

Philosophy is the 'murti' in Sudha's life

She never aimed to become the chairperson of a firm, yet she heads Infosys Foundation. She never chased glory, yet she's an acclaimed writer. She never desired fame, yet she makes shutterbugs run to capture her gracious smile. This is the persona of **Sudha Murty**, chairperson of Infosys Foundation. Murty's contented smile mirrors the principle of her philosophical life—empowering lives through her compassionate efforts. Murty reveals about her passion for work, writing and movies in an interview with **Shivani Venugopal**. Edited excerpts.

OUR BANGALORE EXCLUSIVE

Your letter to Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company's (TELCO) chairman complaining about the 'men only' gender bias made you the first woman to be hired by TELCO. What was your reaction?

Well, I never wanted a job. I was going to the US to do my PhD. I wanted to know the basis of their discrimination. Post my query, I was called for an interview and got selected. I didn't accept the offer immediately. I came back and told my father about my wish to pursue PhD, and explained to him the reason behind my question—to articulate that a woman is as good as a man in her work and knowledge, which I proved in the interview.

My father was unhappy with my attitude. He expected me to appreciate the amendments being made in the rules supporting gender equality, rather than running to the US. To do justice to my question, my father insisted that I walk the talk and show actual proof.

How did you balance work-life?

I had a great advantage. My parents and I lived in the same vicinity. My children were raised with the support of my parents and sister. Despite the help, I chose to work only during my children's school hours.

Your advice to women on balancing work-life.

Every woman's circumstances and priorities are different; therefore, there's no thumb rule or formula to balance work-life.

By nature, I'm not an ambitious person. This approach spared me from chasing wealth, fame or glory. Achieving targets was never my agenda—that's a weakness as well as strength.

Life has taught me that there are only 10 per cent things in our hands. Therefore, I accept any situation and give my very best in my job—be it writing, teaching, foundation or housewife. I never aimed to become a general manager or a chairperson. There's no human being without worries; and there's no human being who has all the happiness in this world. My life revolves around the axis of a strong philosophy, which has helped me to accept and handle



ups and downs gracefully.

Infosys foundation supports programs in the areas of education, rural development, healthcare, arts and culture, and destitute care. How do you raise funds for these programs?

We don't raise a single rupee. Every year we get Rs230 crore from Infosys.

5. So you have the good fortune of a supportive husband in Narayana Murty?

Of course! I travel a lot and hardly spend time at home and Murty never complained about it.

You've provided Karnataka government schools with computer and library facilities. Do the schools and children make optimum use of these facilities?

Yes. We follow the process of dipstick and inspect the schools where we have set up these facilities. During our assessment if we find any lapse, then the people concerned are held accountable.

Were you the source of inspiration for Rohan?

I come from a very humble teachers' family with immense knowledge and love for books. Rohan too grew up with books. When he was a young, I used to talk to Rohan about India's rich history and took him to historical places. While in Harvard, he attended courses in Indian culture and is well read in Buddhist philosophy.

Impressed by the Loeb Classical Library in Harvard, Rohan desired to evince the greatness of Indian history and literature by setting 'The Murty Classical Library of India'. He established it with his savings. I wanted to encourage Rohan and contribut-



ed five-and-a-half-million dollar towards this library by selling my shares.

You're a prolific writer and have written both in Kannada and English. What made you pen your first notable children's story 'How I Taught My Grandmother to Read'?

I'm writing since the age of nineteen. I've written four books for children, eight novels, four technical books, three travelogues, and four collections of my Infosys Foundation experiences. My first Kannada book is titled 'Atirikte'; first English book is 'Wise and Otherwise', which is based on my experiences with varied people around India.

I spent my initial years at my grandparents' home. Despite not going to school, they led a generous, naive, compassionate and



The numerous awards won by Sudha Murthy over the years

humane life based on philosophy. They didn't receive any honour and were my unsung role models. My grandparents gave me great philosophy in life, which probably no book can give.

And what about Dollar Sose (Dollar daughter-in-law)?

It was written in 1985. I found people's craze and attraction towards dollar very funny.

You've earned numerous awards. Which award is close to your heart?

Students and children enjoying my books is the biggest award. Award is in my work being recognised by people for making a difference in their lives.

What brings smile to Sudha Murty's face?

I have enjoyed every role. Perhaps my smile is the reflection of my contented heart.