

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

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Abstract

The importance of children's literature in impacting the intellectual, emotional, moral, and cultural development of children as readers is great. In India, children's literature is no longer limited to a single medium, adapted from oral tradition, as children's folktales, epics, myths, fables, stories, and cartoons interpret each contemporary society's realities while asserting the cultural values found in each of these societies. This shift is attributable to the shift of educational philosophies, technology, globalization, and greater consciousness regarding gender equality, multiculturalism, child agency, environmental awareness, and more. Sudha Murty is one of the most powerful writers of today in India. She has excelled in writing contemporary stories that can be seamlessly linked to traditional Indian storytelling, along with the ethical and educational issues prevalent in today's world. Though simple in form, the narratives are as complex as human emotions – conveying moral lessons that are easy for children to understand, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, to develop empathy, honesty, resilience, compassion, and respect for cultural diversity.

This study aims to look into the history of children's literature in India and discuss the prominent themes and contemporary issues in Sudha Murty's children's literature. The study is addressing the issues that come up repeatedly in one and another, such as Gender Representation, Cultural Identity, moral and ethical education, Family Relationships, and the continuation of Indian culture in a global world. It also covers the nature of female characters or roles and the significance of inter-generational relationships in passing on transmitted values or cultural knowledge and practices. In addition, the research paper explores some of the existing issues in the field of "children's literature" in India, such as digitalization, commercialization, multilingualism, the representation of the marginalized, and enjoyment and educational goals.

Emphasizing recent scholarly research and critical studies, the paper reflects that Sudha Murty's works have an important role in the present-day scenario of Indian children's literature because of the reflection of universal values of humanity and the adoption of culturally inspired stories. Her stories clearly show that children's literature has multiple roles as a source of entertainment, as a source of morals, as a means of cultural preservation, and as a source of social awareness. The study draws the conclusion that Murty's writings are also significant in the ongoing development of Indian children's literature, which provides valuable literary experiences and is still relevant in the 21st century.

Keywords: Children's Literature, India, Sudha Murty, Cultural Identity, Gender Representation, Moral Values, Contemporary Challenges

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1. Introduction

Children's literature is one of the most influential media of literary expression because it has a significant influence on building the imagination, personality, ethics, and perception of children of life. Children's literature is not just for adults, but serves to entertain, educate, and apprise the reader of children in regard to their intellectual growth, emotional maturity, creativity, and cultural awareness. Children engage in language

development, empathy, critical thinking, and moral reasoning through stories, poems, myths, folktales, biographies, and fantasy stories. In every culture, children's literature has been an indispensable vehicle for transferring cultural values, social norms, history, and traditions from one generation to the next (Anand, 2025).

Children's literature in India has a special place because of the immense differences in language, culture, religion, and region in India. Storytelling in

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

India continues across the ages, well before the written word. Wisdom, courage, compassion, justice, and doing the right thing have been parts of ancient tales such as the Panchatantra, Hitopadesha, Jataka Tales, Ramayana, and Mahabharata that have touched lives in generations. These stories, which were passed down orally and later on written down, were the basis of children's literature in India (Verma, 2022).

Indian children's literature has not been a development process but one that has found expression amidst the political, educational, technological, and social changes that have taken place in the nation. The colonial educational system aimed at imposing Western literary traditions onto children's books and affected content, as well as language and publications, in many ways. At the same time, Indian authors aimed to 'modernize' and retain indigenous means of storytelling in new, educational settings. At the same time, Indian writers wished to 'modernise' and maintain indigenous methods of storytelling within new, educational settings. After independence, children's literature began to show a strong nationalistic spirit, democratic ideas, a scientific approach, promoting awareness of the environment, and social inclusiveness (Ghosh, 2023; Chandra, 2023).

Indian children's literature has gone through an amazing growth in the twenty-first century. The improvement in literacy levels and changes in educational policies, the rise in new digital publishing technologies, multilingual translation, and the rise of child- and youth-focused education have inspired most publishers and authors to produce works that cater to and reflect the varied experiences of young people in India. Currently, children's literature doesn't just address the ethical and moral aspects of child development but also plays a significant role in issues of identity development in childhood, gender equality, social justice, nature, disability, multiculturalism, emotional intelligence, and child mental health; therefore, it is not limited to ethical and moral education issue in children's literature (Duhan & Malik, 2025).

Sudha Murty is among the prominent Indians who have contributed to the field of children's literature. Murty has delivered many books focused on children in Indian & International languages, and is a prolific writer, educator, philanthropist, and social worker. Overall, her storytelling is a remarkable way to convey complex ethical and social issues through simple language, engaging stories, relatable characters, and a culture that has easy access. While the story has primarily a didactic aim, unlike purely didactic literature, Murty leaves readers the agency to find out moral lessons organically from character

experience and common situations in one's life (B, 2022).

Often, Murty's children's books are based on Indian folklore, mythology, family experiences, historical tales, and common life experiences. Her works face kids with realistic situations and plant curiosity, empathy, courage, honesty, and perseverance. Traditional storytelling methods can be adapted to tackle modern-day issues while still retaining cultural authenticity, as reflected in books like *Grandma's Bag of Stories*, *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories*, *The Gopi Diaries*, and *The Bird with Golden Wings* (Bag, 2024; Chopra & Mathur, 2025).

A central theme of Murty's children's oeuvre is that of cultural continuity. Her stories are celebrations of India's rich heritage, along with an openness towards diversity and social inclusion. Murty does not treat culture as a static thing; rather, he paints a picture of it as a motivational force that constantly transforms due to compassion, understanding, and the human connection. Thus, her works are of special significance and relevance in the context of today's world because children are now facing various cultures at various places via digital media and international communication (Parveen, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Studies on Indian Children's Literature

Indian children's literature is slowly receiving growing interest and attention from scholars in the areas of education, cultural heritage, identity, and social development. Its history, plethora of themes, and its educational value have been studied, and it has been found that it has evolved from being an oral storytelling tradition to a rich literary genre that reflects the Indian culture and mythological beliefs while also presenting an overview of the social issues of the time.

Anand (2025) speaks about Indian children's literature from ancient times to the present. The study shows that children's literature is still affected by classic stories like Panchatantra, Jataka Tales, Hitopadesha, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, which focus on moral teachings while entertaining. Children's literature has also been a medium of cultural and ethical development, as noted by the modern writers who have included issues of environmental awareness, gender equality, emotional intelligence, and social inclusion as the subjects of children's books, Anand adds.

The current status of children's literature in India, of its literary aspects, educational values, and trends of publishing works are assessed by Chandra (2023). Despite some progress in mainstreaming education in the face of higher literacy rates and educational reforms, the study highlights difficulties, including the commercialization of education, limited

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

representation and scope of marginalized communities, and the prevalence of translated foreign literature. The need for literature that reflects more of the linguistic and cultural diversity of India is emphasized by the author.

Ghosh (2023) investigates how the education system of the British colonized India has affected children's literature in India. While the impact of the western literary models on children's writings is recognized, the study makes a case for the Indian authors to successfully incorporate indigenous folklore and mythology with a new educational agenda that gives rise to a fusion of tradition with innovation, a literature and literary tradition all their own.

In the same way, Sheoran (2009) records that globalization, urbanization, and technological advances have widened the scope of Indian children's literature. Authors now talk about topics like equality and social justice for women, protecting the environment, taking care of the disabled, relationships with family, and so on, and ask kids to think about them, instead of just absorbing what is good.

2.2 Studies on Sudha Murty's Children's Literature

Sudha Murty is an eminent contemporary author of Indian Children's Literature. A few of her stories use simple language, engaging stories, cultural traditions, and ethical values that are accessible and meaningful to youth. Her works have been examined and studied from the point of view of morality, cultural identity, folklore, trauma, and value education, etc.

It explores B (2022) the moral aspects of Murty's children's stories with the assumption that she is not stating moral lessons, but she is awakening ethical values like honesty, kindness, compassion, perseverance, and humility through the ordinary situations faced by the relatable characters in the story. This launches a discussion about what the children think is the right thing to do, in addition to them enjoying the story.

In Sane Salvage, Bag (2024) discusses Murty's conveyance of Indian values in *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories*. Based on the study, the author finds that Murty has captured the spirit of the folk songs, myths, and oral narrative of the history and textured it in a contemporary fashion so as to instill an appreciation of tradition in the child, as well as universal human values.

Bag (2024) has conducted another study on themes of memory and trauma in Murty's children's literature. Murty's versatility and skill at handling these emotionally charged subjects in an age-appropriate way allow children to explore personal development and family dynamics in a reassuring, optimistic, and empowering fashion.

Writing on Murty's *Unusual Tales* series, Lobo (2023) states that her interpretation of the myths and legends does not forget but does give a twist to the tales, making them relevant to their present-day children. Through these adaptations, the values, including courage, honesty, humility, and social responsibility, are promoted.

According to Parveen, both Sudha Murty and Ruskin Bond focus on promoting moral values and emotional growth in the children's texts, with Murty more emphasizing Indian traditions, values of the family, folklore, and cultural identity. She brings her stories to children as a way to celebrate their heritage, foster empathy for others, and celebrate differences and social harmony.

2.3 Themes in Sudha Murty's Children's Literature

Sudha Murty's debut in children's literature is both entertaining & educative at the same time, containing India's cultural values and tackling the current social problems. Simple sentences, characters that readers can identify with, and engaging storylines encourage children to use moral reasoning, cultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking when reading her stories. Her contribution to Indian children's literature has been marked by several themes that recur:

Moral and Ethical Values

Moral education has been the focus of Murty's children's stories. She does not explicitly teach the messages of right and wrong, but she makes simple situations to provide moral values for characters to learn, including honesty, kindness, compassion, courage, responsibility, and perseverance. This fosters children's moral thinking to develop on their own (B,2022). It is also reported that Murty's stories encourage kids to learn actively about morals instead of following rigid morals (Sharma, 2024). Animal characters emphasise these values consistent with the Panchatantra tradition, and in this tradition, social problems were taken up in the contemporary context (Sisodiya & Atreya, 2026).

Indian Culture and Cultural Identity

Murty's stories embrace India's cultural heritage, which includes folklore, mythology, festivals, traditions, and family life. Each of her stories helps children learn more about the Indian culture and also helps in developing values like co-operation, respect, and social harmony (Parveen, 2024). Murty does a wonderful job bringing these traditional stories to a modern audience, retaining the cultural values without putting them into a 'bait and switch' category, writes Bag (2024). Likewise, Lobo (2023) notes that children's relations with the culture of India are enhanced by her reinterpretation of the mythologies.

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

Families and Intergenerational Learning Skills

The profound role played by the family can be seen in Murty's literary works. The parents, grandparents, and teachers accompany their children through stories and in everyday life, developing moral values and emotional maturity. George and K. Intergenerational storytelling fosters cultural continuity and relationships among families (2026). Stories like *Grandma's Bag of Stories* illustrate how grandparents function as educators with the power to pass on wisdom, traditions, and ethical values.

Compassion, Empathy, and Social Responsibility

Children are motivated to act compassionately towards people, animals, and society by Murty. Realistic situations of service to others and acts of kindness and generosity through stories come across as if they could be an experience involving disadvantaged people and animals. The emotional intelligence imparted by *The Gopi Diaries* is achieved by narrating the events from the perspective of the dog, inviting readers to feel empathy and demonstrate responsible behavior. According to Chopra and Mathur (2025), *The Gopi Diaries* fosters emotional intelligence by articulating events from the point of view of the dog and stimulating empathy and responsible actions. Material success is not true happiness, explains Murty, who calls it "joy sharing."

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

Murty breaks the stereotypes about girls by depicting them as intelligent, confident, and independent characters. The women characters play an active role both in education and leadership as well as in decision making within the family, maintaining a connection to the values of Indian culture. In contrast to a more critical perspective, which would address gender inequities directly, Murty's approach is to empower women through modeling, as she believes this will shift the perception of children that gender equality is an intrinsic part of society (2024).

Nature and Environmental Awareness

Another recurring subject of Murty's works is the conservation of the environment. Using forest, animal, river, and village stories to instill in children the need to care for the environment and value nature. Her stories evoke a sense of connection for children with their environment and thus support sustainable lifestyles.

Curiosity, Learning, and Personal Growth.

In Murty's vision, childhood is an age of discovery, wonder, and constant learning. Her young characters don't solve problems by 'luck' but by observation, creativity, and perseverance. Errors provided as learning opportunities to develop children's independence of thought and their ability to learn for life.

In general, Sudha Murty's children's books explore related moral, cultural identity, family relations, empathy, equality of the sexes, eco-awareness, and personal development concerns. The themes in the stories show her very successful attempt to integrate traditional values of India with the education and socialization of children in today's world.

2.4 Contemporary Challenges in Children's Literature

There has been a tremendous development in Indian children's literature in terms of thematic range, readership, and publication. Now, it still has to cope with some difficulties stemming from modernization, globalization, commercialization, the modernization of education, and cultural diversity.

Digital technology is a major factor that poses problems. Digital technology is growing at a great speed of its growth, which poses problems. With the advent of mobile phones, tablets, video games, and streaming services, kids have lost their taste for books. According to Duhan and Malik (2025), digital media provides immediate visual entertainment, which makes it hard to grab children's attention when reading a book. As a result, the authors have to concentrate on writing adventures for the students, while keeping education and literature as their top priority.

There is another significant question related to commercialization. According to Chandra (2023), publishers pay more attention to the marketability and aesthetic design of the book, instead of literary quality. Consequently, a plethora of books focus on non-serious issues, character enhancement, and cultural norms come as an afterthought, and fun takes precedence. The trend is to write formula-based stories with reference to popular genres from abroad rather than their own original Indian stories.

Opportunities and challenges have emerged due to globalization. Even though there is more literature available from abroad these days, Ghosh (2023) cautions that end-user over-reliance on Western literature could diminish learner interest in the folklore, mythology, and regional traditions of India. Thus, Indian writers have to give importance to both the global influences and to preserving the indigenous cultural heritage.

The challenge of the variety of languages is also a great one. India has a variety of languages, but children's publications are mainly dominated by English and some regional languages. While the number of good books in mother tongues has increased, many children still have no access, limiting first of all literacy and second, cultural links (Ghai 2009).

A further issue is the underrepresentation of and the lack of inclusiveness with those who are represented.

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

Despite the progression of critiques and discussions, many children's books continue to lack satisfactory portrayal of the minority groups, cultures and socio-economic statuses of the world's people. Despite criticism and talk, many children's books do not adequately portray the minority people, cultures and socio-economic groups. Empathy, equality and respect for diversity are essential to young readers through inclusive literature.

Lastly, Children's literature has been affected by the modification of family structure. As the world becomes more urban and the size of the family shrinks, authors must be able to present a balance of familiar ideas of family and contemporary life with the child and family unit.

2.5 Research Gap

The literature review suggests that while literature of children in India and literature authored by Sudha Murty is well-explored, there are certain areas of research which remain unexplored.

The majority of the existing studies analyze one element in history or one aspect of morality, culture, folklore and/or family relations individually. There are scarce studies which have tried to link the growth, trends and current issues of Indian children's literature together.

Likewise, Sudha Murty's research concentrates on each book—a book like *Grandma's Bag of Stories* or *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories*, a book like *The Gopi Diaries* or the *Unusual Tales* series. There are few comprehensive works that have looked at her children's literature as a whole.

The second gap lies in the absence of a theme analysis. According to the previous studies, these subjects generally talk about morality, mythology, cultural identity or family values but less about how they can impact on children's moral, cultural, and emotional development simultaneously.

Likewise, research on gender representation is also limited. While scholars recognize Murty's prominent cast of strong female protagonists, detailed study of the character agency and leadership as well as female equality, is lacking.

In addition, comparatively little has been written in terms of character analysis. So far, studies have been largely concentrated on themes and not on representations of important actors such as child protagonists, grandparents, parents, and other key actors that help develop the psychology and morality of children.

Lastly, a few studies have focused on the ways in which Murty's texts address issues like commercialism, digital gadgetry, globalization, and a changing family. The majority of the research available is descriptive and not analytical.

Hence, the present study aimed to fill the identified gaps by interpreting the themes and characters of the children's literature and its evolution in India in the works of Sudha Murty, with special focus on thematic interpretation and character analysis of children's literature.

3. THEMES AND CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

Children's manuscript literature has not only changed from mere entertainment and moral lessons to the most important literary genre but also made a considerable contribution to the intellectual, emotional, cultural, and social development of children. The literature of children today also has more matter that stems from complex issues like gender equality, cultural diversity, environmental awareness, social justice, and also ethical responsibility, along with an involvement of narratives that are engaging and age-appropriate. In modern Indian literature, Sudha Murty has provided a noteworthy contribution in the area of traditional narratives and contemporary social issues. Her works show that children's literature can help to hold on to cultural heritage while preparing children for a fast-changing world.

Murty's tales are filled with several of the hallmarks of contemporary Indian children's stories. They are emphasizing ethical values while avoiding being too dogmatic, depicting a variety of cultural experiences, fostering empathy and compassion, and developing gender parity and inter-generational relationships. Her works also address several contemporary issues, such as globalisation, evolving family structures, a reduced amount of reading, and the missing middle-class presence. These are key themes explored in more detail in the following sections.

3.1 Gender Representation and Equality

The focus on gender representation is one of today's most significant recurring topics in children's literature. Previously, children's novels often imagined that young girls were domesticated, passive, and good, while young boys could likely be adventurous, witty, and daring. Children's development of an unequal typology of gender roles was influenced by such stereotype portrayals. In more recent writing, however, it is a repeated aim of children's literature to attack such stereotypes by portraying girls and boys as equally capable of doing things, with a variety of aspirations, talents, and responsibilities.

Sudha Murty's children's books show some of these changes. While her stories are always steeped in the cultural norms and values of the Indian tradition, they are all founded on the values of respecting women

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

and the awareness to build confidence, curiosity, leadership, and intellectual independence in girls. Instead of depending on her characters to serve the roles of caregivers or secondary characters, Murty gives women the opportunity to be leaders in their families, education, community service, and problem-solving.

Independence is one of the hallmarks of Murty's female characters. In her stories, she asks girls questions to serve as opportunities for self-learning and the discussion of new ideas, as well as for weighing options for solving "real-life" problems, and for making choices that are relevant to their lives. They're as bright as male characters, and Murty believes that education should be equal, no matter the gender. Representations like these vindicate the capabilities of girls and an antithetical social attitude. According to Bag (2024), Murty's children's works are an articulation of women and girls as tough characters who take up challenges of society and agency in a courageous and spirited way. Murty's vision of female empowerment isn't to fight against cultural traditions; it's to show that confidence, education, and independence can be achieved alongside compassion, humility, and a respect for family values. The highlight of her realistic portrayal enhances the relevance of her stories in different contexts, for instance, in the Indian society as of this day, where talks around women's education and gender equality are still ongoing.

Another aspect Murty portrays is the influence of mothers and grandmothers as teachers. As opposed to the traditional literary depictions in which older women mostly carry out domestic chores, Murty's grandmothers serve as storytellers, philosophers, moral guides, and gatekeepers of cultural knowledge. They tell stories to children to bring forth folklore, mythology, morals, and knowledge gained from life. Women's leadership is thus seen not only within the house but also as intellectual, moral, as well.

Gender equality is also promoted in Murty's stories by teachers. Women teachers are often portrayed as knowledgeable, who instill curiosity, discipline, and compassion in students. Their inclusion breaks with traditional cultural and social norms about gender roles, and it helps to support children's attitudes towards women in leadership and responsibility.

3.2 Cultural Diversity and Identity

Cultural identity is one of the most outstanding features of India's children's literature due to the immense linguistic, religious, regional, and cultural diversity. Not only are stories entertaining to young readers, but they also teach traditions, festivals, folklore, history, social values, and many other areas that make up collective cultural consciousness. With globalization, as it applies to children's books, and

the rise of digital materials and media, maintaining cultural identity but respecting other ways of being has taken on increasing significance.

The answers to such a challenge, as presented in the writings of Sudha Murty, truly answer the question by making Indian culture dynamic, inclusive, and adaptable instead of static and exclusive. Her tales are a tribute to the cultural heritage of India, and she highlights the universal values of compassion, truthfulness, generosity, cooperation, and humanity.

In literature, what Murty is doing is a mirroring of Indian cultural identity, which is what Parveen (2024) claims. Her stories offer authentic cultural settings for everyday family life, festivals, traditional occupations, regions, and even communities that are tightly knit and local legends and historical memories. Representations allow children to understand that culture is not just found in significant events in history, but in ordinary relationships between people and in their daily lives.

Murty extensively infused folklore and mythology in her writing, which reinforces Children's bond with the literary legacy of India. Murty's accessible language, characters, and perspectives on education make stories adapted from ancient traditions current. As a result, kids value the mythology as a fresh source of wisdom instead of an ancient assortment of religious tales.

According to Lobo (2023), Murty manages to return the mythological stories, focusing on their humanistic and ethical aspects. The core values gained from traditional stories are courage, honesty, generosity, humility, justice, and perseverance. Both these values are pertinent and keep kids conscious of India's heritage.

Another aspect of Murty's writings is regional diversity. Her stories are set in villages, towns, forests, cities, schools, and households from across India. The cultural diversity of the country is reflected in the differences in food, clothes, languages, festivals, trades, buildings, and landscapes between different stories. These depictions help children to value difference rather than see the difference as a threat to conflict.

For Murty, food has a special symbolic significance in his writings. Family mealtimes and homemade recipes bring family togetherness and enhance children's knowledge of local traditions regarding food. The culinary narratives of children's literature play an important role in children's identity creation, belonging, and multiculturalism, which Musthafa et al. (2024) suggest.

Through interpersonal relationships, Murty also portrays cultural diversity. Different classes of characters from all walks of economic and professional life, from outside and within the

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

community, and across generations are working together politely with respect to problem solving. Such interactions are examples of the positive influence of diversity on humans for the sake of learning from one another and not dividing them.

3.3 Moral and Ethical Values

Moral and ethical training has proved to be one of the unique features of the 'literature for children' in India. Whether as a means to educate honesty, compassion, courage, humility, justice, and social responsibility among young readers through ancient writings like Panchatantra, Hitopadesha, Jataka Tales, or modern literature, stories have been an effective means to teach these values. But how these values are passed on has changed tremendously. Children's books typically used to be a hands-on moral lesson material, but nowadays these books are being written by present-day artists offering subtle messages in a fun and enticing way for children to contemplate. Sudha Murty is a prime example of this modern style, who speaks about moral values through realistic scenarios, relatable characters, and experiences of emotion.

An interesting quality of Murty's children's literature is that the moral learning is percolated from the story and does not come up at a didactic, preaching level. The main characters she features are common children, parents, grandparents, teachers, workers, and citizens faced with common problems in which they must make ethical decisions. Rather than depict prototypical good guys who never commit any fault, Murty paints characters who do get things wrong, learn from their mistakes, and are ultimately morally grown. Such a realistic representation allows children to have the occasion to realize that the development and improvement of morality is an iterative process fueled by ethics, empathy, and responsible decision-making.

Murty's stories are effective in turning around moral instruction into comfortable and engaging reading material (B 2022). The research shows that children are introduced to virtues in their daily routines that they are already coming across in their daily lives. Readers are thus made aware of the ground-level "importance" of ethical behavior, and not the "rules of morality". This is an approach that is congruent with the current educational philosophy of experiential learning and critical thinking over memorizing moral beliefs.

The emphasis in Murty's ethical framework is on honesty. Many examples demonstrate the virtuous effect of being honest and how it builds confidence among people, and it helps in developing a harmonious social relationship. Those who acknowledge errors, tell the truth, and take responsibility are respected, even if it is difficult at first. Whereas dishonesty and pridefulness can lead to

misunderstanding and strife. Importantly, Murty does not see dishonesty as just "offending" alone, as any punishment for dishonesty would be insufficient; she shows how dishonesty can harm children emotionally and socially and invites youngsters to value honesty by feeling the repercussions and reflecting on their actions.

A concept that is also continually present in Murty's children's writing is compassion. All her stories have included her messages of "kindness for ANY person, regardless of their age, profession, religion, or ability or dis-ability. Children are often faced with adults who need help and understanding, as well as with children in disadvantaged situations, animals, and strangers. In these encounters, Murty gives lessons that stress the point that compassion authentically means that everyone is entitled to a certain dignity for which there should be no ulterior motive but charity. These kinds of drawings create empathy, along with enhancing children's social responsibilities.

The need to give is linked closely with that of being compassionate. True generosity is not only about giving to others, but it's also about sharing knowledge, time, encouragement, and emotional support, Murty insists again and again. Giving can have an impact that can solidify relationships and have a positive impact on communities. Children see that they can feel happy apart from success; they can also feel happy that they are helping others feel happy. This attitude is more representative of India's collective welfare philosophy and spirit of cooperation.

Respect for 'elders,' or for learning across generations, is another major focus of Murty's ethical themes in his writings. Grandparents are often the moral teachers who pass on culture, family traditions, history, and how-to-do-it skills in stories. These elder characters do not call for blind trust in their say, but rather speak into the life for discussion, exploration, and critical thinking. Children are encouraged to ask questions, share thoughts, and learn from discussion. This enables respect to be illustrated as a sense of mutual appreciation based on love and understanding, rather than just social rank.

Gratitude is also the key word of Murty's literature, a part of moral growth. Children are urged to value the people in their parents' lives, educators, friends, neighbors, and community workers who help them to develop and be happy. Gratitude is not just a "thank you" that can be said verbally; it is an appreciation of how human relationships intertwine and an appreciation of others' contributions. Thus, images like this foster an attitude of humility rather than a sense of entitlement, and curtail excessive individualism.

4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Characterization is one of the most important literary devices in children's literature as characters are used to share messages of emotion, relationship, values, and social responsibility, which are the primary ways in which children learn about them. Children are influenced by fictional characters, may copy their actions, and may take on board what they learn from the fictional characters' experiences. Thus, the portrayal of the children as protagonists, parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members has a major impact on the education and literature of children's stories. Sudha Murty's children's literature features characters that are realistic, relatable, and multidimensional, with each reflecting the life of ordinary Indians with the values of humanity.

Murty's challenge to the traditional children's story is that it usually celebrates what his characters consider to be good and bad, right and wrong, but Murty takes them to include people with flaws, with fears, with opportunities to grow, and with strengths. This is through the common world of experience in which her characters grow and develop, psychologically credible and well accessible to the young reader. They are from various age groups, professions, social classes, etc., reflecting that the society of India is diverse in its own nature. Focusing on gender equality and cross-generational relationships, female characters like Sanchita and intergenerational connections appear in pivotal roles, reflecting Murty's values of cultural continuity and ethical education.

4.1 Representation of Female Characters

There is a notable change in the portrayal of women and girls in modern children's literature in India. Often in earlier literature, female characters were seen as passive, dependent, and limited in their careers compared to males, but in more recent literature, the female character becomes more of an agent, educated, and a leader, and is seen with different intellectual abilities than men. Children's literature authored by Sudha Murty is a perfect example of this progressive spirit, as it depicts the female characters as involved in family, education, and society, and resonates with Indian cultural values.

Part of Murty's appeal in his female characters is that they think independently. Girls in her stories tend to question situations they do not understand, and they're willing to learn and have a curiosity about anything. They are intellectually confident, designing solutions to problems through observation, creativity, reasoning, and perseverance, not just through adult intervention. These representations help to bring home that intelligence and leadership are not gender specific.

As Murty's female characters grapple with the rigors of daily life, Bag (2024) points out that each woman exhibits a level of bravery, strength, compassion, and resolve. Murty does not show that empowerment is a revolt against tradition, but that it is a process that can help girls to make a valuable contribution to their families and communities through education, confidence, and good behavior. This equilibrium renders her literature as a contemporary literature within the context of the modern Indian society, which recognized a growing space for study for women and the increasing expectations for them.

Murty also includes women as vital sources of knowledge. Younger characters are often led and instructed by their mothers, grandmothers, teachers, and elder sisters – through storytelling, with practical instructions, and with emotional support, and through personal example. They share their authority because they have had experience, wisdom, compassion, and moral integrity, not because they are rulers. The depiction of such characters challenges the conventional literary stereotype of knowledge as exclusively male.

For Murty, the role of the grandmother is near the fore in the field of children's literature. They serve as a storyteller, a teacher, a historian, and an emotional connection to a newer generation simultaneously. Folklore, Mythology, cultural lore, ethics, and practical life experience are brought to children through stories told during family times by the grandmothers. Such stories serve to reinforce emotional ties and to ensure the continuity of oral storytelling traditions, which are very old in Indian children's literature.

Another group of important female characters in the narrative is represented by the teachers. Murty represents women teaching professionals as experts who prompt students to learn and discover, discipline and develop their creativity, and inspire compassion. They are not only facilitators but also promoters of independent learning and lifelong learning. They are a representation of the contributions that women and women teachers have made in the education and intellectual development of present-day India.

Murty's tales also include the role of women's emotional intelligence. Generally, the female role models are good at dealing with interpersonal issues in a manner that involves empathy, patience, forgiveness, cooperation, and effective communication. Such traits are not depicted as being weak, but rather are considered good traits that help to make a family happy and safe. For Murty, leadership development means developing children's knowledge of leadership through the inclusion of emotional maturity as well as intellectual ability.

4.2 Multigenerational Dynamics

The interaction between adults and children is one of the most unique in Sudha Murty's children's writings. While many of today's stories are about child-to-child relationships, Murty continually portrays important relationships between children and extended family. Not just as elders and authorities, parents, grandparents, teachers, and other adults in the community are also peers, storytellers, mentors, and moral guides who are an important part of children's emotional, intellectual, and cultural development.

George and K. (2026) believe Murty's narratives have a socio-cultural significance in maintaining family bonding and collective memory. Older people pass down knowledge and traditions, values of ethics, and practical experience to children through conversations, storytelling sessions, shared activities, and daily life experiences. These interactions help ensure cultural continuity, emotional security, and understanding.

As grandmothers and grandfathers, Murty's is the focal point of her multi-generational stories. Through interesting stories, they prepare children to learn about folklore and mythology, historical events, family traditions, and moral values without formal teaching or instruction. Storytelling becomes an educational process that stimulates imagination, curiosity, has an ethical connotation, and helps build emotional connections between generations.

One of Murty's most impactful works in intergenerational storytelling is *Grandma's Bag of Stories*. The grandmother character sets a context for talking about these values as they relate to the story: kindness, honesty, courage, generosity, patience, and responsibility. Children are highly involved; they ask questions, impart their opinions, and connect stories with their own lives. In this learn-through-storytelling experience, it shifts from being a one-way street to being a two-way road.

Murty's depiction of parents further reinforces a sense of teaching through encouragement as opposed to strict command. Children's curiosity, creativity, independence, and ability to take risks are nurtured and supported by mothers and fathers in times of uncertainty and need for emotional support. They do not fear failure but learn from it, which helps build confidence and resilience in children.

Additionally, teachers are another significant link to the younger generation. Murty's cast of teachers is one of mentors who develop a range of intellectual skills, including curiosity, discipline, care, and someone who is not dependent on others. Classroom engagements do not only cover the subject matter and knowledge taught, but are also extended to ethics, social responsibility, environmental awareness, and cultural heritage. Representations such as this

reinforce children's richness of their understanding of learning as a lifelong endeavour that is facilitated within meaningful human relationships.

The transgenerational relationships also play huge roles in children's emotional development as well. If children of differing ages or genders are confused, disappointed, or in some trouble with a relative, Murty shows that there is always a time when they can be helped by talking to an older relative. Elders provide support, insight, and guidance from their life experience, helping children to build resilience and emotional intelligence.

Another has to do with memory, that facet of Murty's multi-generational relationships. Family stories record aspects of history, area traditions, individual successes, and community difficulties that influence children's sense of their identity. Bag (2024) proposes that, rather than simply a memory of past events, memory is a dynamic mechanism by which children relate their own experiences to other cultural and historical contexts.

Murty also recognises the new family structures in modern-day India. With the growth of urbanization, migration, educational mobility, and professional commitments, opportunities for regularly encountering intergenerational contact have diminished. However, her own stories bring out the fact that emotional intimacy has more to do with meaningful communication than physical proximity. Intergenerational links are vital to children's all-round development, both in person and through shared enjoyment, celebration, or storytelling.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study analysed the evolution, themes, and current issues and problems in children's literature in light of the children's literature of Sudha Murty in India. These findings indicate that Indian children's literature has come a long way from the age-old, oral traditions of storytelling to a vibrant literary form that fuels the intellectual, emotional, cultural, and moral growth of children.

The study reveals that children's literature today is still greatly affected by traditional literature such as Panchatantra, Hitopadesha, Jataka Tales, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, which instill values like honesty, compassion, courage, and wisdom in one's children. These days, children's literature is deemed as promoting gender equality and cultural diversity, raising awareness of environmental issues and of social responsibility, to the needs of contemporary children and readers.

The literature also reveals that there are different problems that are seen in Indian children's literature, such as competition of digital media with print media, commercialization of children's literature,

EVOLUTION, THEMES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WORKS OF SUDHA MURTY

globalization of children's literature, reduced reading habit among children, and lack of India's linguistic and cultural diversity. In these challenges, authors must maintain the balance between entertainment and educational and cultural objectives.

The book can be regarded as an identification of Sudha Murty as one of the leading contemporary writers of Indian Children's literature. She successfully integrates the traditional Indian values and modern concerns into her stories with simple narration, relatable characters, and words. Her literary works embody moral and ethical values, cultural awareness, an empathetic approach, family relationships, gender equality, and environmental awareness without being overly prescriptive.

The character analysis also reveals the good presentation of strong female characters endowed with healthy intergenerational relations that promote emotional development, independent thinking, and culture in children. In her stories, she not only celebrates the storytelling culture of India through her grandparents, parents, and child protagonists but also its contemporary experiences as well.

The study, on an overall basis, concludes that Sudha Murty's children's books are an important contribution to contemporary Indian children's literature as she successfully blended the cultural heritage, ethical element, and contemporary social values in her children's books. Her work shows that children's books can be fun, informative, uplifting, and educate young readers to become responsible, sensitive, and culturally conscious citizens.

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