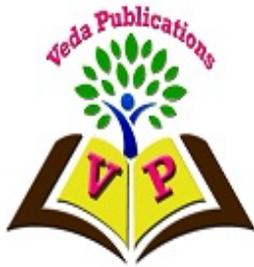




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**TEACHING MORAL VALUES THROUGH ANIMALS IN “GRANDMA’S BAG OF STORIES” BY SUDHA MURTHY**Jyoti Sisodiya^{1*}, Dr. Prachi Atreya²^{1*}Research Scholar, Department of English, Tantiya University, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan.²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tantiya University, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan.Email- sisodiyajyotsna@gmail.comDoi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2026.13105>**ABSTRACT****Article history:**

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Children’s literature functions as an important medium for developing ethical awareness and emotional sensitivity in young readers. One of the most appealing narrative techniques used in children literature is portrayal of animals as moral tools. This paper analyses the use of animal characters in Sudha Murthy’s “Grandma’s Bag of Stories” to understand how moral values are imparted through nonhuman narratives. Murthy uses Indian story telling method to present animals as moral instruments who personifies moral values such as honesty, truth, gratitude, patience, wisdom. Using qualitative textual analysis of selected stories, the paper discusses how animal characters can simplify the complex ethical ideas and make them comprehensible without preaching. This study shows that Murthy’s animal narratives effectively mingle moral values and entertainment that helps young readers to subtly imbibe complex moral ideas. The study highlights the continued relevance of animal-based storytelling in contemporary children’s literature as a meaningful tool for moral education.

Keywords: *Children’s Literature, Moral Values, Animal Narratives, Sudha Murthy, Nonhuman Narratives.*



INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has been an old and pedagogical practice that moulds child's brain emotionally and morally. Storytelling helps children enhance their imaginative power and listening skills in a subtle and effective manner, while also enabling them to learn difficult life lessons in an entertaining and relatable way. Significance of storytelling for children to develop moral understanding is stated persuasively by **Parinitha. B** "Stories play a significant role in the mental growth and character-building of children. Storybooks are a wonderful source of inspiration and lay a strong foundation for their future life. Reading storybooks helps children to increase their confidence, handle emotions, and cope up with problems. It also develops their imagination power, language skills, and learning." (Prinitha B., 2022)

Through these indirect moral instruction children learn to distinguish between right and wrong by observing characters, their actions and repercussions. One of the most sustained narrative techniques is the use of animals as a central character. Animal characters provide authors a symbolic and relatable way to depict human traits and moral issues.

Animals provide a secure creative environment where moral teachings can be explored without judgment since they exist outside of human social hierarchies (Bettelheim, 1976).

Sudha Murthy exemplifies this narrative tradition in her "Grandma's Bag Of Stories". The text is comprised of short stories narrated by a grandmother to her grandchildren, which resonates the cultural practice of storytelling within Indian families. Many of these stories feature animals

whose behavior reflects moral values and ethical decisions. This paper examines how animal characters in "Grandma's Bag of Stories" function as nonhuman moral teachers and how these narratives contribute to children's moral education.

STORYTELLING AND ANIMAL NARRATIVES AS TOOLS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

"Children's Literature helps students to develop their imaginary skills at the same time it helps them to build their personality. Stories assist the child to learn about his culture and tradition. By reading stories children develop creativity because stories act as stimulatory labs and nourish their abilities. These stories dealt with challenges and solutions, and humorous instances and accounts of fictions and real life."(Singhla, 2023)

From a long time children's literature has been considered as an impactful and persuasive way for moral education. Stories like fables, folktales, and myths have long used storytelling to teach ethical lessons in a gentle and memorable way.

According to Husni Rahim and Maila Dinia Husni Rahiem, children need to learn about reasons and children's stories might be one of effective ways to introduce values to young children and create space for children to exercise their reasoning. Through examples in the stories they are able to reflect on their lives. (Rahim & Rahiem, 2012) Stories enable young readers to emotionally connect with characters and understand the consequences of moral and immoral behavior. Within this storytelling tradition, animals emerged as powerful narrative tools for communicating moral values.



Animals were effective narrative devices for conveying moral principles within this storytelling style. Animals have long been used in literature to represent the virtues and vices of people. Animal characters frequently serve as gentle moral instructors in children's literature, demonstrating good and evil by their deeds rather than their words. This narrative technique dates back to well-known books like "Aesop's Fables" and the "Panchatantra," where moral lessons are conveyed through animals in a simple, captivating, and memorable manner.

In "Grandma's Bag of Stories", animals are more than simple story figures; they take part in the action in meaningful ways. By making choices and dealing with the results of those choices, these animal characters show ethical behavior and help children learn moral lessons naturally through the flow of the story.

ANIMAL NARRATIVES IN "GRANDMA'S BAG OF STORIES"

About author's narrative style Dr. Seema Banta says that "Sudha Murthy's stories relate with such old myths, legends and folktales indigenous to Indian culture and traditions. The ancestral and traditional stories passed on from generation to generation and voiced by grandparents to their grandchildren is a great means of creating a bond in the family and directs children to possess or demonstrate moral virtues towards others. By narrating her stories with the use of age old myths, legends and fables Sudha Murthy intends to create stories that are thought provoking, entertaining and also teach interesting life lessons." (Banta, 2022)

Sudha Murthy's "Grandma's Bag Of Stories" is a popular children book that takes inspiration from Indian storytelling tradition. She writes in her author's note about her grandmother Krishnaa who used to tell her stories to teach values of life and how she herself realized the value of storytelling when she became a grandmother. She also talks about the motive of her book that is to teach children and their parents the value of relationship between three generations and to highlight the bond of love with one another and the older generations in family. (Murthy, 2012) The stories are narrated through the voice of a grandmother; the collection presents simple and relatable stories drawn from everyday life, folklore and imagination. She uses familiar settings and characters including animals, myth and magic to gently introduce moral and cultural values to young minds.

Stories in Sudha Murthy's work are a fine blending of Indian cultural values and folklore with a mythic undertone. Murthy presents animal in familiar settings where they confront moral challenges similar to those faced by humans in everyday life. Through these challenges children are made familiar with complex moral conflicts in a relatable and entertaining manner.

The present study focuses on selected stories from "Grandma's Bag of Stories" in which animal characters are used prominently and visibly to convey moral and cultural values to young readers.

In the story 'The Enchanted Scorpion' Sudha Murthy gently and effectively conveys ethical principles through illustrations of animals. Here a sealed box which is full of scorpions becomes a powerful symbol of honesty and trust. Siddharth who is the



protagonist in the story finds out that the box contains ancestral treasure intended only for Uday's true heir and decides to keep it safe for years rather than claiming it for him. These enchanted scorpions only reveal their actual form when the legitimate successor shows up, subtly symbolizes patience and moral restraint. Murthy depicts significance of honesty and selflessness in this simple yet impactful story. This story provides moral insight to young readers through using animals metaphorically instead of explicit preaching.

In the story "What's In It For Me?" Sudha Murthy thoughtfully uses the animal character of Mushika the mouse to help children understand the repercussions of selfish behavior. Mushika is intelligent and enterprising, yet he helps others only when there is something to gain in return. As his selfish behavior grows, his sense of pride also increases, leading him to make unreasonable and foolish demands. Eventually due to this moral shortcoming Mushika faces humiliation, loss and defeat. Through Mushika's degeneration, readers learn that if you always find yourself interest in helping others it can lead to negative outcomes. She presents this moral lesson very gently with the instrument of a little mouse. The story inspires children to practice kindness and generosity, showing that true happiness lies in helping others without expecting rewards.

As Ramita Kher says- "What's in for Me?" talks that the joy of helping someone itself is a reward. If we come forward to help others, it should not be supported with materialistic returns. This short story is about a cunning rat Mushika that comes forward to help others on a condition to get something in

return. Mushika helps a potter, milkman and a groom and in return demands a pumpkin, cow and a bride. The bride turns out to be smart and teaches the little rat a lesson for a lifetime" (Kher R., 2021)

In "Payasam For A Bear" Sudha Murthy uses the figure of a bear to teach children the consequences of greed and dishonesty. The couple Mohan and Basanti, after being tempted by the taste of payasam, breaks their promise to the bear and try to deceive him with a fake dish. The bear becomes a symbol of innocent trust who works really hard to help the couple. On the other hand the humans represent selfishness and dishonesty. When the innocent bear discovers the deception his anger leads to the complete destruction of Mohan's house. Through this animal character children learn that the bear's reaction follows a Tit For Tat response to the human's fraud. The story firmly teaches the importance of keeping one's word and honesty. It also teaches that trust once broken can lead to irreversible loss.

The trusting bear, who has worked hard to help them, becomes a symbol of innocent faith, while the humans represent selfishness and moral weakness. When the bear discovers the deceit, his anger leads to the complete destruction of Mohan's home and crops. Through this animal character, children clearly learn that greed and broken promises invite serious consequences. The story gently but firmly teaches young readers the importance of honesty, gratitude, and keeping one's word, showing that trust, once betrayed, can lead to irreversible loss.



CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed how animal narratives work as an effective medium of moral education in "Grandma's Bag of Stories" by Sudha Murthy. Through a close reading of selected stories, the paper highlights that in Sudha Murthy's work animals are not mere decorative elements but serve as meaningful nonhuman moral teachers. These nonhuman elements guide young readers toward ethical understanding very implicitly. By making animals central to the stories, Murthy presents values such as honesty, selflessness, patience, gratitude, and responsibility in a simple and engaging way that children can easily understand.

The study indicates that Sudha Murthy has very well carried the old Indian tradition of storytelling, where animals have long been used to symbolize human virtues and vices. Stories such as "The Enchanted Scorpion," "What's In It for Me?" and "Payasam for a Bear" shows how Murthy effectively uses animals to impart moral lessons naturally through showing actions and consequences without being instructive. This indirect way of teaching helps children think, understand, and relate with the characters, resulting moral values to stay with them in a gentle and lasting way.

Additionally, use of animals for moral teaching creates a safe space where children can learn and explore the moral conflicts without judgement and fear. When children observe animals making choices and facing the respective outcomes, they learn to distinguish between right and wrong. It also develops empathy and sensitivity; and fear and mercy at the same time. Through this method learning becomes

more entertaining for children rather than being didactic and complex.

In conclusion, The Grandma's Bag Of Stories ensures the relevance of animal based stories in contemporary children's literature. Sudha Murthy's animal stories connect traditional storytelling with modern moral learning, showing that simple, imaginative, and culturally rooted stories can effectively influence children's understand of right and wrong. The study therefore highlights storytelling, especially through animals, as an effective and lasting way to help children develop moral values.

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