

INFOSYS SUDHA MURTHY - ONE OF THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMERS of 21st CENTURY INDIA

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 18th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: <i>Sudha Murthy, Infosys, Education, Literature, Sanitation, Rural development, women empowerment, societal issues.</i>	Social transformation refers to the profound and ongoing changes that are shaping, the way we live, we work, and interact with another. Women played multifaceted role, in the journey of social transformation of India, both as agents of change and as beneficiaries. Women are the epitome of strength, love, sacrifice and courage. Earlier, women were seen only as housewives who were projected to cook, clean and take care of their family. Today women attained immense success in every field, and marching side by side with men, in every walk of life and trying to become self-sufficient and financially independent. The pioneers and leading lights of the woman social transformation of ancient indian period are Vishwavara, Ghosha Apala Maitreyi, Gargi etc. Ahalya Bai Holkar, Rani Padmini, Rani Mangammal, Jodha Bai, Noor Jahan, Chand bibi, Keladi Chennamma and others are pioneers and leading lights of the medieval Indian social transformation. Savitribai Phule, Fatima Sheikh, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Durgabai Deshmukh, Medha Patkar, Vandana Shiva, Kiran Bedi, Sudha Murthy, etc. are the pioneers and leading lights of the Indian social transformation of 21st century. These Women have been instrumental in challenging patriarchal norms and leading reforms in the field of education, health, politics and contributing a lot by playing different role in the field of agriculture, trade-commerce, entrepreneurship, and corporate sector also. Sudha Murthy has been a significant force for social transformation in India, primarily through her extensive philanthropic work as a Rajyasabha member, former chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, She is also the mother-in-law of UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Through her impactful literary contributions, addressing key societal issues. Her work has focused in several key areas like Education, Sanitation, Public Hygiene, Rural Development, Disaster Relief, Healthcare, Women Empowerment, Destitute Care etc.

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INTRODUCTION:

The 21st century has witnessed a proliferation of social movements that have reshaped the global socio-political landscape. These movements, fuelled by a many factors. Understanding their causes and consequences requires an examination of the intricate interplay of economic, technological, political, and cultural forces. We can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women. The ongoing transformation of India is linked with the advancement and empowerment of its women. Since time immemorial, women have challenging the traditional norms and contributing a lot by playing different role in all the fields along with men.

Today women attained immense success in every field and playing multifaceted role, in the journey of social transformation of India. They are the epitome of strength, love, sacrifice and courage. Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, Fatima Sheikh, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani, Durgabai Deshmukh, Medha Patkar, Vandana Shiva, Indira Jaising, Kiran Bedi, Sudha Murthy, etc. are the pioneers and leading lights of the Indian social transformation of 21st century. Sudha is multifaceted woman. She is chairman of INFOSYS Company, Member of Rajyasabha, Mother in Law of British Prime – minister, scholar, writer, famous philanthropist, humanist, social reformer etc. Here an attempt is made to know the role played by Infosys Sudha Murthy in the social transformation of 21st C. India.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This study reveals the role of Sudha Murthy, in the 21st Century Social transformation of India through her works.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on secondary sources such as articles, journals, and books written by Sudha Murthy, interview of Sudha murthy, Multimedia information etc.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Sudha Kulkarni was born on August 19, 1950, in Shiggaon, Karnataka. She grew up in a middle-class family. Her father was a surgeon and her mother a school teacher. She got her Bachelor of Engineering degree (B.E.) from KLE Technological University, where she received a gold medal for topping her class. She completed her Master of Engineering degree from Indian Institute of Science (IISc), where she again secured the first rank and was awarded a gold medal.

EARLY CAREER

After seeing a job advertisement from TELCO (now Tata Motors) that stated "Lady Students need not to apply" she wrote a postcard to the company's chairman, J.R.D. Tata, complaining about the gender bias. This led to a special interview, and she was hired immediately, became the first female engineer at India's largest auto manufacturer. She was posted in Pune as a Development Engineer, later posted in Mumbai and Jamshedpur. She also worked with Walchand group of Industries at Pune as Senior Systems Analyst. She also served as a visiting professor. Sudha Murthy married N.R. Narayana Murthy while she was employed as an engineer at TELCO in Pune. The couple has two children Akshata (daughter) and Rohan (son). Akshata married Rishi Sunak, her classmate from Stanford University and former Finance Minister of the UK. Later Rishi Sunak become the Prime

Minister of England.

ROLE IN INFOSYS:

Sudha Murty played a crucial supporting role in the founding of Infosys by giving Rs. 10,000, with her personal savings. Established Infosys Foundation in 1996, and served as its chairperson for many years. Her work in this area is extensive. At present, 3, 30,000 employees working in Infosys.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF LIBRARIES

Sudha Murty's contribution to the field of libraries is extensive, primarily through her philanthropic work with the Infosys Foundation and her personal advocacy for reading and education. She is known as the "library queen" for her efforts.

Establishing Libraries: Through the Infosys Foundation, Sudha Murty has been instrumental in setting up approximately 70,000 libraries in schools, especially in rural areas across India. Her goal was a library for every school to foster a reading habit among children.

Funding and Modernization: She has supported the movement to provide computer and library facilities to all government schools in Karnataka.

Academic Institutions: The Infosys Foundation endowed and inaugurated the Narayan Rao Melgiri Memorial National Law Library at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) in Bengaluru. She also established the Murty Classical Library of India at Harvard University to promote Indian classical literature.

Advocacy for Storytelling: In her role as a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, she has stressed the importance of storytelling and libraries in schools to boost imagination and creativity among students.

Authoring Books: As a prolific author in both English and Kannada, her simple, value-based stories inspire readers of all ages and help inculcate a reading habit, especially among children. Her books, like *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read & Other Stories* and *Grandma's Bag of Stories*, directly connect with the importance of literacy and the joy of reading.

Personal Commitment: Growing up in a small town with limited library access, she cherished a dream of improving library access for all, a vision she turned into reality through her philanthropic efforts. Her work emphasizes the transformative power of education and the critical role libraries play in providing access to knowledge and opportunities.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Sudha Murty has made substantial contributions to rural development through her role as the long-time chairperson of the **Infosys Foundation**. Her work focuses on providing basic necessities and opportunities to underprivileged communities, with a practical, hands-on approach to philanthropy. Murty's efforts in rural development emphasize sustainable community growth, including infrastructure, sanitation, and livelihood projects.

Sanitation: A key focus has been improving public hygiene. Under her guidance, the

Infosys Foundation has constructed over **16,000 public toilets** in rural areas and several hundred in Bengaluru city, addressing a critical public health issue and promoting dignity, especially for women.

Housing and Disaster Relief: She has spearheaded efforts to build around **3,000 homes** for victims of floods and natural calamities in various districts of Karnataka and other states, including Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Infrastructure & Clean Water: The foundation's work in villages includes building roads, providing drainage systems and electricity, and setting up clean water initiatives like bore wells, water purifier-cum-coolers, and solar water heaters.

Women's Empowerment: Murty has initiated various schemes to empower rural women, such as providing sewing machines for vocational training and helping a community of over 3,000 Devadasis leave their traditional roles and establish their own bank to lead a life of dignity.

HEALTHCARE

Murty's contributions to healthcare aim to make medical facilities and treatment accessible to the poor and aged, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Infrastructure and Equipment: She has facilitated the donation of high-tech surgical equipment, CT scan machines, incubators, and air conditioning units to various hospitals across India.

Patient Support: The foundation has provided essential medicines to poor patients suffering from major disorders like cancer, leprosy, heart defects, and mental illnesses.

Hospice and Care Facilities: Initiatives include constructing a *Dharmashala* (rest house) at the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in Bangalore and providing food for leprosy, tuberculosis, HIV-positive, and blind patients in Karnataka.

Partnerships: She is also a member of the public healthcare initiatives of the Gates Foundation and has partnered with organizations like the Annapoorna Trust for child nutrition programs. Through her pragmatic and compassionate leadership, Sudha Murty has made a significant and lasting impact on the lives of millions, driven by the philosophy that true success lies in serving others

DISASTER RELIEF:

Sudha Murty, primarily through her role as the long-time chairperson of the **Infosys Foundation**, has made significant contributions to disaster relief across India by focusing on both immediate aid and long-term rehabilitation. Her work in this field includes:

Immediate Aid: Providing rapid relief and essential supplies during natural calamities such as the tsunami in Tamil Nadu and Andaman, the earthquake in Kutch-Gujarat, and hurricanes and floods in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. This also includes personal involvement in packing relief materials.

Housing and Reconstruction: A major focus has been on permanent rehabilitation. The Infosys Foundation, under her guidance, constructed more than **2,300 houses** in flood-

affected areas across Karnataka (including Belgaum, Gulbarga, Dharwad, Gadag, Bagalkot, Bijapur, and Karwar) and other states.

Funding: She has personally donated and overseen significant financial contributions, such as ₹10 crore for flood relief in Karnataka in 2019 and ₹25 crore for rehabilitation work (including house construction) in the Kodagu district the year prior. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she and her family committed ₹10 crore to the Akshaya Patra Foundation for relief work.

Infrastructure: As part of the long-term recovery efforts, the foundation's broader mission of rural development, which includes building toilets and providing clean water initiatives, helps build more resilient communities. Her approach emphasizes a hands-on, practical, and long-term commitment to helping affected communities regain their financial independence and stability.

LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Sudha Murty is a prolific writer who has made significant **literary contributions through her novels, short stories, children's books, travelogues, and non-fiction pieces**, written in both English and Kannada. Her work is known for its simplicity, warmth, and focus on social issues, human values, and the lives of ordinary people.

Simple Storytelling: Her writing style is simple, direct, and conversational, making her work accessible and relatable to a wide audience, including young readers. This simplicity often carries profound moral messages and life lessons.

Thematic Focus: Recurring themes in her literature include compassion, kindness, human relationships, traditional Indian values, women's empowerment, and the challenges faced by marginalized communities.

Cultural Relevance: Her stories are deeply rooted in the Indian cultural context, often drawing inspiration from her own life experiences and observations during her philanthropic work with the Infosys Foundation.

Mythology and Folklore: She has a particular focus on reimagining Indian mythology and folklore for modern audiences, especially children, through series like the Gopi Diaries and collections like *The Serpent's Revenge* and *The Man from the Egg*.

Adaptations: Several of her books have been adapted into television series and films, such as *Dollar Bahu* by Zee TV and **the Marathi film Pitruroon** based on her story *Runa*.

NOTABLE WORKS

Sudha Murty has authored over 200 titles and 42 books, many of which have been translated into all major Indian languages.

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories: A popular collection of stories for children and adults alike, emphasizing the power of education.

Gently Falls the Bakula: A novel that explores the impact of career ambitions on marital relationships.

Mahashweta: A novel addressing the social stigma associated with vitiligo and the resilience of a woman in the face of discrimination.

Grandma's Bag of Stories: A collection of fables and moral tales aimed at children, often narrated by a wise grandmother figure.

Dollar Bahu: A novel exploring the impact of globalization & materialism on Indian families.

PLICITY AMIDST IMMENSE WEALTH:

Despite her immense wealth and influence, she remains famously grounded, often wearing simple traditional attire and traveling with her own home-cooked food due to being a strict vegetarian. This commitment to simplicity is a personal philosophy she consistently shares in her writings and speeches.

A RELUCTANT ACTRESS:

A lesser-known fact is her foray into acting. A story she wrote, Runa (meaning 'Debt'), was adapted into a Marathi film called Pitruroon, in which she also made her acting debut. She also appeared in a Kannada film, Prarthana.\

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

For her immense contributions to society and literature, received numerous accolades, important among them are: **Padma Shri** in 2006 (India's fourth-highest civilian award).

Padma Bhushan in 2023 (India's third-highest civilian award).

Sahitya Akademi Award in 2023.

R.K. Narayan Award for Literature in 2006.

Global Indian Award in 2023,

'**Millenium Mahila Shiromani**' award in 2013 Etc.,

CONCLUSION.

The ongoing social transformation in modern India is intrinsically linked to the advancement of its women. Women in modern India are active agents of social transformation, not merely passive recipients of change. Their increased participation in all spheres—political, social, and economic—is a key factor in creating a more inclusive and progressive society. Social movements have been a critical force in shaping modern India. They have addressed historical injustices, demanded policy reforms, and raised awareness about various social issues. Sudha Murthy is a motivation for all women in society. Sudha is known for her simplicity and social work. She has personally contributed to programs benefiting war widows, and to the cause of education, sanitation, and arts. She is a great Indian author.