

9th Standard English

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read

Summary

In 'How I Taught My Grandmother To Read', Sudha Murty describes the determined efforts of an illiterate old lady Krishtakka to make herself literate. She decided to read a novel on her own. The grandmother set the deadline and achieved the target next to impossible within the time set for it. She was able to read the novel Kashi Yatre in the Kannada language on her own at sixty-two. She was helped by her young granddaughter who acted as her only teacher. The grandmother proved that there is no age bar for learning.

Triveni's Popular Novel—Kashi Yatre

The narrator was a girl of about twelve. She used to stay in a village in north Karnataka with her grandparents. At that time Triveni was a very popular writer in the Kannada language. She was a wonderful writer. Her style was easy to read and quite convincing. Her stories dealt with the complex problems in the lives of ordinary people. One of her novels, Kashi Yatre was appearing as a serial in the Kannada magazine Karmaveera. It was the story of an old lady who desired to go to Kashi to worship Lord Vishweshwara. In the story, there was also a young orphan girl. She could not marry because she had no money for the wedding. In the end, the old lady gives away all her savings to the girl without going to Kashi. She considered the happiness of the orphan girl more important than even worshipping Lord Vishweshwara at Kashi.

Grandmother Krishtakka

The narrator's grandmother never went to school. Hence, she couldn't read or write. Every Wednesday, the magazine Karmaveera would come. The grandmother would ask her twelve year old grand-daughter to read the next episode of the story to her. She would listen to her with the greatest concentration. During that time she would forget all her work. Later, she could repeat the entire text by heart. The grandmother too never went to Kashi. She identified herself with the heroine of the novel. After listening to the next episode of Kashi Yatre she would join her friends at the temple courtyard. There, she would discuss the latest episode with her friends.

Grandmother in Tears

Once the narrator went for a wedding with her cousins to a neighbouring village. She went for a couple of days but overstayed their for a week. When she came back to her village, she saw her grandmother in tears. She was shocked. She had never seen the old lady cry even in the most difficult circumstances. The old lady narrated her story to her granddaughter. She had lost her mother when she was just a young girl. There was nobody to look after and guide her. Her father married again. In those days nobody cared to give education to girls. So she never went to school. She got married very young and had children. Later she had grandchildren.

Regret for Not Going to School

The grandmother felt so much happiness in cooking and feeding all of her children. At times, she used to regret not going to school. She had learnt a lesson. So she made sure that her children and grandchildren studied well.

When the narrator was away, Karmaveera came as usual. She opened the magazine. She could not understand anything that was written there. For the first time she felt so much dependent and helpless.

Grandmother Takes a Decision

The grandmother decided to learn the Kannada alphabet from the next day onwards. She decided to work very hard. She kept the Saraswati Pooja day during Dassara as the deadline. That day she would be able to read a novel on her own. She wanted to be independent. The narrator saw the determination on her face yet she laughed at the decision of her grandmother. She made fun of the old lady. But her grandmother just smiled and said nothing.

A Wonderful Student

The next day onwards, the narrator started her tuition. The grandmother was a wonderful student. She did amazing homework. She would read, repeat, write and recite. The narrator was her only teacher. The grandmother was her first student.

Grandmother Reads Kashi Yatre on Her Own

The Dassara festival came as usual. The novel Kashi Yatre had been published by that time. The narrator secretly bought a copy of the novel. The grandmother called her granddaughter to the pooja place and made her sit down on a stool. She gave her a gift of a frock material. Then the grandmother did something unusual. She bent down and touched the feet of her granddaughter. The narrator was taken aback. The old lady gave an explanation. She told her that she was touching the feet of a teacher, not of her granddaughter. She taught her so well that she could read any novel

confidently. A teacher should be respected, irrespective of the gender and age. Then she opened the novel and read the title Kashi Yatre by Triveni. The grandmother had passed with flying colours

