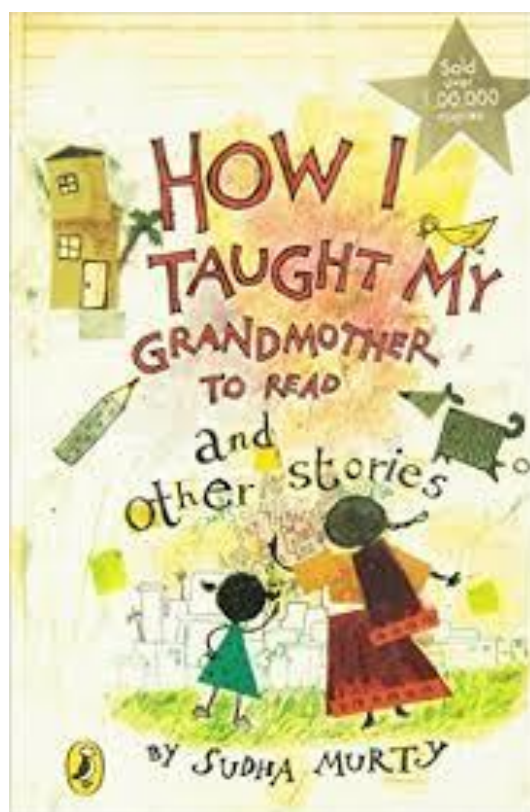


**Teacher-Student Relationship Depicted in Sudha Murty's
*How I Taught My Grandmother To Read And Other Stories***

E. Dhivya, Ph.D. Scholar



Abstract

This article focuses on the teacher-student relationship depicted in Sudha Murty's *How I Taught My Grandmother To Read And Other Stories*. The book presents interesting episodes of how even the ordinary events and the simple teaching-learning we receive in our life may be very significant for our future life. Each story is a slice from the author's life. But Sudha Murty presents these in a manner the readers are able to see how they fit in the pictures she draws. The discussion in the paper focuses on family and non-family relationships, respect and honor to the teachers and our elders, who are endowed with wisdom and on what children and others could do

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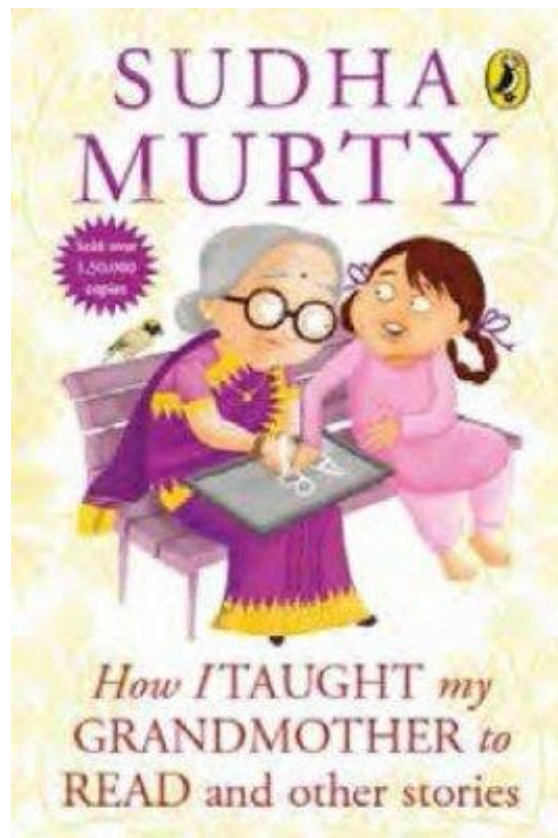
E. Dhivya, Ph.D. Scholar

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to improve our lives. Several stories or narratives presented in the book are discussed and the ideal behind the stories are explained.

Keywords: Sudha Murty, teaching and learning, elders, students and experience and wisdom.

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories



How I taught my grandmother to read and other stories is an interesting collection of short stories. Each story is a slice from the author's life. It is specially written for children and has very important and thought provoking statement lines like "do we tell our children about the sacrifices of the 1857 war of independence" (58). Generous grandmother, religious grandfather, a dutiful daughter, responsible son, successful husband, wise mother, comic cousin, ungrateful classmate and her own good self are highlighted in the story. The influence of some of the characters Sudha Murty met in her real life and the impact of her grandparents and her friends, colleagues are acknowledged in these stories. One of the stories, the red rice granary, is a good story which focuses on how people are let down by the rich, today. It also broadcasts about the achievements of the Infosys foundation and the writer's life of integrity. She writes also about

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the lack of essential subtlety in the characters that children would want to identify themselves with.

Focus on Grandparents

The respect and love for her grandparents is highlighted in many stories of Sudha. One such story is how I taught my grandmother to read and other stories starts with the author's own experience. The story starts with her grandmother eagerly waiting for Sudha to return from her neighbouring village. When she was back once her grandmother was in the verge of tears and she questioned Sudha what was the use of money. Money could do when one could not be independent.

Since the grandmother was unable to read and write, she would wait for her granddaughter Sudha to read the story to her. She requested Sudha to teach the Kannada script. When Sudha expressed her doubt how could she learn at the age of sixty-two, grandmother said, "for a good cause if you are determined you can overcome any obstacle. I will work harder than anybody but I will do it, for learning, there is no age bar" (5). She started to teach her grandmother and to her amazement she learned it very quickly. Sudha says that her grandmother was her first student and it was her first experience in teaching. At that time she did not realize that one day she would become a computer teacher.

Shishya/Disciple/Student Touching the Feet of the Guru/Teacher – Age No Barrier

Sudha bought the novel 'Kashi Yatre' and gifted it to her grandmother for the Dassara Festival. To her surprise her grandmother bent and touched her feet, as a token of respect for the guru. She considered Sudha as her teacher, which had taken her by surprise. But later her grandmother said "I am touching the feet of a teacher, not my granddaughter; a teacher who taught me so well, with so much of affection that I can read any novel confidently in such a short period. Now I am independent. It is my duty to respect a teacher. Is it not written in our scriptures that a teacher should be respected, irrespective of the gender and age?" (5).

Though her grandmother was not an educated person, she knew how to respect her guru. She knew the relation between a guru and a student. Through her grandmother, Sudha experienced the relationship that helped her to understand the importance of relation between student and the teacher.

Grandfather on the Role of Teacher

The role of the teacher is important in the lives of people. “Why should the teacher be respected?” (7) is well imparted to young Sudha by her grandfather. He told her the story of Arjuna, the mighty warrior in Mahabarata. He was asked by his friends why he gave so much of respect to his teacher Dronacharya.

Drona was old, not as rich as Arjuna and never ruled any kingdom. But Arjuna would always sit at his feet respectfully. In this life everything perishes over a period of time. Whether it be diamond, beauty, gold or even land. Only one thing withstands this destruction. It is knowledge. The more you give the more you get. (8)

Sudha’s grandfather told her also about a billionaire, Andrew Carnegie, who spent his money in building the libraries in villages for the welfare of the people of USA.

Sudha as a Teacher: *Hassan’s attendance problem*

The story *Hassan’s attendance problem* describes the author’s own experience as a teacher and her relationship with students. Sudha was teaching post graduate students in a Bangalore college. She had interacted with many students and it was a little impossible to remember all their names. Though in her first batch, there was a boy called Hassan, who was a tall, handsome young man with good memory. Sudha prepared morning first hour classes because students would be fresh and energetic. But Hassan always would be late to class and once in a while he apologetically requested her to pardon him and allow him to write exam. She accepted his request “A good teacher will always wish for the best of her students, though I do agree discipline is very important too” (20). Hassan was a bright student and secured first class in the final examination and passed his courses. Though he got good marks, because of his habit he could not stay in his job and lost his job. Once he came to meet Sudha to sell his software product to her. Even though he studied well, his inability to be punctual cost him his job.

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Without proper discipline it became impossible to apply his learning. His state today is the result of his own habit. She felt bad for him and asked him to try again to improve his standard. Inspired by her words he told her that he would try to do so. As a teacher she took pain to make her students successful in their careers.

A journey through Desert

In the story *A journey through Dessert* Sudha Murty narrates her experience with two young boys whose life changed in different ways by her stories. She used to drive everywhere and the petrol bunk where she fills petrol had a service station. There she met Ram and Gopal. Due to their family circumstances they were working in a petrol bunk and due to meeting so many people they learned to speak four languages. One day she gave them a story book as a gift. They became pale by seeing the book because they did not know how to read and they requested her to narrate the story instead. She could not say no to them and she narrated the story to them. After some time later she met Ram who told her about his successful life and she eagerly asked about Gopal. He told that Gopal was working as a peon. She was pleasantly surprised how her stories changed the life of two youngsters.

A student's life is like the desert, examinations are the hot sun, difficulties are like warm sand and study is like hunger and thirst. As a student you have to travel all alone collecting knowledge and skill the way the boy in the story collected stones. The more you collect the better is the life you lead later (76).

Who is great

In *who is great* story Sudha explains how a problem can be viewed from different angles. Once she told a story in class which led to a debate. "Many a times there is no perfect solution for a given problem. No solution is also a solution. Everything depends upon how you look at it. We make judgments on others depending upon what we think of them" (104). In order to substantiate, she told a story, in which she explains the relationship between a teacher and a student and a father of the student. Rathnapraba who was rich and bright, wanted to give *gurudakshina* to her guru after completing her studies though the guru told her that her father had already paid. Guru decided to test her and put her in a difficult condition asking her to deck up

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with all the jewelry and come to his home all alone in the night. She was willing, her father asked her not to go. But Rathnapraba was adamant and proceeded to meet her guru, while on the way she was stopped by a young thief. She narrated her situation and he let her go on the promise that while coming back she should give all the jewels to him. But secretly the thief followed her to her guru's place. Guru was shocked to see her and blessed her for her courage. When she turned back she saw the thief and asked him to take the jewels as promised. But the thief replied "you are an unusual woman and I do not want anything from you" (107). She was appreciated by her father for her courage and her nature of keeping up words. Sudha finally concluded the story by saying that one should not blame others for their mistake and should think how it affects the person. "There is no person in this story was great. It is the way we look at it. Similarly whenever any problem arises we should view it from different angles. The decisions each of us arrives at will be different. Whenever we blame somebody, for a minute we should enter into that person's mind and try to understand why he did what he did. Only then should we take any decision" (108).

The different aspects in life, importance given to elders and experience, gratitude, unities, work ethics, love for fellow beings everything is discussed in the story collection which enables Sudha Murty to be a distinct writer. Through her narration she has shown the relationship of a student and teacher in several aspects. She explained the importance of guru and students' relation tremendously from her own experience and thus her writing has shown the younger generation how to scale greater heights in life.

Morality may be defined as one's reasoning and actions which pertain to the welfare, rights and fair treatment of persons. Moral values are fundamental to interpersonal interactions and conventions to the smooth operation of society. Sudha Murty's stories deal with culture, human relations, society and various structures of the society. Her writings enrich the readers with moral values. Her stories are heartwarming with humanity and seriousness of purpose.

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E. Dhivya, Ph.D. Scholar
Department of English
PSGR Krishnammal College for Women
Coimbatore 641004
Tamilnadu
India
dhivi.1777@gmail.com.

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