



20

**TEACHER AS A 'TEACHER' IN SUDHA MURTHY'S NOVELS: A STUDY**

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**Abstract:**

*Indian English writing has gained popularity worldwide due to its diverse forms, themes, plots, settings, and character sketches. Authors like Arvind Adiga, Shobha De, Kiran Desai, and Sudha Murthy create unique works with specific numbers, letters, and Indian based traits. Sudha Murthy, an educationist and novelist, portrayed idealistic society through the characters who are disciplined, contended, pure in thought and action, respectful, and loving. This research paper tries to study the portrayal of such teacher-characters in her novels.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher, Honesty, Ideal, Self-identity, Ethics, etc.*

**Introduction:**

Sudha Murthy, born in 1950, a prolific Kannada and English writer, is a multi-talented individual who has served as the Infosys Foundation chair, author, educator, teacher, philanthropist, and social worker. She has received numerous awards, including the R.K. Narayan Literature Award, the Dada Chintamani AttimabeAward, and the Padma Shri Award. Her family appears to have been completely immersed in the teaching field, as evidenced by her grandfather, a well-known Sanskrit instructor. He possessed an excessive amount of knowledge and interest in history and mythology, and its impact seems to have appeared on Sudha Murthy which later is felt through her writings and speeches. She spent the majority of her childhood time with her grandparents and relished every moment she spent with them. For her knowledge and interest in history and mythology, she gives credit to her grandparents.

Sudha claims that my grandfather was a teacher and my first guru, teaching me how to read and write. With this her father was a surgeon and a professor of obstetrics and Gynecology at Karnataka Medical College, Hubli, while her mother was a schoolteacher before marriage. Her other family members, such as her brother and sister were also in the



same line of work. Mr. Shrinivas Kulkarni, like her brother, is an astrophysicist at the California Institute of Technology in the United States. Sudha disclosed a secret: she had learnt a life lesson from her brother, Shrinivas, who had introduced her to a fresh perspective on space and astronomy. Jayashree Deshpande, her sister, is also the creator of the Deshpande Foundation; she established a Deshpande Centre at the MIT School. It is commonly noticed that if one of our parents had a teaching profession, one of our family members would be motivated and accept it as a career. 'School plays an important role in life,' Murthy remarked. Teaching is a very essential career, and it is crucial to understand that the importance of a teacher comes in life after mother and father. Demonstrate courage, compassion, and confidence, work hard, and choose a strategy that allows doing it now. Murthy places the teaching career at the top of her priority list. Teachers, according to her, should be respected because they shape our future. A teacher is the ideal archer because he expresses our life and draw our destiny with his/her hands. Moreover, a teacher assists in determining the best course for an individual's life.

Sudha Murthy writes about the responsibility and significance of 'teacher' in her book, *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk*: "When a doctor makes a mistake, a person goes six feet below the ground. When a judge makes an error, he or she is hung six feet over the ground. However, when a teacher makes a mistake, the entire class is annihilated. Never underestimate teachers" (Murthy, *LSL*, 164).

Moreover, in many interviews, Murthy highlighted this term 'teacher' and how the teacher should behave as well. According to her, all the best qualities of nature are found in a teacher who is ideal, honest, truthful, loving, gives respect, and takes a respectful attitude. She believes that teachers should have patience and should be ever smiling. 'Don't punish or use harsh words; after all, they are children. And don't be judgmental' is her expectation from teachers. Exactly the same characters she portrayed in her work; though she presents a variety of characters with varying traits. However, at least one character is a 'teacher' in her novels; this is a person who has all the ideal traits and follows the path of truthfulness throughout her life. He is portrayed as 'struggling to earn a living, balancing family and societal standards, or balancing the internal and external worlds to survive.' Teachers continue to suffer while refusing to compromise. A teacher never draws attention to the physical pleasure of just following the ideals they have established for themselves in their lives. A teacher never pushes others to take the same path in order to survive, but instead strives to establish an ideal society. Students are always treated as members of their own family; there is no prejudice or differentiation, and in true sense follows the principle of equality.

The close reading of her novels points out that her concept of an ideal individual is portrayed through the character of teacher in her novels. Her personal life and the people who influenced her were perhaps the teachers, hence they peep through her writings. Education, she believes, is a fundamental right for every child and individual. Through her own experience, she persuades the readers that education has no age limit. According to her, in order to become a progressive country, there is no need to focus solely on the IT centre; education is the primary requirement, and which cannot be accomplished without teachers. She strongly believes, 'a perfect teacher creates a perfect society for the country'.



**Analysis:**

In her novel *Dollar*, Bahu Shamanna is an important family member, playing the roles of husband, father, and father-in-law in personal life but with his most important role being a teacher, he believes that he loves that position. Society admires him as an ideal teacher, even though many students follow him as an idealistic person or icon. Although his economic condition is not good, he never complains to anyone. He knows that due to him, his family suffers, but he still tries to fulfil their needs. Gouramma, his wife, always complains against him. According to Shamanna, being a father, he tries to fulfill the basic needs of each and every member of the family. He is content with his life and never expects more than this. Shamanna has two sons and one daughter, living in a simple house. He is happy with his family, but Gouramma thinks that due to Shamanna's low earnings; she has to suffer a lot in her life. She is an ambitious lady. Shamanna respects every relationship and thinks that there should be space in every relationship- no burden, no expectation, no interference. While Gouramma was totally against it, she always blames her husband and her fate and speaks rudely. She hates her daughter-in-law, Vinuta, who is a teacher. But Shamanna always supports Vinuta for her rights, her values, and her principles.

Vinuta is the daughter from a poor family; she works hard to get a position for herself. She is a teacher, an ideal person – non - possessive, calm, simple, and well – behaved – who respects everyone, is realistic, and believes in God. She never argues or uses harsh words to anyone. Through her behaviour with the colleagues at school, she creates a separate family at school. She knows well that money is an important factor in everybody's life, but not more important than values. Towards the end of the novel, she struggles for her own identity; she accepts that, although her earnings are lower, her job is responsive, she gets satisfaction, and she feels that were doing something for our nation, society, and family. She believes that if she does not get the popularity or tag of a rich person and physical pleasure, there is still no problem, but she will get peace of mind from this position as a teacher.

In the novel *Mahashweta*, Anupama as Anu is a modest, poor, and lovely young lady. Her life is full of ups and downs, but she manages well. Anu, a motherless girl, was raised by her father, Shamanna, an ideal teacher who blamed himself for his daughter's plight. He lost his wife and then married with Sabakka. But throughout his life, he considers it as his mistake for assuming that Anu would live peacefully with her mother. Anu, on the other hand, suffers at the hands of her stepmother. After a long time of suffering, she receives a proposal from Dr. Anand, a wealthy individual, for marriage. Her marriage is a surprising and unforgettable experience or accomplishment for her. But, it proves to be just a dream and it breaks, she realizes the truth that has lost everything in a short period of time. 'Leucoderma' disease has ended her family life. She feels alone and lost in the world. Her friend encourages her and assists her in finding a job in Mumbai. She is appointed as a Sanskrit teacher at the college after a battle. She is really happy and content with her job. She thoroughly enjoys the profession. She understands that her position as a teacher has provided her with prosperity, happiness, and her most essential self-identity in society. Students adore and admire her. She represents the, who is constantly looking for support from relatives, friends and the people around. Through her student, she is able to start her own family. She behaves like a mother with students, and the student shared their problems and secret thoughts with her. Students



used to congregate at her home. Meanwhile, she receives a proposal from Dr. Vasant and Dr. Anand, which she turns down. In the end, she declares that the teaching profession had influenced her too much and had shown her a new path in life. She decides to herself that she would play this role here after. Anu's father was an ideal, who struggled throughout his life for this job, and she would follow in his footsteps, but she would give all her life exclusively for the profession.

In the novel, *House of Cards*, Mridula is a government school teacher at Aladahalli. Murthy describes in depth the teaching position and their responsibilities in our country's education system, as well as the real image of our society and how changes in the education system occur on a daily basis. Murthy differentiates between a government school and a private school, and the coaching system, and points out that the follies in the education system, the people who consider it as business and instructors' mentalities through the protagonist, Mridula. When she is at Aladahalli High School, she compares village school to city school. It is well-known, and students come from nearby communities to study there. The school has everything, including a school building, a large playground, an open-air theatre and its own culinary garden. Every child works in the garden for vegetable cultivation and cooking and is fed at lunch time, without the assistance of the government. At school, obedience is valued. As a result, the pupils are courteous and attentive to the teachers. It is like a huge joint family, and Mridula loved being a teacher at the school (Murthy, *HOC*, 83). It indicates that the school is committed to the students' overall development by encouraging them. Teachers are aware that merely bookish knowledge cannot adequately develop students, thus they emphasize on practical knowledge.

While she transferred to Yelhanka School in the big city of Bangalore, she realised that the students' response was inadequate. People prefer English-medium private schools despite the fact that they are more expensive than government schools. This is a painful truth for her. Mridula sees teaching as more than just a source of revenue; she sees it as a spiritual profession and teaches the children with passion. Murthy emphasizes the unique characteristics of teachers through Mridula and presents the true picture: "that today's teachers' attitudes have also evolved and are different. Some teachers conduct private sessions at their homes, while others have a parallel small business and are more interested in earning money than in teaching. The majority of them do not consider their teaching salary to be their primary source of income. They see it as merely 'an appetizer to the main entrée'" (Murthy, *HOC*, 83).

As a result, there is no personal bond between the teachers and the students. Mridula, a teacher, values peace and adheres to principles in order to effectively teach her students. She notices a shift in her village and school, where parents send their children to city schools for a better education and a better chance of admission to college. Local schools are frequently overlooked, and good teachers are transferred to urban schools. As a result, the school has become barren. Mridula gets disturbed and decides to help the school. Sudha aims to emphasize that it is the responsibility of everyone in the country to pursue a good education through good teachers, emphasizing the importance of good teachers in achieving this goal.

In *Gently Falls*, the Bakula, though no major character plays the role of a teacher, but some minor characters play a vital role. Kamala, Shrimati's mother is a school teacher; her husband means Shrimati's father was jobless and he never bothered about it; his wife is a



service woman, but he never appreciates her. Kamala fulfils all of her duties in life, including wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and teacher. She is an extremely peaceful, loving, and caring person who never complains about anything. Her husband and mother-in-law never give her anything. So she focuses on her profession and her daughter's education, and she always supports Shrimati. She proves to be an exceptional individual at every stage of her life.

One more character, Professor Collins, an American, whom Shrimati meets at the college through her professor Kulkarni, is a historian. He was conducting historical study, and whenever he comes to India, he visits Shrimati. Collins recognizes Shrimati's passion in history, and has witnessed her initiatives, knowledge, and love for history. Collins has a daughter named Dorothy, and he frequently compares Shrimati to his daughter and treats her like a daughter. He advises her that if she is interested in history, she should conduct research. Professor Collis suggests her that, "If you want, I can arrange for you to receive a scholarship at our university. You could either study archaeology or Asian History". These are the words of a superb teacher who is always concerned with the success of her students, but Shrimati rejects because she loves Shrikant. He says to her, "Don't you feel that if you don't pursue your love of history, you will get frustrated and bored". He returns with his best wishes for her future. When he returns to India after a few years and encounters Shrimati, he realises she is disturbed. A teacher's core happiness comes from within, confidence, and passion in their job. They guide their students without borders, countries, or cultures, recalling them without expectation. Murthy's concept of a teacher is based on Professor Collins, who emphasizes that a teacher performs their duties with great respect and is a teacher who has noticed their interest in history. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and respect for their students.

TO conclude, characters in Sudha Murthy's novels, such as Vinuta, Mridula, Anupama, Kamala, Shamanna, and Professor Collins represent Sudha Murthy's expectations from teachers. Each one of them is a complete personality and can play multiple roles without compromising their principles. Despite having family issues, Vinuta never let them interfere with her teaching career. Mridula, dissatisfied with her family, decides to live extravagantly, but she finds hope in her village. School is viewed as a beacon of hope, bringing new life into her life. Anupama overcomes her life's challenges by resolving her profession. These characters demonstrate the power of education and teachers' resilience in the face of adversity. Not only are these characters present as teachers, but we will meet at least one teacher character in her other works such as short stories, fiction, and non-fiction.

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