

Indian Culture: A Study of Select Non-Fiction of Sudha Murty- A Review of Literature

Vinil Rohan D Souza ^{1*} & Srinivas Vooradi ²

¹ *Doctoral Research Scholar, College of Social Science & Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore & Assit. Professor, Dept. of English, St Philomena College (Autonomous) Puttur, Karnataka, India.*

² *Professor, College of Social Science & Humanities, Srinivas University, Mangalore, India.*

Abstract—Culture and society are foundational to human development, shaping education, emotions, and philosophy. Sudha Murty's writings capture the interplay of tradition, ethics, and contemporary social realities in India. While her fiction and short stories have been widely studied, her non-fiction remains under-explored, leaving a gap in understanding how factual narratives transmit cultural identity and values. This paper examines her non-fiction works to uncover multicultural insights and assess how embedded values influence individual and collective behavior. Objectives include analyzing cultural themes, evaluating ethical and humanitarian dimensions, and highlighting empathy-building elements relevant for modern readers. A qualitative textual analysis of selected non-fiction texts is performed, supported by a systematic review of peer-reviewed sources from Google Scholar and Shodhganga. Findings emphasize the need for holistic research to bridge the gap, illustrating how Murty's non-fiction preserves heritage while guiding contemporary society toward compassion and shared understanding within India's diverse fabric.

Keywords—compassion, empathy, ethics, Indian Culture, society, tradition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture and society are the most vital elements in the educational, social, emotional, psychological and philosophical growth and development of human being. An ideal society could not be formed without culture, and the cultural bond cannot exist without the ideal society. Socialism is an aspect that interchanges political, economic, and psychological concepts and creates a new awakened society. Sudha Murty, being a writer, has astutely observed and precisely depicted the ordinary person and typical society, especially the customs, traditions, positivity, humanity, wisdom, and social conduct of a particular social group, characteristics of different people, background of different families, etc., in her writing.

Furthermore, culture is an element that examines the attitude, behavior, and traits of a specific social group over a prolonged period. The idea, customs, and social conduct of a particular social groups displayed, and their impact on society is emphasized in culture. The culture of specific social groups includes their attitude, behavior, characteristics of various personalities, their customs festivals and their relationships among all.

Literature functions as a medium for the transmission of ideas and acts as a portal into a culture. The new critics contended that the finest writing conveys a through comparison of human experience by harmonizing the intellectual and emotional aspects. A significant trait of outstanding literature is that encapsulates the core of a culture and how it impacts the lives of its readers. With values, one possesses the capacity to determine or shape other people's lives, which in turn contributes to the formation of a society and also a good nation in a broader sense. For instance, in the USA, success, liberty and individual accomplishment are valued, but in Vietnam, allegiance to the family and collective responsibilities are valued. However, the ideals of a society might clash, but values and beliefs are part of culture, as are other non-material elements.

In addition to this, Non-fiction as a literary genre plays a vital role in literature, offering readers a window into real-world experience, events, and ideas. By presenting factual information, non-fiction works provide insight into various aspects of human life, society and culture, fostering awareness, understanding, sympathy and empathy. Through non-fiction, writers share knowledge, challenge perspectives, interpretation and inspire reflection, making it a valuable and impactful form of literary expression.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature explores various interconnected themes concerning Indian values, culture, tradition, moral-ethical teaching, morality, empathy, Indian ideologies in Sudha Murthy's writings. Parinitha B (2022) highlights that the multi-faceted prolific children's author Sudha Murthy's contribution to the field of children's literature is a hallmark in Indian English literature. Her children's stories dealt with the importance of family bonds and concern towards society and fellow beings. The characters in her stories help the children to understand our culture and tradition. Dr. Rajesh (2023) opines that Sudha Murthy's writing reflects her keen observation and portrayal of the complexities of Indian society, addressing various themes such as caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, communal harmony, social disparities, and women's empowerment. Sudha Murthy's works also advocate for women's empowerment, addressing gender inequality and women's agency in Indian society. Biji Gopakumar (2021) examines that, when reading Sudha Murthy, the reader is immediately drawn into the lives of everyday people. In several of her works, she deals with women and their issues in a meaningful way. Motivation, action, and judgement are all aided by literature. We learn to evaluate our own and other people's values by immersing ourselves in high-quality literature. We all have core values that serve as compass points for determining what is good and wrong in our lives. It abides by the rules of the community. Trust is a virtue that has the power to inspire others and bring out the best in them. It is via our values that we learn to concentrate on the basics and take sensible risks. We are also taught to persevere through setbacks. It also allows us to make the most of our abilities. Values such as frankness and honesty; compassion; bravery; accountability; patriotism; respect and fairness are among them. Values are put to the test by the moral standards that individuals uphold. Based on a clear understanding of what is right and wrong, our ideas and actions are guided by our ethical or moral principles. Dr Sunitha Clarrisa (2025) says that her stories are rooted in real-life experiences, reflecting women from various walks of life — from obedient homemakers confined by patriarchy to bold professionals carving out identities in modern society. Prachi Pradip Suryawanshi (2025) explores that Murthy is best known for her literary contributions, which include novels, short stories, and children's books written in

English and Kannada. Her writing often explores themes of social justice, gender discrimination, cultural values, and human resilience. Her style of writing makes her an extraordinary writer. Her novels, including *Mahashweta*, *Three Thousand Stitches*, and *Dollar Bahu*, reflect her deep concern for social issues and provide a subtle yet powerful critique of patriarchal norms. Through relatable characters and real-life experiences, she inspires readers to challenge societal injustices and embrace self-reliance. Charuvilla Joseph Chacko (2020) highlights that Sudha Murthy's books portray moral qualities; amid clashes and difficulties in life; these accounts re-establish values as per the evolving socio-culture. Her stories, identified with the country, its well-known identities, culture and connections in a family, have helped in molding a person's dispositions towards self and towards the general public. These stories are viable in affecting the way youngsters and grown-ups carry on and think since most loved stories are frequently perused and re-read more than once, attributable to the significant impact felt. Sudha Murthy is known for her huge commitment in the field of moving and motivational writing in India through her motivational short stories, accounts and books, which show us important lessons and bits of knowledge into life and human instinct. D. mythily captures it as Sudha Murthy's novels explore the journey of self-discovery. It considers the intricacies of life, varying historical backgrounds, cultural diversity, and evolving value systems. Addressing women's issues, while grounded in a shared sense of unity, requires a context-sensitive approach due to the influence of socio-cultural factors. Women who find themselves under the influence of patriarchal control often experience increased limitations and social isolation. They navigate life within the constraints of a closed society, and these themes are strongly present in Sudha Murthy's writings. B. Manoj Kannan (2025) finds that Sudha Murthy believes in the traditional Indian value system, good people win and bad people lose. Sudha Murthy is well acquainted with the various customs, conventions and traditions of the village life. She is familiar with the habits and hobbies of the village people and one can see that she has made use of this knowledge in the plot, story and action of the novels. M. Ravinder Reddy (2019) describes as 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 tradition and culture in the

modern generation. These help them to develop a positive attitude and familiar with problems, miseries, merits and demerits theoretically. Rimah Saleh (2019) opines it as Mrs. Sudha Murthy, an Indian social worker, and writer have written many short stories and novels in a style so provocative depicting a realistic picture of all social issues, women empowerment, identity crisis and the need for ethical values to make life meaningful. Her Value-based writings focus immensely on ordinary lifestyles wherein the readers can identify themselves in some character. Her writings are embedded in Indian culture and incidents are drawn from day-to-day realities, events, and experiences. Ms. Kirthika (2025) captures it saying, Sudha Murthy, a prolific Indian writer, has made significant literary contributions by portraying the nuances of human relationships, social values, and gender roles (e.g., Dollar Bahu, 2001; Wise and Otherwise, 2002). Her works often explore themes of love, duty, and societal expectations, much like Mahasweta Devi's narratives on marriage and social constructs (e.g., Draupadi, 1978; Mother of 1084, 1974). Through her storytelling, Murthy highlights the complexities of marital relationships, the influence of tradition, and the evolving roles of individuals within a partnership. Her novels and short stories frequently depict the intersection of personal aspirations and societal norms, reflecting on how expectations shape human interactions. Nilesh Samadhan (2025) explains, Sudha Murthy, an eminent Indian author, has captivated readers with her simple yet profound storytelling. Her novels, written in English, often depict themes of social consciousness, family values, and human relationships. Murthy's writing is known for its accessibility, allowing a broad spectrum of readers to connect with her characters and narratives. Her works are deeply rooted in Indian culture, yet they transcend geographical and societal boundaries, making them universally relatable. Her storytelling is characterized by its sincerity and depth, weaving together elements of realism and fiction to highlight pressing societal issues. By focusing on ordinary individuals and their struggles, Murthy effectively portrays the complexities of human relationships and social structures. Her characters, often inspired by real-life experiences, reflect the everyday triumphs and tribulations faced by people across different walks of life. Through her literature, she not only entertains but also educates and inspires readers, encouraging them to reflect on moral and ethical dilemmas. Bhupendra N. Kesur (2022) finds as

Humanitarian perspectives are the replica of the tendency of people behaving to one another in the form of love, affection, respect, emotion, sympathy, compassion, and humanity etc. An attempt has been made to shed light on the evaluative nature of humanitarian perspectives in Sudha Murthy's aforesaid novels which are the best examples of the humanitarian approach. The characters in the novels represent such perspectives which should be achieved by every individual in the world to make human life happier and more peaceful. Ethical values are advocated through the significance of humanitarian perspectives in the light of select novels. Ethics is the principle of human life that can be cherished through such humanitarian perspectives of the people. Raosaheb Vajjanathrao Kangne (2018) reflects it as, The non-fictional ideological values, morality, ethics, honesty and ethos are completely expressed through this genre. Being an author, social worker, teacher and a good lady, it is simply recorded by Sudha Murthy's sensitive mind that the small experiences with small-small journeys are very hearts touching. These all experiences are with the villagers, slum dwellers, men, women, students and educationists, etc. It was clearly said by Mrs. Murthy that our mind is a storehouse of lot of stories and tales. She painted many lovely stories with the help of strangers who came in life.

III. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this review study are,

- (1) To review the contributions of the author to literature with a focus on Indian Culture.
- (2) To understand the depth of Indian culture.
- (3) To identify the research gap after studying literature.
- (4) To develop a proposal for the research study.

IV. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

A number of scholarly articles related to Sudha Murthy's writings have been reviewed. And, an in-depth study of the selected non-fiction was done to assess the specified objectives. Further, Google Scholar and Shodhganga were used to search for the relevant material, scholarly resources and publications. The reference section includes a list of all the works cited in the study.

4.1 Major themes highlighted in Sudha Murthy's writing:

Sudha Murthy is one of the most prominent Indian writers whose narratives are about the middle-class people in India. The majority of her writings are on cultural aspects, family relationships, education, religious tasks, social attitudes, economical situations and women empowerment. She writes in simple English and her literary works are easy and understandable to the readers. She has written fictional, non-fictional, short stories, travelogues and novellas.

4.1.1 Social and ethical values

Sudha Murthy's novels revolve around middle class families and the struggles they face as they climb up the social ladder to success. People sideline ethical, moral and cultural values of society. They lose integrity as they amass wealth through unethical ways. The author herself has commented on money as a change triggering catalyst in her famous novel *House of Cards*. This paper explores this theme unravelling the life of Dr. Sanjay, a man of integrity in the initial years of his practice as a government doctor and the metamorphosis when he becomes a private doctor, as he begins to be wealthy through fraudulent ways which ultimately affects his family life. It affects his relationship with his wife and poor upbringing of his son. (Aleena Shaju, 2023, p. 102)

The prose "In the Sahyadri Hills" is a poignant exploration of the lives of tribal people residing in the Sahyadri mountain range. The text provides a vivid portrayal of their daily struggles, communal living, and the natural environment they inhabit. Murthy's narrative is both a reflection on the challenges faced by these communities and a celebration of their rich cultural heritage. In the Sahyadri Hills is a narrative that vividly portrays the daily lives, struggles, and cultural practices of the tribal communities residing in the Sahyadri mountain range. Murthy's depiction goes beyond mere description, offering a deep dive into the ethical and moral values that govern these communities. The text addresses themes such as environmental sustainability, communal solidarity, and the impact of external influences on traditional ways of life. (Yogesh S.,2024, p.01)

Mrs. Sudha Murthy, an Indian social worker, and writer have written many short stories and novels in a style so provocative depicting a realistic picture of all social issues, women empowerment, identity

crisis and the need for ethical values to make life meaningful. Her Value-based writings focus immensely on ordinary lifestyles wherein the readers can identify themselves in some character. Her writings are embedded in Indian culture and incidents are drawn from day-to-day realities, events, and experiences. These realities reveal that women are unable to speak out on what they richly deserve. Passive sufferings, stoic sacrifice, family relationships, silence, social indifference, negation, loneliness, fear, isolation, rejection, failure acceptance, individualism, loud protest, violating the social norms has remained dormant. Women in the novels taken for the study such as *Shrimati*, *Mridula*, and *Mahashweta* become victims under their own circumstances. At a later stage of their life, they realize their potential and rebound. A woman need not bind herself with limitations and fixed ideas to please society, she has to transcend beyond and awaken herself to several other possibilities to realize her own aspiration. She has to embark on a new journey from within. All these above-said thoughts loom large in the scenic portrayal of the woman characters depicted by Sudha Murthy. (Rimah Saleh Alyahya,2019, p667)

4.1.2 Socio-cultural issues:

Sudha Murthy, an acclaimed Indian author and philanthropist, often incorporates socio-cultural issues in her fiction to shed light on various aspects of Indian society. Here are a few examples of how socio-cultural issues are reflected in Sudha Murthy's fiction: 1. Caste-based Discrimination: In her book *Dollar Bahu*, Sudha Murthy addresses the issue of caste-based discrimination within families. The story revolves around a traditional family where the daughter-in-law, who belongs to a lower caste, faces mistreatment and discrimination from her in-laws. The novel explores the complexities of caste dynamics and the challenges faced by individuals caught in caste-based prejudices. 2. Gender Inequality and Women's Empowerment: Sudha Murthy often highlights the struggles faced by women in Indian society and their quest for empowerment. In her collection of short stories titled "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories," she portrays female protagonists who challenge societal norms, fight for their rights, and strive for independence. These stories touch upon issues such as dowry, female education, gender stereotypes, and women's agency. 3. Social Disparities and Philanthropy: Sudha Murthy's works

often emphasize the importance of philanthropy and addressing social inequalities. In her book "Wise and Otherwise," she shares real-life experiences of encounters with people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Through these stories, she highlights the disparities in society and encourages readers to contribute to positive change by helping those in need. 4. Communal Harmony and Religious Tolerance: Sudha Murthy's writings often promote communal harmony and religious tolerance. In her novel *House of Cards*, she tells the story of a Hindu-Muslim couple and their struggles to overcome religious biases and societal prejudices. The book addresses the importance of acceptance, understanding, and mutual respect among individuals from different religious backgrounds. 5. Education and Rural Development: Sudha Murthy's works frequently touch upon the significance of education and rural development in transforming lives. In her book "Three Thousand Stitches: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives," she narrates inspiring stories of individuals who have used education as a means to overcome social and economic barriers. These stories highlight the transformative power of education and the need for accessible educational opportunities, especially in rural areas. Through her storytelling, Sudha Murthy portrays the realities of Indian society, challenges societal norms, and advocates for social change. Her works resonate with readers by addressing socio-cultural issues with empathy, compassion, and a desire to create a more inclusive and equitable society. (Rajesh Dattatray Zankar, 2023, pp. 3-4)

4.1.3 Global Humanitarian Perspectives:

Sudha Murthy has experienced such a grim reality of the human world being a part of the corporate sector. She expresses her great concerns over the declination of global humanitarian perspectives after pinpointing the changed mindsets of the individuals. She outspeaks the truth about the corporate world that "I have seen that in the corporate world, people who were so simple become so complicated. And they start thinking that money can buy everything" [4]. Unlike other eminent personalities of having philanthropic perspectives, she too serves the society due to her social commitment. She tried to reform and revive the humanitarian perspectives not only through her social works but also through her popular fictional and nonfictional works. The select novels of Sudha Murthy reflect her genuine efforts towards more effective humanitarian perspectives

which need to be revived and developed for the happiness and peacefulness of human beings in the global society. Her works are the finest examples of the inculcation of humanitarian perspectives which seem to have different abstract forms like humanity, emotions, love, affection, human relationship, desires, human compassion, etc.

The cosmopolitan sensibility of Sudha Murthy towards more effectiveness of global humanitarian perspectives is shown through the significance of ethical value and human values in the select novels—*Dollar Bahu*, *Gently Falls the Bakula* and *House of Cards*. Her concerns over the loss of the humanitarian approach as well as subjugation of ethical value over the vices to revive the global humanitarian perspectives are reflected through the textual analysis. Being a philanthropist, Murthy's human compassion are the essence of her each piece of writing that brings forth the realization of human sensibility and approach towards the welfare of mankind. The various abstract forms of humanitarian perspectives like emotions, love, human values, ethics, spirituality, responsibilities etc. are found and discussed in the select works of Sudha Murthy to manifest the global humanitarian perspectives. (Bhupendra N. Kesur, 2022, pp. 54-55)

4.1.4 Morals and Values for Youngsters:

Sudha Murthy's books portray moral qualities; amid clashes and difficulties in life; these accounts re-establish values as per the evolving socio-culture. Her stories, identified with the country, its well-known identities, culture and connections in a family, have helped in molding a person's dispositions towards self and towards the general public. These stories are viable in affecting the way youngsters and grown-ups carry on and think since most loved stories are frequently perused and re-read more than once, attributable to the significant impact felt.

Sudha Murthy's oeuvre causes us to strengthen human qualities with the goal that we as people who are portrayed to be the crown of God's creation can demonstrate our value over lesser living creatures by defining humanized objectives and accomplishing them through the correct means. We likewise capture the delights of nature and mankind that are in charge of the open doors in life to serve others through. Her works make one mindful of the way that each new day is a blessing, which is offered solely to us, with its boundless chances to work towards human bliss.

Every portrayal of Sudha Murty is much the same as valuable diamonds, which grant the light of knowledge and qualities. An author's identity and mentality can strengthen the qualities they teach: modesty, validity and spontaneity, mindfulness and sympathy, resilience and a soul to live. Our author's distinctiveness sparkles in her works moving us to benefit as much as possible from our lives through their motivational words. (Charuvilla Joseph Chacko,2020, pp.19,25)

V. RESEARCH GAP

Despite Sudha Murthy's significant contribution to Indian Literature through her writings ranging from short stories, fiction and non-fiction that often highlight cultural nuances, traditions and societal issues in India, after the review of scholarly works, it was discovered that there is a limited scholarly work focusing specially on her non-fiction works which reflect, critique or shape perceptions of Indian culture. Most existing works published are on Sudha Murty's writing either focuses on her fiction or short stories which provide general overview of her writing, without deeply analyzing the cultural dimensions in her non-fiction through a critical lens. So, it is discovered in the literature review that there is a scope to examine and explore the intersections of different Indian cultures, identity and social structure portrayed in her non-fiction, to understand the interplay between literature and cultural discourses in contemporary India.

VI. RESEARCH AGENDA

The proposed study will investigate Indian culture through the lens of Sudha Murty's non-fiction works, aiming to uncover how her writings enrich our understanding of real-world values, ethics, ideologies and compassion within India's multicultural fabric. The study will identify and analyze the key cultural themes – such as values, compassion, social responsibility etc., embedded in her selected texts. It will also explore how these themes influence individual perspectives, behavior and empathy in a diverse nation. In addition to this the study will assess the very relevance of such literary insights for contemporary readers seeking connection to their heritage and guidance in navigating modern complexities.

The research will employ a qualitative textual analysis of Sudha Murty's selected non-fiction books, gathering required data from peer-reviewed journals through Google Scholar and other online sources by a review of existing scholarship on Indian cultural studies to uncover how non-fiction literature serves as a conduit for cultural transmission and personal growth. The positive qualities of Indian culture will be blended into research papers that will be published in peer-review journals as the study progresses, intending to complete the research work within the stipulated time.

VII. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The proposed research will examine the Indian Culture, especially in connection to non-fiction in Sudha Murty's writings which offers a treasure of insight, knowledge and real-life experience that can broaden our perspective and deepen our understanding of the real world. As it is noted, Indian culture includes many aspects like- values, ethics, ideologies, compassion etc., which plays a vital role in the country's diverse society. A country like India, which is a hub of multi-culture, Indian culture not only shape the country's diversity but also influence an individual's perspective, behavior, and ideals. These internalized values help people navigate the complexities of a diverse society, promoting empathy, understanding and co-existence, which are the true essence of humanity.

In today's fast-paced world, there is a need of systematic study on literary works, especially, non-fiction, which serve a guide light, offering insights into the country's rich cultural heritage, traditions and values that provide a sense of connection to our roots. They also inspire, educate, and enlighten us to deal life's challenges with wisdom and empathy.

The proposed study commences with the following objectives:

- To analyze Sudha Murty's non-fiction writings reflecting the multi-cultural aspects of Indian society and its underlying values.
- To examine the role of values, ethics and ideologies portrayed in Sudha Murty's works in shaping individuals and collective behavior within India's diverse social fabric.
- To identify the key themes in Sudha Murty's works that promote empathy, compassion, understanding and co-existence among others.

- To assess how studying non-fiction can serve as a guide for contemporary readers in navigating complexities of modern life while staying connected to cultural roots.
- To evaluate the impact of Sudha Murthy's insights of traditional Indian culture, heritage, values and application of it in dealing with day-to-day life's challenges.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indian Culture is undoubtedly an amalgamation of religious beliefs, diverse languages, moral principles and societal-familial values that continue to shape tradition and social norms, forming the roots of Indian cultural philosophy. As a prolific writer, Sudha Murthy's works are deeply rooted in Indian culture, exploring its various facets. Her heart-touching narrative, simple yet rich language has captivated a wide range of audiences.

A substantial body of scholarly work has examined Sudha Murthy's writings on moral-ethical values and socio-cultural aspects. However, after reviewing numerous online resources, it became apparent that Indian culture with its distinct features, remains underexplored. Notably, Indian culture in the context of non-fiction has not been studied comprehensively, indicating a significant gap. This literature review highlights the need for a holistic approach to understanding Indian culture, presenting an opportunity for investigation and analysis to fill the gap.

IX. CONCLUSION

Based on the review, Sudha Murthy's writings emerge as a vital conduit for Indian cultural values, weaving together tradition, ethics, and contemporary social realities across fiction and non-fiction. Scholars highlight her nuanced portrayal of family bonds, gender struggles, humanitarianism, and moral resilience, yet a noticeable gap persists: her non-fiction remains underexplored, especially regarding how it transmits cultural identity and empathy in modern contexts. Addressing this gap through qualitative textual analysis will illuminate the interplay of literature, values, and societal transformation. Ultimately, Murthy's work not only preserves India's diverse heritage but also offers readers guidance and reflection for navigating

today's complexities while staying rooted in shared humanity and compassion.

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