

REALISM IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SUDHA MURTHY

*Afrin Bankalagi. G. P. Porwal Arts, Commerce, V. V. Salimath Science College, Sindagi.

Abstract

This paper attempts to study how **Sudha Murthy in her works portrays literary realism** and represents reality by portraying mundane, everyday experiences as they are in real life. When trying to understand realism in literature, just think of the word real. Rather than applying filters or fantasy to your fictional world, realism is based on "real" everyday life. So, realism in literature is like that photo you take before adding all your Snapchat filters. In realism, you'll find characters with genuine jobs and problems. Realism finds its roots in the early nineteenth century. The genre was a response to romanticism. Realist artists and writers wanted to get back to observations of society rather than creating exotic romantic works that are out of touch with the real world. One of the most famous early literary works showing realism in literature was *The Human Comedy* by Honore de Balzac. Realism was stimulated by several intellectual developments in the first half of the 19th century. Among these were the anti-Romantic movement in Germany, with its emphasis on the common man as an artistic subject; Auguste Comte's Positivist philosophy, in which sociology's importance as the scientific study of society was emphasized; the rise of professional journalism, with its accurate and dispassionate recording of current events. Sudha Murthy is an Indian engineering teacher and chairperson of Infosys Foundation. She writes in English, Kannada and Marathi languages book. She got the Padma Shri award. She married the co-founder of Infosys Narayana Murthy. Sudha Murthy mainly writes about tradition and mythology. She educated in Karnataka computer science and engineering.

In real-life stories written by Sudha Murthy, A prolific author and philanthropist, Sudha Murthy is quite content at often being addressed as "Mrs. Narayana Murthy", as she presides over the Rs 400 crore Infosys Foundation that works among the less privileged sections of society and practices what she preaches -- that "money alone does not bring satisfaction" and that "satisfaction comes from the heart". She helps others in many ways. She loves travelling and watching movies. Sudha Murthy mostly writes about tradition and mythology. She works hard to full fill her husband wishes. Sudha Murthy father supports in all ways to go forward. He accepted her daughter to learn when they are no girls in college. She studied computer science and technology in Karnataka. She travels a lot at the weekend. At the end of the chapter or part, she researches that alcohol people suffer and the troubles they are facing and understands how to overcome the problem. She is very inspirational to many women in the world.

Key words: Realism, Identity, Imagery, Rationality and Progress, Sudha Murthy

Introduction

Broadly defined as "the representation of reality", [2] realism in the arts is the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic conventions, as well as implausible, exotic and supernatural elements. Realism has been prevalent in the arts at many periods, and is in large part a matter of technique and training, and the avoidance of stylization. In the visual arts, illusionistic realism is the accurate depiction of life forms, perspective, and the details of light and colour. Realist works of art may emphasize the ugly or sordid, such as works of social realism, regionalism, or kitchen sink realism. [3][4]

Sudha Murthy, for the umpteenth time, was celebrated when she gave her two cents to women who gently belittled her by ordering her to stand in the economy class queue at the Heathrow International Airport a few months ago. Going by the unbelievably harebrained, albeit widely accepted definitions of class here in India, it was natural for the two women, gilded with pearl necklaces and expensive handbags, to think of the otherwise plainly-dressed Murthy as someone who could not have simply afforded a business class seat. That the "cattle-class" people could be called so because the "non-cattle" class took the ownership of associating their clothes with the lack of buying power remains tenacious till date. So do the norms and attitudes that perpetuate such biases. And it is Murthy, who draws power and character from innumerable encounters like these, and documents a graceful, warm-hearted account of them in her new book *Three Thousand Stitches*. The book is much like its title, and knits a thread of events that helped Murthy become what she is today. The result is a gratifying texture that is both grand, and slightly gruff, in parts. Murthy's stories cover a myriad of strong and poignant themes, ranging from alcoholism (*I can't, We can*), to establishing stronger gender roles (*How to Beat the Boys*). In some stories, she touches upon conservatism and discrimination by chronicling her own journey of beating the odds (here, the society). She is allowed to study in a boys' dominated college on the condition that she wore a saree to college everyday so as to avoid prying eyes. And she happily obliges. In the bygone days of 1960s, that was still a small price to pay for something deemed as insignificant as educating a girl. At times, boys would throw paper airplanes at Murthy's back with messages like, "A woman's place in the kitchen is in the kitchen or as a professor, but definitely not in an engineering college." But it always took an abundance of courage and self-restraint on Murthy's part to not retort or give up. The one with her gynecologist father's first delivery, and how it changed the patient's life read like a Bollywood script of the 80's, and yet it had the zest to land on the reader's heart with a feel-good warmth. Like most of the stories, this too primarily dealt with grit and inspiration, only that it wasn't articulated sublimely enough. Having said that, Murthy's writing is without frills and feels wry and lacking in emotions. For most of the part, Murthy refrains from beating about the bush and is blatantly to the point, which more often than not ends up making the read more of a trudge along. The reader would have appreciated a little more depth to the anecdotes, which otherwise, read more like strictly-voiced out instructions with a premeditated lesson in the end. Book titled *How the Onion Got Its Layers*, the story is not of the vegetable or the tears that accompany it. An ode to weavers who spin tales, and otherwise. The book is set in Bangalore, Karnataka in India. 12-year-old Nooni is an adventurous kid but when her parents get caught up with work all summer, she has to stay at her grandparents' place. She is surprised by the pace of life there as her grandma is a person who is very enthusiastic. For example, she always cooks meals for the whole village even though there are only 3 people living in her house. But soon, she gets used to it by engaging herself in helping her grandmother with household chores and a flurry of activities. She learns how to ride a bike, organize picnics, and much more with the help of her new-found friends. When one day, they stumble upon something

historic. She starts digging, understanding myths from the people older than her when she thought she finally knew what it was, she went to the archaeological society to help her uncover the ancient structure.

Yet, *Three Thousand Stitches* is packaged into a clean little read that can be easily completed in one short sitting. What works for *Three Thousand Stitches* is that it has stories helmed by real people; it is always interesting to know things that happened to people that made them fierce and unrelenting. It's even more interesting if one is able to soak in the lessons and learn. Some stories are interesting just because they throw in an occasional dose of knowledge. Like, did you know there is a Mallika Shake, named after Mallika Sherawat in West Hollywood, and is a mix of blueberries, balckberries, rasberries and strawberries? And that there are statues and posters of Yash Chopra, Shahrukh Khan, and Kajol in the unknown corners of the world? There are. There are tiny scraps of information to chew on in every story, sprinkled with some humor here and there.

Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze Sudha Murthy's works viewed under realism, literary realism, brings an era of literary technique in which authors described things as they are without embellishment or fantastical plots. Works of literary realism shun flowery language, exotic settings and characters, and epic stories of love and heroism.

Sudha Murthy Books

She has written a collection of semi-autobiographical stories, "*How I taught my grandmother to read*". It is an alluring collection of stories that recount some fun and engaging real-life incidents from the life of Sudha Murthy. The stories inspire readers to believe in what's right and to go the extra mile to realize their dreams. In the stories like "*Salaam Abdul Kalam*" and "*Appro J.R.D*", she talks of two eminent personalities, Abdul Kalam and JRD Tata. They enjoyed the greatest heights in their professional life but never shied from extending support and befriending common people.

She recounts an incident when her husband, Narayan Murthy was late to pick her from the office and J.R.D. Tata waited with her till Narayan came and cautioned him to come on time. Kalam is a well-known person and Murthy portrays him as a person who was like a friend to her. This sheds new light on his life and his character.

Few notable works of Sudha Murthy

- Wise And Otherwise
- Gently Falls the Bakula
- Mahashweta
- Dollar Bahu
- House of Cards
- Three Thousand Stitches
- The Mother I Never Knew

Realism in Sudha Murthy books:

Her stories are full of moral accounts that are a treat for young children reading them. In her collection of story titled "*The bird with golden wings*", she tried to leave an impression on the readers that more greed can always lead to an abrupt end to one's ambitions and one's life too. In the title story, she talks of a golden bird that is fed by a young girl and fulfills her wishes but as soon as her greedy mother approaches her, the bird gifts her snake and never comes back. An interesting story is "*How the sea becomes salty*" which has been perhaps picked from the legends. A greedy couple uses the magical fan to prove to the ship captain that they are salt merchants, turn the sea salty as they don't know how to stop the fan from giving more salt.

Her stories are equally funny and will leave you with a wide grin on your face realizing that the stories weaved funny elements in such an effortless manner. My favourite is "*The king with donkey's ear*". The secret that the king has donkey's ears is well kept by the king's parents and his barber. But when the barber's son witnesses the secret, he is not able to keep it to himself and runs into the land and buries his head deep in the mud and screams "The king has donkey ears" and relieves himself. The mud had some seeds planted in it which grew into a tree and were used to make drums for the king's court. The drums spill out the secret every time they are hit and that's how the entire kingdom comes to know of the king's ears.

Sudha Murthy's notable books for young adults:

- How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories
- Grandma's Bag Of Stories
- The Magic of the Lost Temple
- The Serpent's Revenge: Unusual Tales from the Mahabharata
- The Bird with Golden Wings: Stories of Wit and Magic
- The Man from the Egg: Unusual Tales about the Trinity
- The Daughter from a Wishing Tree
- The Gopi Diaries
- How the Sea Became Salty

Real and Mystical elements in her Books

The stories of Sudha Murthy also consist of mystical elements that eventually become a cause of concern for the characters. Either by granting boons or cautioning them from getting into excess, but the characters always land in trouble.

In the story, "*Sulakshini and the lake demon*", the girl finds a spring of water when her village mates are finding it difficult to meet the needs of water. The Lake demon warns her that if she tells about this to anybody in the village, she will be taken up in the stream by the demon. She fears death. Somebody will have to die, either her or her village mates. How she tackles the demon is worth reading.

Her book, *“The magic of lost temple”* narrates the story of Noorie, a young girl on a vacation to her grandparent’s home. The story makes you feel nostalgic about the way we used to visit the home of our grandparents on our vacation and what a relief it used to be! It gave us a long break from rushing to school and other places in cities. She also discovers an ancient step well in the village which adds extra glamour to the story.

Being an adult when I read Sudha Murthy’s books, it seemed a bit preachy and unrealistic but when I read them with a child’s heart, I realized how special they were. Written in simple language, talking of simple things, and showing the magic, her stories were an absolute delight to read.

Grandparents' Bag of Stories' by Sudha Murthy is a follow up to her popular Grandma's Bag of Stories. It's a delightful collection of stories that will not only entertain children stuck at home during the pandemic, but will also be relatable for them.

Published during the 2017, this tome contains relatable tales from the pandemic. The children in the tales stitch facemasks, help out with the cleaning, cooking and other chores of the house and even assist their family in helping those in need. In between the daily chores, they hear fascinating tales about kings and thieves, Gods and Goddesses, beanstalks and strange kingdoms from their grandparents. Grandma’s Bag of Stories is a beautiful collection of interesting stories to share with kids from the pen of very popular author Mrs. Sudha Murthy. The book will take you through the memory lane of your childhood days spent at your grandparent’s home. Sudha Murthy’s Grandma’s Bag of Stories is simply wonderful and full of engaging stories of monkeys and mice, kings and cheats, scorpions and hidden treasures and princesses and onions.

The book starts with the grandmother Ajji waiting for her grandkids Raghu and Meenu to arrive for summer vacations. The other pair of sibling Anand and Krishna had already arrived. The craziness and fondness of the kids for their Ajji is what is narrated in the first chapter of the book. How the kids loved to listen to Ajji’s funny and wonderful stories.

The conversation between Ajji and her grandchildren is interesting and engaging. It lets us dig into the kind of bondings and inspiration grandparents can have on today’s younger generation.

The book takes you on a journey from a real world to the world of fantasies and fiction. The children in the story learn about the village life, farmers, birds, and animals while walking in the paddy fields with their grandfather. On the other hand, they learn about the moral values, culture and different virtues of life from the stories narrated to them by their loving and affectionate grandmother.

After narrating every story the grandmother discusses it with the kids in the first few stories. And this is the part which brings the crux of every story they listened. The visualizations the kids went to and the lessons they learned are all discussed at last which further increases the curiosity of the reader to read all the stories covered in the book. Though we miss this discussion in the later part of the book, yet the stories keep us excited and interested enough to read. Ajji’s stories are based on the values of courage, intelligence, foresight, and kindness.

For the simple reason that children should never be given direct sermon. It DOESNOT work. It should rather be in the form of a suitable story, by means of examples. When you read/tell your child a suitable story, he tends to fit himself into the plot. Its then that he can clearly identify where he is going wrong. He gets the larger picture and develops a perspective. He is then more willing to come around to your viewpoint or listen to you. Children are very impressionable.

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But then the story also needs to be interesting. That's equally important. Ever realized how quickly your kid gets done when you hand over the "Moral Stories" book. Mrs. Murthy believes that story telling is an art and the reader should never know where reality has stopped and imagination has begun.

Not to forget the biggest reason, stories are the greatest medium for attaining knowledge. Now I am going to write a little bit about the book. 7yrs to 100+ ! You can read along with the 5-6yrs age group. It's easy to follow.

As the name suggests, stories in this book are from Mahabharata but an extension of those that you would see on TV or read in regular mythological books. These are based on Mrs. Murthy's sharp observation of unusual facts and deep understating of Indian Myths and History, rarely depicted in any other book for this age group. This book contains 25 short stories. So there are a number of stories that happened before the Mahabharata era but they have relevance as they help understand certain characters or incidences better from the saga. There is a dedicated section on Lord Krishna where he is not shown as the supreme almighty but as an outstanding strategist hence making it more relatable. Towards the end, there is a story on Pandavas and reason or their death.

Conclusion

Realism is a literary technique and movement that revolutionized literature. Literary realism creates the appearance of life as it is actually experienced, with characters that speak everyday language and are representative of everyday life as a reader would understand it. Reading a book penned by Smt. Sudha Murthy is always an interesting experience. She writes about incidents that happened in her life, people she met and mostly shares her knowledge in a way that the reader can be inspired by it and eventually contribute in making the society even better. Her stories reflect the real people and that makes it easy for the readers to connect with them.

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