

## ANALYSING THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN SUDHA MURTHY'S LITERARY COMPOSITIONS

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### **Abstract:**

Sudha Murthy's literary works offer a compelling exploration of the intricate challenges encountered by Indian society. This study investigates the depth of themes and societal criticism present in Murthy's works by analysing her stories. The study elucidates topics such as gender disparity, intercultural conflicts, and ethical dilemmas, while emphasising Murthy's skillful portrayal of the complexities of human relationships and societal forces. The analysis also highlights Murthy's depiction of resilient female characters and his exploration of intergenerational dynamics, offering valuable perspectives on the obstacles and triumphs experienced by individuals within Indian culture. Murthy's writings both educate and entertain readers with her skillful character development and empathetic storytelling. This has a lasting impact on readers and upholds her status as a distinguished Indian novelist and social commentator.

**keywords:** Sudha Murthy, gender disparity, cultural clashes, social critique, women, intergenerational relationships.

### **Introduction**

Sudha Murthy, a computer engineer, social worker, and writer, is widely recognised. She was born in 1950 into a family of Karnataka Brahmin Kulkarni descent. Her literary works encompass novels, compilations of short tales, travelogues, technical writings, and non-fiction. She commenced her professional career as a designer and software programmer. She is married to Mr. Narayan Murthy, the co-founder of Infosys. Currently, she holds the position of chairwoman for "The Infosys Foundation".

Her remarkable philanthropic efforts have had a substantial impact on education in rural communities in Karnataka. She established libraries and orphanages in Karnataka. She founded "The Murthy Classical Library of India" at Harvard University. She is proficient in both Kannada and English. Her writings have been translated into Indian languages. In 2006, she was honoured with the "Padma Shri" and the "R.K. Narayan Award" in recognition of her literary contributions. In 2023, she was awarded "The Padma Bhushan" for her notable contributions to the field of social work.

She first started her career in software engineering and design. Currently, she holds the position of director at the Infosys Foundation and is also actively engaged in the Gates Foundation's wider human services projects. She has initiated several orphanages, made contributions towards national improvement, supported the endeavour to equip all Karnataka government schools with computers and libraries, and established "The Murthy Classical Library of India" at Harvard University. Sudha Murthy led a significant endeavour to impart software engineering education and equip every school in Karnataka with computers and libraries.

In 1995, the Bangalore Rotary Club honoured her with the prestigious "Best Teacher Award". Sudha Murthy's renown stems from her philanthropic endeavours and her unwavering commitment to writing in both Kannada and English. Her Kannada book "Dollar Sose" (English: "Dollar Daughter-in-Law"), which she later translated into English as "Dollar Bahu," was adapted into a television series that aired on Zed TV in 2001. In 2019, Govind reported that Sudha Murthy achieved the distinction of being the inaugural female employee at TATA Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO), the leading vehicle producer in India. She commenced her employment with the organisation in Pune as a development engineer and subsequently transferred to Mumbai and Jamshedpur.

In a letter to the chairman of TELCO, she raised the issue of discrimination and highlighted the company's exclusive hiring of males. She willingly consented to this unconventional gathering and promptly executed a contract. Subsequently, she commenced employment as a Senior Systems Analyst at the Pune-based Walchand Group of Industries. In 1996, she established the Infosys Foundation. Currently, she holds the positions of a visiting professor at Bangalore University's PG Centre and a trustee of the organisation. Indeed, she was an instructor at Christ University. She has made significant contributions to the field of writing, encompassing travelogues, instructional books, how-to books, and novels. In addition, the Infosys Foundation made investments in and established two institutions of higher education: the Narayan Rao Melgiri Memorial National Law Library at NLSIU and the H.R. The KadimDiwan Building is the location of the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) office at IIT Kanpur.

Sudha Murthy asserts that her encounter with JRD Tata, who served as her source of motivation for philanthropic endeavours, had a profound impact on her life. His admonition to "contribute to society" served as her inspiration, prompting her to choose a profession in social work. As a means of encouraging herself to contribute to society, she displays a photograph of JRD Tata on her workplace wall. As an author, she motivates women to exhibit strength in challenging circumstances by empowering them via her narratives. Her work draws influence from the societal and cultural context of India.

The female heroines in her works are astute, inherently resilient individuals who possess the ability to navigate and overcome any arduous situation in life. They steadfastly uphold their status in the rituals of traditional Indian culture. Sudha Murthy, a prominent contemporary female author, skillfully portrays the socio-psychological challenges faced by Indian women in her writing, making her a highly influential figure in modern literature. Her novels emphasise the prevalence of abuse, humiliation, and exploitation experienced by women.

The focal point of her writings frequently revolves around interpersonal dynamics between men and women, as well as themes of acceptance and estrangement within modern society. It has been observed that although the male characters in her works are influenced by the allure of opulence, convenience, and consumerism, the female characters are direct, hardworking, and naive. They lack awareness of the significance of women and the act of raising a family. Ultimately, the female protagonists triumph over the challenges by diligent efforts to achieve satisfying and meaningful existences. This paper analyses the literary works of Sudha Murthy, specifically focusing on three of her books: "Mahashweta," "Gently Falls the Bakula," and "The House of Cards."

## **Review of literature**

Jangde and Naidu (2023) conducted an analysis of the literary works of Sudha Murthy, a well-known Indian novelist and social worker, focusing specifically on her novels. Sudha Murthy's publications delve into a multitude of topics, offering novel insights into Indian society, culture, and human emotions. This assessment examines her narrative techniques, ways of storytelling, and the sociological motifs she addresses in her literary works. Additionally, it examines the impact of her writings on readers and their role in fostering societal transformation. In order to give readers a comprehensive understanding of Sudha Murthy's artistic achievements, the research includes a detailed analysis of her novels, interviews, and critical evaluations.

Srivastava (2020) observed that there has been a progressive shift in attitudes and actions towards women in India since the country earned independence. It was widely recognised that without empowering the marginalised gender, India would be unable to fulfil its ambitious aim of making significant progress in various fields. Sudha Murthy is widely recognised as one of the most

prolific and realistic writers of Indian English literature due to her skill in exploring the profound inner worlds of her female characters and portraying the evolution of their psyches over time. This study seeks to trace the journeys of the primary female protagonists in selected writings by Sudha Murthy as they transition from darkness to daylight. These stories depict a mature woman who challenges the traditional norms of a male-dominated society in order to assert and establish her own sense of self.

Priyanka (2022) examined the challenges faced by women in a society that is dominated by men and bound by traditional customs in her books and short stories. The paper explores the portrayal of women's suffering in a restrictive society in Sudha Murthy's "Mahasweta" and the TV series "House of Cards". Across the entire country, women strive to live with integrity. Women have problems in various domains of life, such as employment, healthcare, and property rights. Therefore, the achievement of women's liberation in India is still a distant goal. This review highlights the challenges encountered by the female characters in Sudha Murthy's writings, such as abuse, derogatory remarks, and exploitation. Women and girls worldwide continue to be impacted by violence, bigotry, inequality, and poverty. Although they have built civilization from scratch, they still do not receive the recognition they deserve. Currently, women and girls are deprived of even the most basic rights. This study article aims to bolster the development of a robust and vibrant women's movement, consisting of women who possess the ability to confront patriarchal norms, tackle the root causes of injustice, and advocate for their complete set of rights.

In their study, Jyothi and Vijayanand (2023) analysed the struggle of Indian women shown in Sudha Murthy's writings as they resist the oppressive structures of a tightly regulated society. Women around the country strive daily to uphold their sense of dignity. Women face various challenges on a daily basis, including those pertaining to employment, healthcare, and property rights. Consequently, the achievement of women's liberation in India is still far from being realised. This critique delves into the process of marginalisation and exploitation experienced by female characters in the literary works of Sudha Murthy. Despite having established the foundation for society, women and girls persistently encounter mistreatment, prejudice, inequity, and impoverishment on a worldwide level. Furthermore, they have been unsuccessful in attaining their deserved position in society. Indeed, women and girls frequently encounter challenges when asserting their fundamental rights. The insights generated from this study would be advantageous to the women's movement, comprising empowered women who are equipped to challenge patriarchal norms, tackle the root causes of injustice, and assert their comprehensive rights.

Jain, A., and B. Rani. Sudha Murthy is a renowned figure in the field of Indian English literature in 2023. The fundamental topics of her whole body of work revolve around the empowerment of women and the education of their rights. Her designs exemplify the evolution of women's psychological comprehension of their social status. Mahashweta is an excellent source for

exploring the idea of a novel, powerful woman who surpasses any male. The book highlights the liberation of women from their previous subordinate status to men, emphasising their ability to exercise independent thinking. The primary issue with women is that, despite being subjected to mistreatment and disregard by their spouses, they exhibit a greater preoccupation with their husbands. At this juncture, women experience a loss of self-identity and repudiate their partners. The book *Mahashweta* offers a significant critique of patriarchal civilization. Anupama chooses to divorce her husband and embrace her newfound autonomy in the book. "*Mahashweta*" by Sudha Murthy exemplifies the effective debunking of gender stereotypes and the emphasis on the societal significance of women. Within the oppressive patriarchal framework, the main character yearns for self-expression and embarks on a new journey towards personal emancipation. To a certain extent, this course of action leads to increased power and control.

P. Saraswat (2020). Promoting the empowerment of women is essential for ensuring long-term and sustainable development. Empowerment is endowing individuals, especially women, with the capacity to acquire and maintain power resources, enabling them to reject decisions imposed upon them by others and make independent choices. The attainment of women's education, economic stability, and financial security is regarded as crucial in this regard.

From the standpoint of sustainable development, there are opportunities to eradicate poverty, protect human health and well-being, and ensure the preservation of people's livelihoods and sociocultural values. Education is crucial for sustainable growth. Ensuring financial stability and offering education are crucial for alleviating poverty and equipping the future generation with knowledge. Sudha Murthy, a highly productive author, strongly supports women's rights. She has written numerous stories that explore the concept of women's liberation. She is a proponent of women's empowerment, which encompasses the progress of both the entire family and the woman herself. The initial stage in empowering women is providing them with education. Women make up the second largest demographic group in terms of population size. Therefore, their contribution is crucial in achieving sustainable development goals, understanding complex challenges, proposing solutions, and attaining overall developmental objectives.

Kauntagi and Kolekar (2022) investigated the portrayal of modern and contemporary women in Sudha Murthy's literary works. The advent of independence marked a new phase in the advancement of women. In the past, women were deprived of the opportunity to author books, receive an education, and experience equal treatment in society. Gender equality is practiced in India. To summarise this saying, we might refer to Sudha Murthy, a renowned Indian author in the field of English literature, who has achieved global recognition. Sudha Murthy is known for her emphasis on feminism, self-discovery, hospitality, and compassion. She is highly productive in writing both fiction and nonfiction works in Kannada and English. Despite receiving numerous accolades, including the Padma Shree and the R.K. The Narayana Award for literature stands out

as one of the notable awards. The author's main focus revolves around women's concerns, challenges, and ability to bounce back in the midst of difficulties. Multiple literary works express this perspective. The author has written four novels: *Dollar Bahu*, *The House of Cards*, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, and *Mahasheweta*. The texts depict a wide range of emotions and viewpoints expressed by women. In the current era characterised by male hegemony, contemporary women are striving to reclaim their individuality. The survey indicates that women who achieve success in contemporary society are self-reliant. Similar to a man, she wishes to accomplish and satisfy her cerebral cravings.

Benny and Shaju, the major protagonists of Sudha Murthy's books, represent middle-class families striving to overcome the obstacles they face on their journey towards social advancement and success. Individuals violate societal conventions that pertain to morality, ethics, and culture. Individuals who employ unethical methods to get wealth always compromise their ethics. The esteemed author of the acclaimed novel *House of Cards* has acknowledged money as a catalyst for change. This essay examines this matter by *The story chronicles the journey of Dr. Sanjay*, a doctor who initially upholds high moral standards during his tenure as a government physician. However, he later transitions into a private practice and begins accumulating wealth by unethical methods, which ultimately affects his family life. It affects his marital relationship and contributes to his son's insufficient upbringing.

### **Themes of challenges are examined**

A word theme refers to a fundamental concept that the plot of the book revolves around. The book provides coverage on this topic. A novelist writes with a specific intention. The author aims to communicate a message, critique negative conduct in individuals or society, impart moral principles to the readers, raise awareness about a social problem, or present a unique perspective on significant historical events. Put simply, a writer operates with specific objectives in their mind. He doesn't speak in isolation. Each work generally revolves around a central subject and contains other subordinate, less significant motifs.

The secondary themes may enhance the main topic by giving contrasting or similar ideas. Indian fiction authors writing in English have extensively addressed topics such as castes, classes, social inequality, oppression, isolation, prejudice, unemployment, and the rural-urban split. Novelists have the ability to discuss one or more of the above stated topics simultaneously. Indeed, the magnificence of a book is contingent upon its adeptness in addressing multiple issues inside a single work.

Sudha Murthy's publications encompass a diverse range of themes, offering insightful examples that extend beyond issues specifically impacting women. Her work demonstrates a distinct

transition towards writing from a feminine standpoint in a broad sense. Within the realm of feminine writing, it is typical to ascribe women's difficulties to males, as if marriage granted permission to enforce a male-dominated agenda and perpetuated innate antagonism between men and women. Sudha Murthy, one of the earliest Indian writers in English, provides a rational explanation for the tragedies of a particular woman by attributing them to the actions of the male in the household and another woman. Sudha Murthy explores the intricate relationships between two women living in the same household in all four of her works. Additionally, she delves into the diminishing impact of increasing capitalism on personal human connections inside Indian culture.

The Indian economic system underwent liberalisation, providing the populace with several opportunities to accumulate savings. Adolescent males and females were afforded the chance to go to developed countries and had convenient availability to modern conveniences. On one side, it altered their economic and societal circumstances.

### **Current condition or state**

On the other hand, it resulted in tension within the family's often strong bonds. Sudha Murthy's literary works artfully explore the disintegration of familial ties. Her works have several subordinate motifs. Indians, as a whole, possess robust superstitious beliefs. They strictly adhere to the caste system, particularly in terms of the significance placed on marriage. Indian daily life is shaped by horoscopes, religious beliefs, rituals, customs, standards, and auspicious inauspicious eras. Sudha Murthy skillfully illuminates the paradoxes inherent in the lives of Indian individuals in each of her works.

### **Gender disparity**

Gender inequality is a complex subject in general. The word "gender inequality" may give the impression that it only refers to discrimination against women, however this is not accurate. It has an equal impact on both males and females. Gender inequality, as defined by Wikipedia, refers to the concept and circumstances in which women and men are not regarded as equal. This phrase encompasses the differential treatment or perception of individuals based solely or partly on their gender. Gender inequality, as defined by the English Encyclopaedia, refers to the disparity in the position, power, and prestige between men and women within various social groupings and societies.

Hence, the concept of gender disparity is applicable to both males and females. Gender and sex are separate concepts that need to be comprehended in order to identify the underlying reason for gender inequality. According to the English Encyclopaedia, gender is the set of social expectations that determine how individuals should behave based on their sex. Gender pertains to the socially

produced attributes of masculinity and femininity, rather than the anatomical attributes that differentiate males and females. To summarise, gender is a social construct devised by humans, but sex is an innate characteristic of human beings.

Upon careful examination of the extensive data on discrimination and gender equality, it becomes evident that women greatly trail behind men in several aspects of life. Nevertheless, women encounter discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and denigration both within their households and in the broader society. This type of prejudice is readily seen in Indian society. Our culture exhibits several cases of gender prejudice. The deeply rooted patriarchal system embedded in Indian culture is the main cause of gender inequality. This system is considered legitimate and lawful due to our religious beliefs. According to Manu, the author of Hindu law, women are expected to be under the authority of their father during childhood, their husband after marriage, and their son when they are elderly or widowed. They are not to be allowed to assert themselves independently under any circumstances. Irrespective of their religious denomination, whether Hindu, Muslim, or any other, this is the factual status of women in India. Gender imbalance is widespread in several issues within our culture. These factors encompass extreme poverty, limited access to education, insufficient nourishment for women, limited job prospects, lack of awareness, societal attitudes, and cultural norms. Additional factors contributing to this inequality encompass instances of physical harassment, dowries, marital and divorce practices, pre-marital and adulterous relationships, as well as the estrangement between women and other male relatives. Here are some notable instances of gender-based inequity.

### **Interactions and clashes arising from differences in cultural beliefs, values, and practices**

Cultural conflicts are a prominent theme in Sudha Murthy's literary works, offering a detailed examination of the tension between traditional values and modern ideals in the Indian context. Murthy adeptly portrays persons grappling with the intricacies of managing many cultural identities and reconciling the tensions arising from conflicting cultural norms and expectations.

Murthy's paintings depict a cultural struggle by highlighting the juxtaposition of urban and rural civilizations. Characters often face a conflict between the allure of urban wealth and the traditional practices of country life. This paradox is effectively depicted in works such as "Wise and Otherwise," where main characters hailing from rural backgrounds confront the rapid pace of urbanisation and the erosion of conventional lifestyles. Murthy uses these examples to exemplify the challenges individuals face when trying to Adapt to evolving socio-cultural circumstances and the challenges they face in maintaining their traditional history while accepting modernity.

Sudha Murthy's writings often explore the conflict between traditional customs and contemporary values, particularly in relation to gender roles and relationships. The characters engage in a struggle



against societal norms and traditions that perpetuate gender inequality and restrict personal freedom. Murthy's exposition of these cultural tensions provides a profound understanding of the challenges faced by women in challenging patriarchal conventions and asserting their rights to independence and self-governance. Stories such as "Dollar Bahu" and "Gently Falls the Bakula" delve into the intricate nature of marital relationships and the clash between traditional and modern values. They provide poignant observations on the evolving dynamics of female roles within Indian society.

In addition, Sudha Murthy's works delve at the generational divide and the challenges that arise between older and younger generations. Characters often face a dilemma of balancing traditional customs with embracing modern perspectives. Murthy examines the challenges that arise among grandparents, parents, and children as they navigate different cultural beliefs and generational anticipations in works such as "The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk" and "Grandma's Bag of Stories." Murthy examines the changing dynamics of family connections and the relationship between tradition and change in Indian households by using these tensions as a lens.

### **Ethical quandaries**

Ethics refers to a moral philosophy that emphasises the spiritual aspects of human existence. As a branch of philosophy, it has profoundly influenced human existence by offering the essential principles necessary for a joyful and peaceful life. The term "ethics" refers to the established customs and practices that individuals have evolved throughout time, which serve as the basis for their peaceful and harmonious way of life. Spiritual occurrences unveil the most invaluable moral precepts that individuals must adhere to in order to be considered virtuous. Ethics is the field of study that analyses human activity in relation to their established customs and norms, as well as the actions that stem from their personal traits. It also assesses the criteria that determine the moral quality of these acts. Mackenzie 1.

Instead than prioritising wealth and material goods, it is crucial to uphold and disseminate moral ideas in order to foster a diverse range of human values. It is imperative that all individuals demonstrate reverence and affection for each other as fellow human beings. Humanity, love, compassion, empathy, and spirituality are the moral attributes that unite individuals. Due to the continued presence and implementation of ethical principles, the world remains interconnected with others in all spheres of life.

## **Analysis of Characters**

- **Depiction of Women Characters**

Sudha Murthy's literary works are acclaimed for their portrayal of formidable and intricate female protagonists who exhibit resilience and determination in the face of challenges. Murthy's female protagonists frequently challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes by openly breaking societal expectations and customs. Murthy explores the complexities of women's lives in Indian culture through the portrayal of characters such as Anasuya in "Dollar Bahu" and Chitra in "The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk." These characters delve into various issues, such as marital conflicts, career aspirations, and domestic responsibilities. These individuals are depicted as possessing agency and autonomy, actively exerting control over their own lives despite the constraints imposed on them by patriarchal structures. Murthy's portrayal of female characters demonstrates a deep understanding of the obstacles and triumphs experienced by women in their pursuit of empowerment and personal happiness.

## **Interactions and relationships between multiple generations**

The intergenerational relationships in Sudha Murthy's literary works have a significant impact on the character identities and experiences. Murthy skillfully portrays the clash between age-old customs and modern convictions, skillfully depicting the subtleties of familial dynamics across multiple generations. Characters frequently experience a conflict between their desire for personal freedom and self-expression and the demands placed on them by older generations. Murthy explores the conflicts that arise between parents and children, as well as between grandparents and grandchildren, in stories such as "Gently Falls the Bakula" and "Mahashweta." These interactions are influenced by generational expectations, cultural traditions, and the evolving socioeconomic landscape of contemporary India. Murthy's analysis of intergenerational dynamics enhances the depth and intricacy of her stories, while also illuminating the complexities of family life and the conflicts arising from the clash between traditional values and modernity.

Sudha Murthy's literary works showcase her profound understanding of social dynamics and the complexities of human existence through her depiction of female characters and intergenerational relationships. Through these images, she examines the challenges women face in navigating pervasive gender stereotypes and the complexities of intergenerational family dynamics. Murthy's narratives resonate with readers owing to their relatability and genuineness, offering perceptive viewpoints on the challenges and triumphs experienced by individuals within the framework of Indian culture.

## **conclusion**

Sudha Murthy's literary works encompass a wide range of issues, offering deep insights into the human experience. She examines subjects such as gender disparity, clashes across cultures, and moral quandaries, emphasising the challenges and successes of women in asserting their autonomy and ability to make decisions for themselves. Murthy also explores the complexities of cultural conflicts, analysing the struggle between traditional values and contemporary ideals. Her stories expose the changing dynamics of Indian culture and the difficulties individuals encounter in safeguarding their cultural heritage while adapting to new circumstances. Characters in the story face ethical challenges, adding an additional level of complexity as they struggle with moral quandaries and make judgements. Murthy's literary works evoke a strong emotional response from readers of all ages, promoting introspection, compassion, and comprehension. Her literary works not only provide entertainment but also offer enlightenment, creating a lasting impression on the hearts and minds of readers, thus solidifying her position as one of India's most cherished storytellers.

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