



PHILANTHROPY: STUDY OF SOCIETY THROUGH ANGLE OF KARMA

SUNITA WAHAL

Assistant Professor
BLP Govt. PG College
MHOW, Indore (MP) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The works of Dr Sudha Murty cover a wide canvas of human life, experiences and possibilities. She is a philanthropist herself and advocates this principle through many of her literary works. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the concept of philanthropy, as expressed by the author.

Keywords: *Philanthropy, Karma, Donation, Concept of Sharing, Gratitude, Human values*

INTRODUCTION

Dr Murty defines the word philanthropy in her book, *Here, There and Everywhere*. She says, "Philanthropy is a Greek word where 'philos' means loving and 'anthropos' means man. (Here, There and Everywhere 243). To put it in simple words, it is a practice of helping the poor and needy, especially by imparting money. She has set an example by spreading the message of compassion and brotherhood.

Purpose/Objective:

Is to discuss the concept of philanthropy and how it is dealt with and elaborated in select works of Dr Sudha Murty.

Methodology:



An in-depth study of the fiction, non-fiction, travelogues by Dr Murty. An analysis of select works, such as, Here, There and Everywhere, Wise and Otherwise, etc. Review of web material related to philanthropy subject.

Main Findings:

The works of Dr Murty highlight certain social issues, as well as the concept of philanthropy. It speaks of the philanthropic activities at universal level. An attempt to make this world a better place is the message Incorporated in each example.

Implications:

The literature by Dr Murty not only highlights the ethical and moral elements, it also teaches a lesson of harmony and brotherhood. She has also discussed the theory of Karma and philanthropy in her works to express the philosophy of charity and goodwill among all human beings. “Karma yoga, also called Karma Marga, is one of the three spiritual paths in Hinduism, one based on the “Yoga of action” . . . It teaches that a spiritual seeker should act according to dharma, without being attached to the fruits or personal consequences. Karma yoga, states the Bhagavad Gita, purifies the mind.” (“Karma Yoga”)

Sudha Murty and her husband Mr. N.R. Narayan Murthy can both be labelled as a Karmayogi couple. To quote Narayan Murthy, “I am what we call a ‘Karma yogi’ in Sanskrit. A Karma yogi is somebody who believes in data. I collect a lot of data.”

(“Brainy Quote)

The characters in Sudha Murty’s books emphasize the fact that all flowers make a garden. There is a variety and each has a different approach towards life. The House of Cards fiction is about Mridula, a woman with norms and her husband Dr. Sanjay who is an ambitious person yet not getting his due because of politics in his department. He chose to tread on the right path of honesty. His friend Alex is a worldly wise person and shows him a way to reach his goal. He says, “Along with talent, a strong sense of practicality is essential. There is nothing wrong in earning more money. If you want to help people, keep aside a percentage of your earnings for philanthropy or treat some poor patients for free.” (House of Cards 109).

As a child, the author was unable to comprehend why all the travellers blessed the horegallu (a stone under the tree) beneath the tree, on which they relaxed. There were earthen pots with cool water and the passersby used to share their happiness and sorrow with. Murty’s grandfather who was a retired school teacher. He told her, “Child, a horegallu is essential in any journey. We all carry our burdens according to our situations and capacities. But every once in a while, we need to stop, put down that burden and rest . . . The horegallu gives everyone that opportunity to do so. It helps people regain their strengths. (The Old Man 12)



The feeling of charity and philanthropy is universal as well as ancient. It has been mentioned in Indian scriptures as well as other literatures exceeding the boundaries of nations and time. There is a reference in the book, *The Overstory* (2018) by Richard Powers. It mentions, “The Greeks had a word, Xenia- guest friendship – a command to take care of travelling strangers, to open your door to whoever is out there because anyone passing by, far from home, might be God.

There is a story narrated by Ovid about two immortals who came to Earth in disguise to cleanse the world. Only one old couple Bauas and Philemon let them in. They were rewarded to live on earth as trees after death. So they continued in the form of, “an Oak and a Linden- huge and gracious and intertwined. What we care for, we will grow to resemble. And what we resemble will hold us, when we are us no longer. (Powers Richards, *The Overstory*)

The author knew where the shoe pinched because she had faced inconvenience at engineering college campus, in the year 1968, when she was the only lady among 149 boys. She remembers, “Finally it was lack of ladies’ toilet on campus that made me understand the difficulty faced by many women in India due to the insufficiency or sheer absence of toilets. Eventually, this would lead me to build more than 13,000 toilets in Karnataka alone. (Three Thousand stitches 22)

CONCLUSION:

The concept of philanthropy is introduced by Dr. Murty by means of small anecdotes, sometimes narrations from true life incidents and also first-hand experiences. She constantly reminds the readers that life is the best teacher and learns from it to make this world a better place.

Philanthropy is not all about money, a kind gesture and a bit of understanding also adds to the happiness and solace. In words of Thich Nhat Hanh:

Words can travel thousands of miles.

May my words create mutual understanding and love . . . (How to Connect 47)

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