

F.1 “How I taught my Grandmother to Read by Sudha Murthy

Summary and Analysis: “How I taught my Grandmother to Read”, is a **character based** short story [1] by Sudha Murthy. The story explores the intimate relationship between the grandmother Avva and her granddaughter. The relationship is explored on two levels: grandmother and granddaughter, teacher and student. The story told in flashback, is written in a very simple language.

The narrator recalls when she was a little girl of twelve; she stayed with her grandmother in a small village in North Karnataka. The village didn't have an efficient transport facility, and thus the weekly post and magazines would arrive one day late. The village would eagerly await the arrival of the weekly *Karamveera*. The weekly contained a serialised version of a popular novel *KashiYatra* by the renowned young woman writer Triveni, whose promising career was interrupted by an untimely death. The plot revolved around an old lady who saves over a lifetime to go on a pilgrimage to Kashi. However she gifts the money to a young orphan to let her marry her love. Avva too was very fond of the episodic story. She would listen eagerly to the latest episode read by her granddaughter – the narrator.

Once, the narrator went to a wedding in the neighbouring village. Although she intended to stay only for a couple of days, she ended up staying a week. On her return, she found Avva depressed and anxious for some strange reason. After a lot of coaxing and cajoling, Avva reveals to the narrator that the latest issue of *Karamveera* came in her absence. Since she is illiterate, she could only stare helplessly at the words, wishing earnestly to understand what they meant. She had been married off young, and familial concerns occupied her entirely afterwards. So, she could never study, and remained illiterate. But now at the age of sixty-two she realizes her dependency and handicap. She can't even enjoy herself without the help of her granddaughter. The realization is a painful one, and it gives Avva considerable grief.

She decided, therefore, to take charge of her destiny and educate herself. She persuaded the narrator – her granddaughter to teach her Kannada alphabet. She set Saraswati Puja day during the festival of Dussehra as a deadline for learning it. Avva proves to be a determined and dedicated student. She would read, repeat and recite to perfect her grasp of the lesson. By the time the Puja day appears, she has mastered the alphabet well enough to read *KashiYatre*, now published as a novel, on her own. The narrator had bought it as a gift for Avva on eve of the festival. Avva calls the narrator to the puja place and made her sit on a stool. She gave a gift of frock material as *guru dakshina* or fees to the narrator, since she was her teacher. She then bowed down to touch the feet of the narrator. This surprises and startles the narrator, as custom and religion dictate that the young seek the blessings of elders by touching their feet. Avva, however, saw nothing contradictory in her action. She remarks that she is not touching the feet of her granddaughter, but her teacher. In civilized societies, teachers are respected irrespective of their age, sex, gender etc. The narrator reciprocates the gesture later, and touches the feet of Avva to seek her blessings. The story ends with the narrator feeling satisfied and pleased, that her student – Avva, had managed to successfully pass her education.

Avva, therefore, demonstrates clearly the difference between literacy and education. Literacy only involves possessing the ability to read and/or write. Education, however, is a

deeper and powerful concept. Education involves the positive modification of a personality. Avva educates herself through her determination and perseverance. She is empowered by her ability to be independent and shake off dependence. Often, highly literate people with degrees look down upon less literate people. But Avva is educated not literate. She doesn't possess a formal degree but possesses knowledge that is more practical and useful. It allows her to notice that she owes a debt of gratitude to her granddaughter, and she bows down in reverence. Education removes arrogance and hubris, and makes a man humble and broadminded. Therefore, we can conclude that by the end of story Avva's personality has undergone a positive transformation.

Questions:

1. **Provide a character sketch of Avva?**
2. **The relationship between grand-daughter and the student is an untraditional one. Discuss?**
3. **Discuss any literary work that you recently read with reference to the reasons for your enjoyment?**

[\[1\]](#)In a character-based story, the character is the centre, while the plot, the environment revolves around them. The story moves forward not through continuous actions, but through the various dimensions of a character that are revealed by disconnected events.

Grammar web lesson for IX and X

Tenses

Verbs have different forms, called tenses. The tenses of a verb tell us when the action happens. If it happens regularly, or if it happens often or sometimes or never, i.e. they determine the time of action in a particular sentence.

SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

We use simple present tense when we are talking about facts, or saying something we know about a person or a thing, for example

1. We wash our hands before meals.
2. The Sun rises in the east & sets in the west.
3. Tim likes bananas.
4. Jenny wants to be a nurse.
5. Maria enjoys singing.

We use simple present tense to talk about things that have been arranged for the future, for example

1. The Train departs in five minutes
2. The plane lands at 5:30.
3. We move house in a month.

We often use the simple present tense when we are telling a story in present, for example, when we are describing a series of pictures that tell a story.

FORM

Affirmative: I/We/Love flowers; you/they/love flowers;

he/she/it/love flowers ; Ram/Sita/loves flowers.

Negative: I/We/do not love flowers; you/they/do not love flowers.; he/she/it does not love flowers; Ram/Sita/does not love flowers.

Interrogative: Do I/We/love flowers? Do you/they/love flowers?; Does he/she/it/love flowers?; Does Ram/sita/love flowers?

In the case of interrogative sentences beginning with a question word (what, why, when, how, whose, whom, etc.) the usual pattern is:

Question word +do/does+subject+the first or basic form of the verb +.....?, for example

1. Why do you keep the door closed?
2. Where does Ravi live?

We use the root form of the verb in the simple present tense.

We add 's' or es to the root form of the verb with the pronouns 'he', she, it & singular nouns.

Format;

Affirmative:subject+verb(present form)+object.

Negative:subject+auxillary verb+negative word+main verb+object

Interrogative:auxillary verb+subject+main verb+object.

Simple Past Tense

(a) The simple past tense express actions that took place at some time in the past and are over now.

1. Joined this school last month.
2. She received this letter yesterday.

(b) This tense also express some past habit.

I usually went home on holidays.

We usually form the simple past tense by adding -ed to the verb.

e.g., Cross + ed =crossed

Jump + ed=jumped

Walk + ed=walked

Forms:

Affirmative:

I/we/loved/flowers;you/they/loved/flowers;he/she/it/loved/flowers;ram/sita/loved/flowers.

Negative: I/we/did/not/love/flowers; you/they/did/not/love/flowers; he/she/it/did/not/love/flowers; Ram/sita/did/not/love/flowers.

Interrogative: Did/i/we/love/flowers? Did/you/they/love/flowers? Did/she/he/it/love/flowers? Did/ram/sita/love/flowers?

In interrogative sentences, the pattern is:

Did+subject+the basic form of the verb+.....?

Question word +did+subject+the basic form of the verb+.....?

for e.g.,

1. Did the thief run away?
2. How did the thief run away?

Simple future tense

We use simple future tense of a verb to express an action that will take place in the future.

for e.g.,

1. We shall visit the zoo tomorrow
2. They will go to the hills in the summer vacation

Words like tomorrow, next month may be used to suggest the future time.

For interrogative sentences FORM IS:

Will/shall+subject+first or basic form of verb+....?

Question word+will/shall+subject+the first or basic form of the verb.

e.g., 1. Shall we meet tomorrow?

2. When will the principal address the students?

Continuous/Progressive tenses

Continuous tenses is used to indicate an action going on at the time of speaking .it is used to talk about the things that are going on or happening now

for e.g

1. Mum is baking a cake.
2. I am eating my lunch.
3. We are playing.

Past continuous tense:

It is used to express an action that was in the progress at some moment before the time of speaking.

1. Miss lee was cleaning the chalkboard.
2. Peter was making a model of a bridge.

We often use simple past & past continuous together to suggest that something happened when another action was in progress.

e.g, 1. He married sangeeta when they were working together

Future continuous tense

We use this tense for an action that will be in progress at a given moment in the future or to express an action that is fairly certain happen in future

1. At 8pm, I shall be taking my dinner.

Perfect tenses

we used to this sentences to express action that has just been completed. We use the verb has or have as a helping verb to form the present perfect tenses .The present perfect tense connects the past with the present .we use it to talk about happenings in the past that effect the present.

for e.g

1. I have seen this film already.
2. I have made a cup of tea for you.
3. Who has eaten the sandwiches?
4. Where has the thief hidden the jewellery?

PATTERN:

HAS/HAVE+THIRD FORM OF VERB.....(PRESENT PERFECT)

HAD+THIRD FORM OF THE VERB.(PAST PERFECT)

SHALL/WILL+HAVE+THIRD FORM OF THE VERB.(FUTURE PERFECT)

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