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## **The Contribution of Sudha Murthy in Indian English Literature**

(With a special reference to “How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories”)



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### **ABSRTACT**

The purpose of the paper is to study the evolution of a new woman in Sudha Murthy’s novel- *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*. With the dawn of freedom, particularly India’s national struggle, the position of women took a turn for better. It was strongly realized that so long as women of country were not uplifted or granted equal status with the men in all walks of life - political, social, economic, educational, where India could neither progress nor make any significant advance in any field. For nothing was it said, “The hand that rocks the cradle; rules the world.” In accordance to this proverb, an apt example is Sudha Murthy who is a prolific fiction author in Kannada and English has published several books that promote her views on feminism, charity, hospitality and self-realization through fictional and nonfictional books. She is a recipient of many awards and the most notable amongst them are *the Padma Shree* and *the R.K. Narayan Awards* for her contribution to literature. The author has unlighted about the woman’s courage, struggle, views to face

problems and many aspects. The present paper is based on the psychological realism, exclusively to the main characters of the novel that is Sudha Murthy herself when she was a small, cute grand-daughter of her grandma. The novel mixed modern ideas in the orthodox Indian society and conscientious firmness of a new Indian woman. The present story deals with the rural life of a village in Karnataka where the people get the morning paper in the afternoon and the weekly magazine used to come one day late. The author has portrayed the real picture of countryside of India. The famous *Triveni's both Karmaveera and Kashi Yatre* was very familiar stories at the time. Her works were easy to read and very convincing to digest to the audience. The theme of Triveni's writing was usually dealt with complex psychological problems in the life of ordinary people. Unfortunately, for Kannada literature, she died when she was very young and after the forty to fifty years also, the people are missing Triveni's literature.

The contribution of Sudha Murthy in Indian English literature emphasizes to the Indian English literature and the present paper enlightens the impact of her contribution with a special reference to *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*, the grandmother of the author, Krishtakka was alone in the modern world because of illiteracy, due to that the illiterate lady was dependent in the independent India. She has strong desire or enthusiastic emotions towards education, literacy. The real or spiritual meaning of education is drafted in the story with the religious philosophy and psychological status of the human being (Krishtakka). The religious philosophy of the author signifies with examples of *Kashi Yatre's* protagonist realized that the real ultimate *punnya* is not to visit pilgrimage (Kashi) but to help the poor and needy. The protagonist, an old poor lady who was already suffering from financial crises, gave her all collected amount to an orphan girl who is in love and she needs money for her wedding. The ultimate *punnya*, realization of ultimate truth, important and need of education and all these things are shown by the author. The present paper enlightens the minute observation of the author, Sudha Murthy.

**Keywords :** Loneliness, dependent-illiterate, religious-philosophy, psychological-realism, ultimate *punnya*, Psychology: relating to mental emotional state, Ardent: showing strong feelings, savoring: enjoying an experience, Scriptures: holy writing.

## Research Paper

### Introduction

The literature and language is playing a vital role in the sustainable development of India as well throughout the world. Especially Sudha Murthy's writing in the Indian contemporary English literature is one of the milestones in the literary development. In the change of modernity and technology, English language is at the center and all the regional languages are connected to the English in India. After the 1960, the languages have become more dominant in the different areas. The development of the India as well the world is much attached with the language, especially, the English. The development of literature, science, education, technology, politics, these areas have become the pillars of modernity where the language especially English played a vital role in it.

In the present English literature, Sudha Murthy's writing has good contribution. Overall writing of Sudha Murthy deals with the education, religious tasks, cultural aspects, family relationship, social attitudes, economical situation, feminist problems, etc. Sudha Murthy's writing is the mirror of society where the picture of the Indian women in all walks of life political, social, educational, architectural, administrative, and domestic is clearly shown and the prolific writer deals with all aspects of society. The great social worker, author, technician and educationalist Dr. Sudha Murthy contributed for the Indian English literature through the fictional, non-fictional novels, short stories, novellas and travelogues through the verities of literary genre. Sudha Murthy's literary contribution in English and Kannada for the society is contributed after minute observations, experiences, visits and imaginations who have contributed in English and Kannada is clear and simple, which communicates her ideas smoothly. She advocates feminism and gives power to her women characters to strike the worst situations of their lives. She stroke on the points where the women are strong in their worst conditions and fought against the discrimination. She is full of humility and modesty that uses her wealth for the less fortunate people. She acknowledges to the cry and requirement of the impoverished, the destitute and the marginalized portion of the society. She writes in the backdrop of Indian English Literature. The main protagonists are portrayed as well educated women with the inherent inner power who were ready to face the challenges under any circumstances and emerge successfully by carving a place for them in the society within the parameter of the Indian tradition. And these female protagonists are suffering from the different social and domestic problems.

Sudha Murthy was the first woman engineer to be selected in Telco (Now Tata Motors), Pune who talks about her encounter with J.R.D Tata when she had a postcard to JRD Tata complaining of the gender basis in Tata Motors. Sudha Murthy recounts tales from her life in a simple yet engrossing manner. The stories range from her childhood to her life as a teacher and a mother. The referred book shows readers how her mother's constant advice on saving money actually helped Sudha Murthy when she had to start a company with her husband Dr Narayan Murthy. It also features a story where the protagonist takes a train ride with the President.

Other popular books written by Sudha Murthy are *The Magic Drum and Other Favorite Stories*, *Dollar Bahu*, *the Old Man and His God*, and *Wise & Otherwise* (An audio book). Sudha Murthy has tried her hand at both fiction and non-fiction. She writes in English and Kannada and so far, she has written a compilation of short stories, two books for children, nine novels, three separate non-fictional collections, three travelogues, and four technical books. She has been awarded *the R. K. Narayan Award* for Literature (2006) and has been the recipient of *the Padma Shree Award* (2006). She was born in Shiggaon, North Karnataka in the year 1950.

The literary contribution of Sudha Murthy in the Indian contemporary English literature for the world English literature is published through the Penguin Publication, which deals with common lives and her views of donations, hospitality, realization and struggle of a passionate lady to be literary independent, some of them include sweet hospitality: *Wise and Otherwise*, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*. Sudha Murthy's contribution in terms of educational or literacy is heart-touchable through different examples of the fictional book *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories* which is filled with heart touching tales varying from one about how her grandmother asked the twelve-year-old girl (Author) to teach her the alphabets. Each of the twenty-five stories in the book provides some inspiration to its readers. The stories are presented in an effortless and humorous fashion. The present story is the most wonderful experience where the author recalls her memories that how she had taught her illiterate grandmother Krishtakka to read *Kashi Yatrebya* Karnataka fame author Triveni and other stories also. The author recalls her childhood days in the small village of Karnataka with her grandmother where the village was a remote place where the morning paper would get in the afternoon and the weekly magazine would get one day late. Sudha Murthy has portrayed the real picture of the rural India, which was real-visual picture in the mind of the writer about the socio-educational condition of the Indian countryside.

Sudha Murthy has focused on the educational and religious philosophy of the rural India that how the old grandmother is attracted towards the magazine by Triveni in Kannada language and the village people would wait eagerly for the weekly magazine *the Karmaveera*. The village people were so connected with the magazine that they were thinking, their day is incomplete without reading of the *Karmaveera*. The folk literary work of Triveni, *Kashi Yatre* appeared as a series that was a story of an old lady and her strong desire to visit once to Kashi that is known as Varanasi which is a religious pilgrimage where the people get the ultimate *punnya* after praying the Lord Vishweshwara. The protagonist of *Kashi Yatre* who was facing from financial crises collected some amount to visit once Kashi in whole life to do ultimate *punnya* but gave a collected amount to an orphan girl who was in love and wanted to marry. The struggling lady protagonist realized that ultimate *punnya* is not visiting Kashi but to help a needy or poor. The old lady's realization is the real religious philosophy and not superstition.

The series of the magazine of *Kashi Yatre* was being read by small Sudha Murthy for her grand-mother, because the grandmother, Krishtakka was illiterate. When the small reader, Sudha Murthy went to attend a marriage of her cousin to another village, the old Krishtakka realized the importance of education in the absence of her grand-daughter. When the grand-daughter came back, grandmother, Krishtakka requested her granddaughter to teach her, how to read (*Kashi Yatre*). The curiosity and the eagerness of the old lady were very strong towards education. The author, Sudha Murthy focused on the real desire and curiosity of human being, and for that the age does not matter when the old lady started to learn the Kannada alphabets at the age of sixty-two years and she determined that she would complete her course till Dassehra and grandmother Krishtakka's teacher was none but her granddaughter who is twelve years old, till the Dassehra, grandmother forgot the age and relation with her granddaughter and really she educated herself what the efforts were being taken by grandmother, really amazing; her homework was very tuff, she read, repeated, wrote and recited continuously, the teachers should not be irrespective with the gender or age. During the Dassehra, the result of her efforts was something different; the granddaughter, Sudha Murthy bought a published novel *Kashi Yatre* by Triveni and the small granddaughter was also gifted with a frock material by her grandmother (Student). Her grandmother bent down and touched the feet suddenly of her granddaughter (Teacher). The author found this was extremely guilty because the elder never touches the feet to the younger so that the grandmother broke the rule of the tradition. But in response of that, the grandmother replied that she was not touched the feet of her twelve year granddaughter but her teacher who taught

her that how to read *Kashi Yatre* and other stories also. In simply, the religious, educational, cultural and moral values are fully drafted in the literature so the literary contribution of Sudha Murthy is the supreme morality and moral values for the readers. The view of grandmother to her granddaughter as a student was very soft and clear that the grandma said that her teacher was very caring and loving who taught her so well that she could read any unknown novel in a short period confidently and that is the reason the grandmother thought that her teacher made her independent. Now the grandma was so confident and she was not feeling isolated also and when she was alone at all in her isolated life, all books are with her and she can communicate with them well. Here the intention behind the writer's writing is very clear that we are really dependent if we are illiterate. The illiteracy is one of the most dominant issues in the Indian contemporary world which was softly criticized by the author, Sudha Murthy and the soft satire and criticism is drafted in the story. Sudha Murthy's contribution is heart touching for the contemporary world. The present book *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories* deals with twenty five stories and each story provides the lesson for life that this contribution is really inspirational for the readers of the present era.

The author Sudha Murthy has talked about the real freedom or independence where the grandmother of the author was unable to read the book and was enjoying the story by Triveni. The stories were enjoyed not only by the grandma but all the people of village. But the grandma was not able to enjoy without her granddaughter. The realization about the religious and educational philosophy confirmed when the grandmother has become independent. The spiritual meaning of freedom and educationally independent is nothing but to be educated and to take all the advantages of education in life.

Sudha Murthy's literary contribution flickers on the real rural life where the people of the village are attracted to the folk literature of Triveni who was a famous one for her religious philosophy. The religious and educational philosophies are two sides of a coin of spiritual awakening but Dr. Murthy is such author who has shown both the pictures simultaneously and effectively. The readers could become the followers of author if the real picture of society and real struggle is shown with morals and values. How the Kannada readers were waiting for her upcoming series of Triveni. *Karmaveera* and *Kashi Yatre* were such tales and its plot was very heart touching. With the help of the incident: The protagonist of *Kashi Yatre* helped an orphan girl for her marriage. Through this type of religious philosophy, the blind faith and the traditional superstition are kept out from her contribution.

The contribution of the author in the contemporary Indian English literature is very sensitive because it is connected with the real determination, desire and confidence of a suffering woman where the grandma of Sudha Murthy was feeling so alone and isolated, the author tried to explain the importance of education and when the grandmother decided to start to study the alphabets of Kannada, the granddaughter was making a fun unknowingly but she was also unaware that how her grandmother would start her education at the age of sixty-two years when she has become enough old, all her hairs are grey, her hands are wrinkled, with spectacles works so much in the kitchen also. But, the author portrayed the ladies' determination, desire, confidence, suffer and nature of the women was really awesome. Grandma determined that she would keep Saraswati Pooja day during Dassehra and she will work very hard for a good cause, if you are determined, you can overcome any obstacle in your life. And really grandma was very enthusiastic and eager to be educated. We can understand from her statement: "*I will work harder than anybody but I will do it.*" It was the confidence of the grandma and she planned according to her determination. The illiterate lady's confidence, desire and affection towards education were strong as the old lady was literally illiterate but she had sense of literate person.

Sixty-two years, Krishtakka is the representative of modern era's woman where girl's education was not considered important because the women were ignored for education comparatively men even she never went to school and remained unlettered. She was married at very tender age and had her children and at her old age, she had so much pleasure in cooking and feeding. But she feels guilty in her mind that she made sure that her children and grandchildren study well. The old lady, Krishtakka associates herself with the protagonist of the story 'Kashi Yatre' and believed that the actual practice of religion is to practice humaneness. She was very attached to her granddaughter who read stories for her. A beautifully portrayed old character Krishtakka wanted to emerge from the quagmire of ignorance. The old lady's hard work, sincerity, dedication and ardent desire were so strong that she proved that there is no age bar for learning. Her great willingness for reading and passion for acquiring knowledge and later on the grandma became the independent and emerge from the quagmire of ignorance.

The author, Sudha Murthy, a fictional writer has traced the interesting anecdotes from her personal life; especially from her childhood who is known for simplicity in writing and important element of life. The simple tasks are drafted in the plot and the way of drafting is also simple but the issues which are taken for drafting are very serious in the developed and developing India, for example; the problem of women education, the religious philosophy,

the illiteracy, the marriage system (Bal-Vivaha), the view and attitude towards woman education and so on. The literary contribution of Sudha Murthy in contemporary Indian English Literature is memorable which the best shared experiences from her life are.

### **Conclusion**

In the contemporary English literature, non-fictional works and language has its own impact on the world literature in English. The literary contribution of Sudha Murthy in Indian contemporary English literature is playing the vital role in the world English literature. The present paper deals about the real situation of the India, especially the marriage system of India, child marriage (Bal-Vivaha), the real suffer of the women for education. The spiritual meaning of education is derived and the self-realization of the real religious philosophy is conveyed with the special references of the fictional book *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*. The real prayer to God and the real *pooja* of the God is not to visit to any pilgrimage but to help needy people and self-realization. “*To help the poor is Godliness.*” The literary contribution of Sudha Murthy is in the contemporary English literature is really the milestone for the readers of literature where Sudha Murthy observed the society minutely and with the help of her own experiences, she has prorate the beautiful ladies characters. How are the real suffered of the Indian ladies especially economically, socially, educationally and the family relationship? The real perspectives of the rural India is part rated and the protagonist of the stories are the representative of all the Indian ladies who are suffering from educational, social, financial, and domestic problems.

The old lady Krishtakka’s isolation is the live picture of the real education and the spirit of education. At the conclusion, in the contemporary Indian English literature, the literary contribution of Sudha Murthy is probably dealing with feminist problems that are educational, social, domestic, cultural etc in the post-modernism.



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