



JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)

An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS IN SUDHA MURTY'S HOW I TAUGHT MY GRANDMOTHER TO READ AND OT STORIES

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Literature is the expression of a feeling of deprivation recourse against a sense of something missing. But the contrary is also true: language is what makes us human. It is also against the meaningless noise and silence of nature and history.

- Octavio Paz.

This paper sheds light on the social and cultural aspects in Sudha Murty's "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and other Stories". The ancient literature of India is the crowning glory of the Indian civilization. Ancient literature has produced voluminous literature of knowledge and wisdom which cannot be matched with any other civilization. Books for children have changed from simple stories that are rich in morals and traditions to those that reflect the new challenging society.

Sudha Murty, one of the successful Indian women writers, has written many books. She is a multifaceted personality, a brilliant technocrat, dedicated teacher, good writer and selfless activist. Her novels deal with common lives and also about her views on hospitality and realization.

Sudha Murthy's How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories provides lessons for life through its twenty-five, splendidly written stories. Sudha Murthy has even picked out anecdotes from her own life to present to the readers a book that shows them the forgotten values of life. The story How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories written by Sudha Murty, wife of the founder of Infosys, N R Nurayana Murty, is her reminiscence about teaching her grandmother. She teaches her grandmother to read and write and the old lady is bending on learning it.

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories is a wonderful collection of short stories. Each story is a slice horn the author's life. It is specially written for children and has very important and thought provoking lines like "do we tell our children about the sacrifices of the 1857 war of Independence" (58). Generous grandmother, religious grandfather, dutiful daughter, responsible son, successful husband, wise mother, comic cousin, ungrateful classmate and her own good self are highlighted in the book.

In *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*, Sudha highlights her respect and love for her grandparents. She, in order to teach her grandmother has turned into a new leaf and the story is a real life incident that had happened when Sudha was twelve years old. Sudha's grandmother requested her to teach Kannada alphabets. Sudha expressed her own doubt that how she can learn at the age of sixty two, she 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). Sudha 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.

"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 Mahabharata. He was asked by his friends why he gave so much respect to his teacher Dronacharya. Drona was old, not as rich as Arjuna, and never ruled any kingdom. But Arjuna would always kiss his feet with great respect.

In this life everything perishes over a period of time. Whether it is 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 respect for elders is highlighted in *Salaam Abdul Kalam*. She tells about the mutual respect she shares with Kalam. The simplicity of Kalam made her a great admirer of him. She met him in Bangalore for the first time. The people who impressed Sudha have a special place in her life. One such impressed personality is JRD Tata. She has given account of him in *Appro JRD*.

The *Story of Two Doctors* deals with how she had learnt the value of humanity and relationship. Sudha's sister worked as doctor in a government hospital. She used to discuss about the state of government hospital in our country. "Our government hospitals may not have too many facilities, but at least the poor can get treatment here for almost free" (66).

The importance of saving money is imparted to the young readers. The savings of Sudha helped Murty to start his company and she remembered her mother's words. "Save money and use it only in extremely essential situations" (89).

The humaneness of her grandparents inspired her a lot. She acquired the helping tendency from her grandparents. Many would come to ask for alms to her grandparents in the village. They never had much money but her grandfather would help them in the form of rice. After receiving the rice they raised their right hands and blessed them. Sudha is influenced by her grandparents and their magnanimous attitude towards people shaped her personality.

Sudha expresses her moral values through her short stories. Children love stories, they want to know how to live, tackle problems, adjust with others in their young age. While lending the stories, children themselves do not know how they have involved into the characters of the story. Thus, the story changes the character of a child. Each moral value makes them to know how they are good in their life. Sudha used her writings readers to bind their lives with moral values.

In short or to conclude this paper, it has taught us that the modern western life style is not suitable for peaceful and healthy social life whereas Indian way of life of large and single family of father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, grand daughter and grandson would surely help to pave the way to the above said life and be a good guidance to grandchildren in this way of life.

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