



# Life Style and Humanity in Sudha Murthy's Wise and Otherwise – a Salute to Life

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose the present paper is to focus on the literary work of a well-known Indian woman writer, Dr, Sudha Murthy with special emphasis on 'Wise and Otherwise – A Salute to Life'. Sudha Murthy is the auther of several novels, three collections of short stories, four technical books and three travelogues. She is more popular as a trustee and Chairperson of Infosys Foundation through which she does her charity work and works hard for the betterment of less fortunate people by providing financial help to support their education, food and clothing. Today she is a well-known Indian woman writer writing in English and has been awarded R.K. Narayan's Award in Literature and Padmashri in 2006. The present paper focuses on 'Wise and Otherwise' that narrates her wonderful experiences and incidents of life that have a strong impact on our society. The book contains 51 chapters that deal with cultural aspects, family relationship, social attitudes economical situation and feminist problems. These stories of Sudha Murthy are the lessons of life in which she emphasises the need for compassion and humanity. Her stories particularly depict the neglected interior parts of India where there is the need of immediate help. All the stories in the book teach us the lessons of honesty, hard work, giving back to the society. This book itself is a strong message of humanity that is the most essential for the mankind to survive in this incredible life. The subtitle of this book-it is a salute to life in its true sense.

**Keywords:** Honesty, humanity, moral values, message, hardwork

## I. INTRODUCTION

With its prime aim of giving 'Sublime and Pure Joy' literature plays a vital role in the sustainable development of a nation as well as the world. The majority of literature performs many social functions that can have a vast impact on the society. That's why it is properly said that 'Literature is the part of the fabric of society' and also 'it is the significant component of the culture of society'. In this sense Sudha Murthy's writing is one of the milestones in Indian literatre. Born in Karnataka with teacher's blood in her vein, later married to Narayan Murthy, started the Infosys Foundation. It is a non-profit organization that supports the programmes in the fields of healthcare, rural development, education and art. An M.Tech in Computer Science, technologist and also philanthroost, Sudha Murthy began writing in the later years of Life, in which she has documented her various experiences Sudha Murthy's 'Wise and Otherwise – 'A Salute to Life' is purely based on her experiences and minute observation. Her pen is so highly emotional that most of her stories are read with tearful eyes. It is also noteworthy that the characters in her stories belong to the neglected community and yet very honest and

'too full of milk of human kindness' who teach many more lessons of morality, hospitality and humanity. So it creates a strong impact on the readers and has good contribution in the present English Literature.

'Wise and Otherwise' of Sudha Murthy covers wide length and breadth of India. The present paper focuses on the four stories. The very opening story 'Honesty comes from the Heart' narrates the honesty of a college going student 'Hanumanthappa' who stands merit in S.S.C. exam. Being attracted by the bright and sparkling eyes of Hanumanthappa, Sudha Murthy decides to help him financially in his further education as his father is a Coolie. So she sends Rs. 1800 to cover his expenses for six months. But with her great surprise, one morning she gets envelope along the letter of Hanumanthappa which he writes that as he didn't stay in the hostel for two months his expenditure was less than Rs. 300 per month. Therefore he sends the unspent money to Sudha Murthy. Despite being poor, he returns it very honestly. Sudha Murthy is taken back by such poverty and yet such honesty of Hanumanthappa. This experience of Sudha Murthy is unbelievable but true. Experience has taught Sudha Murthy that honesty is not the mark of any particular, it is also not related to education or wealth. It cannot be taught at any university. In most people, it springs naturally from the heart.

'In Sahyadri Hills, A Lesson in Humility' is also such a pleasant and wonderful experience of Sudha Murthy. In her visit to tribal village school deep in the forest of Sahyadri Hills, with the purpose to improve the school, Sudha Murthy meets the Thandappa, more than ninety years old man, the head of the tribe. In the second visit when Sudha Murthy goes there with her gifts of umbrellas and clothes for school children, the Thandappa teaches her tribal culture and offers her a bottle of wild red fruit juice. In Sahyadri forest, an old man, a tribal with no schooling practiced a highly principled philosophy of life – give when you take; do not take without giving. So she smiled and gracefully accepted his gift. The Thandappa rises even further in her esteem when she remembers his remark 'There is a grace in accepting also.'

'Salaam Namest' is another story that itself is a lesson of honesty and humanity. Sudha Murthy narrates the story of Mohammed Sheikh who has a tiny shop of books and stationary from whom she buys books for Bangalore slum schools. She comes to know from Sheikh that his widow sister and niece both stay with his family and she is suffering from cancer, and he needs the money desperately for her operation. Knowing him very well, Sudha Murthy, offers him a cheque of fifty thousand rupees. Operation is done well but for a long time she does hear anything from her. One day she goes to the shop and comes to know that Zubeida passed away a fortnight back. In spite of her help Zubeida does not survive. Sheikh introduces her to his niece Tabassum. She says in clear voice 'Madam, Ammi ka Salaam, Sheikh wipes his tears and gives an envelope to Sudha Murthy in which there are three thousand rupees that remains from the given amount. He also says to her that while dying Zubeida made a promise to meet Sudha Murthy and give her Salaam. She also promised her brother to return the amount to be given to another sick person. Sudha Murthy is stunned and speechless at this time. Even after death Zubeida has passed on her positive attitude to her child. Our earth is enriched by people like Zubeida.

Salaam Namaste brings tears in the eyes when Sudha Murthy talks of Zubeida, who tells her brother to return the unspent money allotted for her cancer.

'Think Positive Be Happy' comments on the people's attitude to look at life. A cook of Sudha Murthy's mother Girija never speaks about her personal life and always cheerful. She looks smart, contented often hums a song while working. She lives happily though her husband and son abandon her. On the other hand Vasant the family friend is an executive with multinational company yet he is always complaining about something or the other. So each visit of Vasant makes an atmosphere gloomy, Sudha Murthy thinks of both persons that Vasant makes his life miserable by thinking about what he does not have, while Girija, an uneducated woman learns to

see the positive side of every difficulty and to enjoy life. Such stories inspire and teach lessons of humanity. Besides the positive side of life, some stories such as – A Bond Betrayed on Rakhi Day, Stove Bursts or Dowry Deaths?, Not All's Wrong with the Next Generation, Life is a Examination narrate the seamy side of life. 'My money, Your Money' comments on the negative attitude of people. In such stories Sudha Murthy finds complete absence of love, declining values of family system which place a lot of questions about the present family system that is turning failure unfortunately. Even many stories throw light on social evils like literacy, dowry deaths, ill treatment of women poverty, and forced Devdasi. The story of a man who leaves his own father in an old age home claiming that he is a homeless man who needs help and comes to claim money when he dies makes us restless and comments on the selfish relations.

## II. CONCLUSION

All the stories in 'Wise and Otherwise' reflect the positive and seamy side of life and different attitudes to at the life. In the words of Sudha Murthy 'Let's think positively' and pick up only good from her experiences. This book is in the form of lessons of life, that preach the gospels of honesty and humanity. Sudha Murthy is doing a job of giving back to society following the advice given by JRD Tata. While leaving Telco Sudha Murthy was not sure about the success of their company Infosys. There upon JRD Tata advised "Never start with diffidence. Always start with confidence. When you are successful you must give back to society. Society gives us so much; we must reciprocate. I wish you all the best" In JRD Tata Sudha Murthy saw her role model for his simplicity, his generosity, kindness and the care he took of his employees. Even today Sudha Murthy follows the advice of JRD Tata that is giving back to the society. Her giving back to the society through Infosys Foundation has given her pleasant and wonderful experience that result in the touching writings of the stories that pose the book on the highest peak of literary standards. Based on the experiences of Sudha Murthy 'Wise and Otherwise' is a salute to life in the real sense and works as a guide lamp in such a selfish, miserable, corrupted, wretched and incredible life of today.

## III. REFERENCES

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