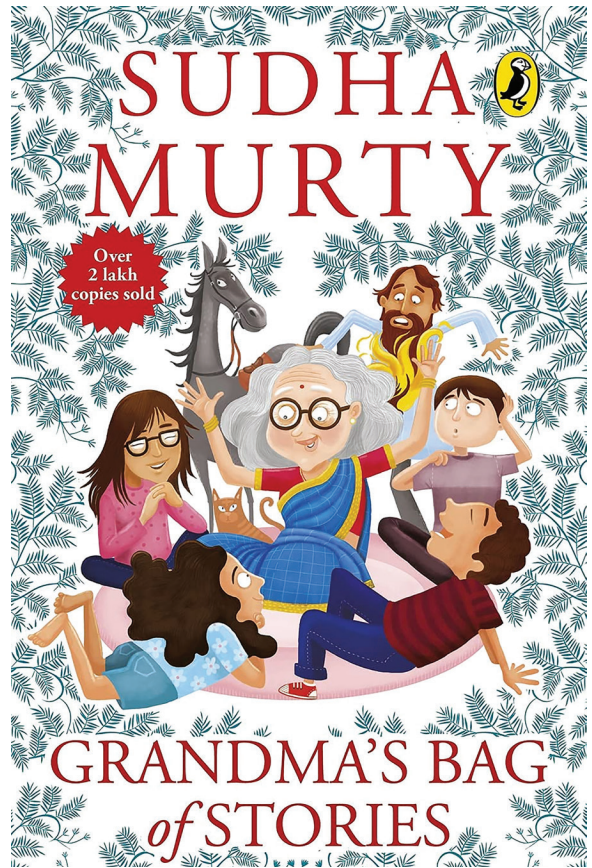


**Grandma's Bag of Stories**

Deeksha Marothia\*

- Author** : Sudha Murthy  
**Illustrator** : Priya Kuriyan  
**Ages** : 6 years and above  
**Price** : ₹ 250  
**Publishers** : Penguin Books Limited  
**Year of Publication** : 2015

Sudha Murthy, a renowned writer in English and Kannada, is an award-winning writer of children's fiction, who has written collections of short stories and four books for children. She is a recipient of the RK Narayan Award for Literature and also won Padma Shri for the same in 2006. Her 'Grandma's Bag of Stories' is a collection of 22 short stories that were originally told to her grandchildren and also takes its inspiration from



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stories told by her grandmother, to her, while growing up. All stories are set in India, reflecting the rich culture and traditions of the country. Set in the backdrop of Shiggon, a sleepy town in North Karnataka, it features a variety of characters from young children like Raghu, Meenu, Anand, and Krishna to grandparents like Ajji and Ajja.

The cover of the book is illustrated by Priya Kuriyan in a variety of colours which makes the book look fascinating and leaves the young readers bewitched. It has elements of magic and adventure attached to it. There are some details that add depth to the character like Grandma Ajji's attire, 'saree', and a 'bindi', giving the Indianness to the character. In between the stories, there are simple yet beautiful black-and-white images which also make the details stand out.

Although the book contains many stories, few out them like, 'Doctor, Doctor' keeps the readers hooked throughout. 'Doctor, Doctor' for instance, is a story about a shopkeeper named Ravi who lives in a small village somewhere near a great desert in India. On a very hot and sunny day, Ravi receives a visitor in the form of a very old man in his shop. The old man is so tired and thirsty that he cannot utter a single word. He somehow opens his mouth to utter the word, 'water'. It is an acute drought, the villagers bring water from a faraway stream, making it extremely precious—every drop of it. Ravi offers water to the old man who, very surprisingly, empties the whole pitcher. Ravi feels dismayed to see this

but still feels a sense of satisfaction as he has helped someone in real need. His kindness to the old, thirsty man turns the ordinary pot into a magical one. Whosoever drinks water from it gets cured of any ailment and deformity. What makes it so special is that it never gets empty. The shopkeeper and his magical pot become very famous even in faraway places in no time. People start coming to him more often to have the precious medicine. This makes him turn greedy and he starts favouring rich patients to earn a few bucks over the poor in need. Ravi's new found wealth also brings with it greed. One day again, the same old man returns but instead of quenching his thirst, Ravi goes to the palace to take care of the queen who was exasperated due to a mosquito bite.

If Ravi's kindness had given the pot magical powers, his greed turns it into an ordinary pot again. But before he could realise this, it was already too late. This makes him regret his choices and decisions, leaving him to live an ordinary life with an ordinary pot like before. This story is a heartwarming tale about the importance of kindness and compassion over monetary benefits. It teaches us that kindness is always rewarded when we help each other in difficult times and by doing so, we are also helping ourselves to become happier and more fulfilled people when we make a difference in the world while greed and selfishness will always lead to pain and suffering.

Another story, "Who was the happiest of them all?" is a story of a king named Amrit like king Akbar and

a minister named Chandan like Birbal in Akbar's court. The story is about king Amrit's desire to see how many people in his kingdom are content and satisfied with what they already have. For this, one fine day, he calls everyone to his kingdom and they are asked to share if they are content or in need of something more. Everyone declares that they are happy but to actually test their happiness, the king gives them all a task to go through his precious garden and pick fruits and flowers they like. Whosoever said earlier that they are happy with what they have, after going inside the garden and finding golden and silver fruits turns greedy and fills their sack with it. But after exiting the garden, they are faced by a stream of water through which the only way is to swim in, in order to cross it and reach the exit of the garden. Feeling sad, many people leave their full sack of fruits and flowers there and reach the king's kingdom. Seeing sad faces, the king asks them the reason. Out of many, only one man confesses that his happiness lay in the fact that the king made them visit his garden and not having a bag full of precious fruits and flowers. Listening to this and his minister Chandan makes him realise that "People's contentment does not end with having enough food or money. They also need to be truly happy inside. Only then will they not be swayed when they gain or lose wealth."

The story gives the lesson that in times of individual achievements and

gaining milestones, the happiness lies in collective joy and well-being. Happiness is subjective and can be found in the simplest and smallest of things. It also highlights that every king needs a clever minister in the kingdom to show them the right path to rule the state smoothly just like how everyone needs someone in their lives to tell them the difference between right and wrong whenever needed.

Last but not least, the story, "What's in it for me" is told by Ajja instead of Ajji to kids. It's about a mouse known as Mushika who likes to get paid for everything he does no matter how big or small. He constantly seeks personal gain in every possible endeavour be it helping someone, or doing a chore his first question is always, "What's in it for me?" As the story progresses, he gets trapped in his plan and realises the true value of selfless actions and contentment which comes from acts of giving without expecting anything in return.

What makes all these stories stand out is the fact that the characters here are relatable and believable. The stories are well written and engaging with the plot which is easy to follow and leaves the reader hooked for more. The book is a must-read as it is not only heartwarming but thought provoking too and also teaches moral life lessons with the help of crisp and adventurous stories. It not only entertains young as well as adult minds but also educates. With blended magic and realism in the stories, it is a valuable addition to anyone's library.