasy and reality. They can be sparkling to the imagination of young readers, while at the same time imparting hidden life lessons necessary in the current modern world, that are not didactically forced on the readers.

Her short story collection "The Bird with Golden Wings: Stories of Wit and Magic" is a fantastic example of this art. Life lessons like wit and the power of unity can be learned effectively through the story of 'The Snake and The Frogs', one of the stories from this collection wherein the wicked snake who has been a threat to the life of the frogs in a pond is outsmarted by the old wise frog's plan when he suggested the other frogs to stand in a line one after the other and puff their bodies when the snake approaches to appear bigger and stronger than the snake who has been the reason of panic amongst all frogs. This story can be regarded as a fresh Panchatantra, giving the moral importance of unity and the power of wit in a fun and straightforward way.

An important lesson is taught through another poignant tale "The Bird with Golden Wings"; the story of a king obsessed with finding and capturing the bird with golden wings, believing it would bring him immense prosperity and wealth, which to his disappointment does not happen. Time passes and he realizes that there is no real value in the materialistic aspect of living however true happiness is felt by him when he releases the bird off the cage. This story makes the young readers grasp the importance of common welfare, moral autonomy in a utilitarian society, and developing the value of nature and humility.

The following collection of inspiring tales "The Magic Drums and Other Favorite Stories" suggests similar values inspired by Indian mythology and a continuation of the Indian folktales. For Instance, the title story is about the Magic Drum brought by a group of travelers, who informs the villagers of its power to bring rain which is much needed by the villagers for the resources and crop failure that they were struggling from. The story closes with an important life lesson learned by the villagers, who understood that the true magical power of the drum lies in bringing together the people in unity to accomplish a common goal for everyone's welfare. The story teaches the strength of community and belief in unity as moral, instilling the idea of teamwork. The essential human values and ethics, that are reflected in all the works of Sudha Murty, and these human values are the basis of all the education that is necessary for the improvement of cognitive skills as well as to guide the children's actions towards a morally desirable way and for moral and responsible conduct.

Essential Understanding of the Current Modern World Problems

The goal of children's literature is to cultivate resilient individuals with clear thinking, determination, and moral integrity. Children, naturally curious, explore the world through their questions. Creativity and imagination are vital for the growth of young children. Murty

understands the needs of young minds and comes up with diverse themes in her books like gender stereotypes, environmental conservation, the importance of education and empowerment, etc. the reason for her growing readership. Her stories may be fictional or at times mythological, however, the themes traced are necessarily relevant and current.

Murty's "The Man from the Egg", a retelling of the story of Garuda, the mythical bird from the Hindu mythology hints at the idea of sustainable behavior towards the environment. In the story, the children are presented with an example of the mythological character of Garuda, who is born from an egg, so huge that it blocks out the sun. This becomes a problem for all the others on the planet, and how then Garuda modifies his size by shrinking smaller; therefore, allowing sunlight for the others and the greater good of the planet.

Murty also addresses the idea of gender roles in Indian Society through her works and strongly suggests women's empowerment even to young readers; for instance, her story "The Magic Drum" presents the story of a young girl, Rukmini, who faces varied barriers in accessing her dreams of becoming a drummer and how she gradually wins over the admiration and love of everyone with her talent pushing aside the gender stereotypes. In another tale, "The Day I Became God", Anu, the young girl, consistently chases her ambition of becoming a doctor despite all the hardships, from becoming homeless after running from a forced marriage to helping the poor and needy, the journey of Anu who becomes a doctor with the Prince's support and her determination. This story is a way to guide young readers, especially girls, towards the pursuit of their dreams and standing up for themselves despite adversities.

These are just some direct moral lessons learned from Murty's narratives, in her different stories she has tried to be socially relatable to the readers, producing not just moral lessons but showcasing different issues of the society that the young readers are bound to come across in later years of their life. The idea of this kind of literature is to conceptualize the world issues beforehand develop a problem-solving approach and explore self-balancing skills in case of adversities.

Conclusion

Sudha Murty is one of the best-selling authors amongst the children. Because of her engaging and entertaining narrative styles, she has become the most widely read Indian children's literature author. Her stories hold the power to promote moral values; the engaging quality and the Indianness of her characters are relatable to the children of our country. Her strong personal cultural beliefs and philanthropic consciousness are reflected in her stories as

well and they keep resonating with readers of all ages. This kind of timeless narrative of the Indian culture is something the present generation requires the most. In the evolving modern world, wherein values are wavering we require more authors like Murty, who refrain from being popular at the cost of losing of cultural identity. Moral lessons like love, empathy, honesty, kindness, and integrity are present and can be traced in literature all across the globe. What makes Murty more remarkable is the pedagogical way through which she takes up the voices of the Indian children and represents the Indian culture in her stories. She represents social problems through her works, and talks about the solution to those problems through the interesting character's explorations, challenging the readers to think analytically and make reasoned judgments. She prompts the idea of the Indian family system, the age-old values of respecting elders. Her diverse characters and varied themes introduce the young readers to diverse cultures, traditions, and beliefs broadening their perspective and developing respect towards cultural diversity. Her work can provide them with a holistic learning experience in an entertaining fashion, greatly benefiting young minds.

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