

Sane Salvage: Re-reading the Dissemination of Indian Values in Sudha Murty's the Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories

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Abstract:

Moral values are sets of socio-culturally wrought guidelines for human behaviour that ensure acceptance of individuals as honest and valued members of a given community. Since literature reflects society and defines morality, it often operates as a medium for disseminating moral values specific to an age and a place. Sudha Murty, the chairperson of Infosys, an Indian multinational information technology company, is also a significant Indian writer in English with more than twenty published books to her credit. Though one of life's achievers, Murty has remained grounded in her roots of Indian tradition and Indian values. In the intended study, I want to analyse selected short stories from Murty's story collection, *The MAGIC DRUM and other favourite Stories* (2006), to underscore how Murty tries to salvage Indian values for her target readership of children and young adults. As will be shown, her purpose is to regain and retain moral sanity in the face of severe value erosion.

I shall briefly discuss stories like *The Seed of Truth; A Bottle of Dew* and *The Lucky Purse* on the one hand and *The Last Laddoo; The White Crow* and *Haripant the Wise* on the other to foreground her praise of the positive values of truthfulness, diligence, and kindness in the first set of stories and her opposition to the negative traits like niggardliness, exaggeration, and avarice in the second set. I will try to show how Murty highlights values promoted and vices decried. Attempts will also be made to indicate the significance of the author's invocation of a rural past and invectives against a consumerist culture in the selected short stories.

Keywords: Sudha Murty, Cultural Resonance, Indian Values, Linguo-cultural Heritage, Dissemination, Moral Sanity, Sacred Sanctuary.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” - M. K.Gandhi.

Literature is the mirror of society and value education has always been one of the major purposes of its reflection. In a diverse country like India where multiculturalism is itself a genre of study, value education has a prominent place in its ever-changing curriculum. In my paper, I have tried to show how Sudha Murthy, as a contemporary Indian writer in English, has devoted herself to salvaging moral values through her short stories in this era of metaverse connected through the artificial intelligence. Her works vividly portray the positive values like truthfulness, diligence, and kindness on one hand, while niggardliness, exaggeration, and avarice on the other. The picture of the Indian society that we find in her works has come from her day-to-day experience of the sad reality of life. Sudha Murty is known for her writing style which is grounded in Indian culture and tradition, and her stories are a testament to the rich moral values

that define Indian society. As an inspirational writer, Murthy has ventured to voice against the typical degradation of the moral values of the present generation. She persuades her readers to enrich themselves with positive values. Murthy's thought-provoking works resurrect the positive moral values of the human mind through the process of reminiscing ancient cultural values. Her stories even picturize birth and death and how they lay their impact on the aftermath of human relationships. Murthy aims to cultivate positive moral values and nurture Indian multiculturalism. In her collection of short stories, *The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories* (2006) Sudha Murthy has attempted to disseminate Indian values and culture to children through simple yet powerful stories that engage and entertain them that are centred on simple characters and their daily lives. The stories are set in different parts of India, and each story has a unique theme and message. The book is a collection of stories that teach children valuable lessons about honesty, integrity, perseverance, and compassion.

At the heart of Murthy's storytelling lies a profound reverence for traditional Indian values, which are seamlessly interwoven with contemporary themes, making her stories both timeless and relevant. Through her characters and their experiences, Murthy encapsulates the essence of virtues such as compassion, humility, and resilience, serving as a beacon of wisdom for readers of all ages. As one delves into the enchanting tales woven by Murthy, a tapestry of Indian values unfolds, offering readers a nuanced perspective on the rich cultural heritage embedded within the narratives.

"The Last Laddoo" is a short story that revolves around a tight-fisted old couple named Devaiah and Devamma and their fight over the division of one laddoo. Finding no way, they came up with the idea that they will remain silent and the one who cracks the silence loses the laddoo. The story ends epigrammatically when a stray dog is seen eating the laddoo. What Murthy shows is that niggardliness ends up in the dangers of greed. It also leads to witless behaviour.

"The Lucky Purse" is a short story that circulates the act of generosity and kindness of the compassionate woman Mallika who demonstrates her benevolence throughout the story. We see at the beginning of the story that she gave her silk bag to an unknown woman. By the end of the story, we also see that she gave her food to an old woman even after being hungry for several days. Through her story Murthy portrays characters that quintessentially embody kindness.

"The White Crow" is a short story that revolves around the act of exaggeration and boastfulness. In the narrative, Umasundari exaggeratedly called a regular crow, a large crow. Satyabhama, Vimalavati and Kamalesh spread rumours that the regular crow was indeed a big white crow. It indicated the possession of hidden treasure in Umasundari's out house and was consequently demolished by the king's order. Murthy here shows the consequences of exaggeration and boastfulness and the danger and harm that it can lead to others.

"The Seed of Truth" is a short story that portrays the act of truthfulness of Pingala, a poor farmer's little son. King Vidyadhara calls all children and hands out roasted seeds to them. He announces that whoever grows beautiful and healthy plants from these seeds becomes the prince of the kingdom. Pingala is humiliated by others as he comes with an empty pot. Through the character of Pingala, Murthy skilfully shows how one's honesty and genuineness can bring respect as well as success.

“Haripant the Wise” is a short story that spins around the grim act of avarice. Shiriyala Shetty is a ghee merchant who unethically sells adulterated ghee, does not care to think about the health of his customers who consume his ghee. Consequently, he was caught and punished by Haripant. In another part of the story, we find a rich merchant Vibhandaka who is plagued by avarice, as we find him mistreating poor Gunakara, was punished by Haripant. Murthy here presents how avarice blinds people and makes them self-indulgent. They relinquish humanity and become indifferent to the suffering of others.

Through her story “A Bottle of Dew”, Murty demonstrates that hard work is the sole key to success. It is only through perseverance and hard work that one can achieve wealth and good health. Ramanatha is in search of a magic potion that will transform anything into gold. He worked truly hard to get it but ended up in establishing a banana plantation unknowingly. Although he knew that it will take him years to get that potion, he was uncompromisingly determined to get it. He succeeded in getting gold not through any magic potion but through the banana plantation which was the result of his hard work.

Sudha Murthy, through this present text *The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories* graphically displays the theme of morality, culture and heritage of India. Murty's stories are set in India and reflect the diverse cultural heritage of the country across diverse spatio-temporal contexts. Her stories depict characters from different backgrounds and showcase the unique aspects of their culture, while also highlighting the commonalities that unite them. Through her writing, she strives to enthrone moral values in human actions as well as to amplify humanity in her target audience. Murty in her short stories represents the erosion of moral values like respect, honesty, compassion as well as kindness and aimed at salvaging them by broadcasting valuable model lessons.

The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories serves as a repository of cultural treasures, each narrative serving as a vessel through which Indian values are disseminated. Whether it's the tale of a humble drum that brings joy to a village or the story of a young girl's journey towards self-discovery, Murty's narratives resonate with authenticity, inviting readers to reflect on the enduring relevance of age-old values in today's rapidly changing world. In the vast landscape of literature, certain works stand as cultural landmarks, offering readers not just stories, but profound insights into the essence of a society. Sudha Murty's collection, *The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories*, is one such literary gem that transcends mere storytelling, serving as a vessel for the dissemination of Indian values. Through a meticulous examination of Murty's narratives, one embarks on a journey of rediscovery, exploring the timeless wisdom that lies at the heart of Indian culture.

Sudha Murty's brilliance lies in her technique of preaching moral values through the actions of the character. In addition to her intelligible stories, Murty preaches moral values in the book through the language and tone of her writing. Her writing is simple, yet powerful, and her stories are told in a way that is easy to understand and relatable to readers of all ages. She has also incorporated words and phrases from different Indian languages, which helps to preserve the linguo-cultural heritage of the country. This approach enables readers to appreciate the diversity of Indian culture while also promoting cross-cultural understanding. She has drawn character portraits from every stage of life – child, teenager, man or aged person. These characters represent the same moral dilemma faced by common people in everyday life. Their experiences teach us valuable lessons about Indian moral values and inspire us to be better human

beings. Her stories promote cross-cultural understanding, honesty, togetherness, solicitude, hard work, and gender equality which showcase the unique aspects of India's cultural heritage while also highlighting the commonalities that unite us all. Murty's short stories remind everyone to follow the path of righteousness, irrespective of their colour, race, or gender. Her stories deal with a wide range of themes, from social issues to personal challenges to teach children the value of honesty and kindness. However, all of her stories have a common thread of morality and ethical behaviour that is essential for being a good human being. It shows them that even in difficult times one should never compromise on their values and always strive to do the right thing by highlighting the importance of sharing and caring for others. These stories teach children about Indian mythology and folklore and help them to appreciate the diversity of Indian culture that disseminates Indian values and moral humanity to children in a simple and engaging way. The stories in the book teach children important lessons about honesty, integrity, compassion, and perseverance making it an excellent resource for parents and educators who want to introduce children to Indian values and culture and inculcate these values in them from a very young age. Sudha Murty's short stories are a wonderful asset to introduce moral and ethical values to the coming generation that will preserve our cultural heritage. This is how Sudha Murty's *The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories* put forward a sane salvage of the positive moral values and adds to our senses how one person can make a difference in the world by promoting values and traditions.

In a world where the cacophony of modernity often threatens to drown out the whispers of tradition, Murty's stories serve as a reminder of the enduring power of Indian values to anchor individuals amidst the storms of life. Through "Sane Salvage," readers are invited to embark on a journey of rediscovery, where the pages of Murty's book become a sacred sanctuary for the preservation and celebration of India's cultural heritage. Moreover, Murty's narratives serve as vehicles for cultural preservation, capturing the oral traditions and folk tales passed down through generations. Through her retellings, Murty bridges the gap between past and present, fostering a sense of continuity and connection to India's rich cultural heritage. 'Sane Salvage' invites readers to engage in a process of re-reading, where the layers of Murty's narratives are peeled back to reveal deeper insights into Indian values and traditions. Through critical analysis and reflection, readers uncover the subtle nuances embedded within each story, gaining a deeper appreciation for the cultural resonance that permeates Murty's work.

In essence, 'Sane Salvage' serves as a call to action, urging readers to reclaim and celebrate the Indian values woven into Murty's narratives. As guardians of cultural heritage, readers are tasked with preserving and passing on these values to future generations, ensuring that they continue to serve as guiding beacons in an ever-changing world. Through the pages of *The Magic Drum And Other Favourite Stories*, Sudha Murty invites readers on a journey of rediscovery, where the wisdom of the past illuminates the path forward.

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