

How I Taught My Grandmother to Read

Book: Kaveri (Chapter 1) **Author:** Sudha Murty **Genre:** Autobiographical Memoir **Target:** Board Exam Preparation

01. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Genre: Autobiographical Narrative / Personal Memoir

Protagonists: **Krishtakka** (Grandmother, 62 years old) and **Sudha Murty** (Narrator, 12 years old)

Setting: A remote village in North Karnataka

Core Subject: A 62-year-old illiterate grandmother's journey to learn the Kannada alphabet so she can independently read her favorite serial novel, *Kashi Yatre*.

Key Values: Determination, respect for teachers, lifelong learning, gender equality, and empathy across generations.

02. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sudha Murty (born August 19, 1950) is an acclaimed Indian author, social worker, and chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. Writing prolifically in both **Kannada** and **English**, her literary works are celebrated for their simple language, deep moral insights, and realistic portrayal of rural Indian life.

In this autobiographical excerpt, she recounts an episode from her childhood when she was 12 years old. The story highlights the warmth of familial bonds, the socio-cultural restrictions faced by women in older generations, and the transformative power of literacy.

03. BACKGROUND OF THE STORY

The story is set in a small, remote village in North Karnataka where transport and communication systems were poorly developed. Newspapers and magazines arrived a day late via the local bus service. During this era, education for girls was not prioritized in rural India. Consequently, women like Krishtakka grew up illiterate, remaining dependent on literate family members to read letters or books to them.

04. COMPLETE CHAPTER SUMMARY

The narrator lived with her grandmother Krishtakka in a remote Karnataka village. In those days, transport was limited, and magazines arrived a day late. The grandmother, who had never attended school, was passionately fond of a serialized novel titled *Kashi Yatre* written by Triveni, published in the Kannada weekly *Karmaveera*.

The novel revolved around an old lady who longed to visit Kashi (Varanasi) to worship Lord Vishweshwara, but ultimately gave away her life's savings to help a poor orphaned girl marry. Krishtakka deeply identified with the protagonist because she, too, had never been to Kashi. Every Wednesday, when the magazine arrived, the 12-year-old narrator would read the chapter aloud to her. Krishtakka listened with complete concentration and would later discuss the plot with her friends at the temple stepwell.

The turning point came when the narrator left for a neighboring village to attend a cousin's wedding for a week. During her absence, the next issue of *Karmaveera* arrived. Krishtakka opened the magazine, saw the illustrations, but was unable to read a single word. She felt deeply embarrassed, helpless, and frustrated by her illiteracy.

When the narrator returned, she found her grandmother crying on the terrace. Krishtakka opened her heart, explaining how her mother had died young and her father had married off her young without schooling. She declared her firm resolution: **She wanted to learn the Kannada alphabet by Saraswati Pooja (Dussehra)** and requested her 12-year-old granddaughter to be her teacher.

Despite her age (62) and heavy household duties, Krishtakka proved to be an extraordinary student. On Dussehra, she successfully read the novel *Kashi Yatre* independently. To honor her teacher, she touched the young narrator's feet, establishing that a teacher deserves reverence regardless of age.

05. SCENE-WISE SUMMARY & TIMELINE

Every Wednesday	Weekly Serial Tradition The weekly magazine <i>Karmaveera</i> arrives. The narrator reads <i>Kashi Yatre</i> aloud to Krishtakka, who memorizes and discusses the plot.
Narrator's Trip	The Grand Wedding Leave The 12-year-old narrator leaves for a neighboring village for a week to attend a cousin's wedding.
Absence Period	The Crisis of Helplessness The magazine arrives, but Krishtakka cannot read it. She feels utterly dependent and weeps over her illiteracy.
Narrator's Return	The Resolution Krishtakka reveals her grief, resolves to learn the Kannada alphabet by Dussehra, and appoints the narrator as her Guru.
Dussehra Day	Saraswati Pooja Victory Krishtakka reads <i>Kashi Yatre</i> independently and touches her granddaughter's feet in reverence to education.

06. CHARACTER SKETCHES

Grandmother (Krishtakka) • Introduction: A 62-year-old traditional homemaker living in a rural Karnataka village. • Personality & Qualities: Determined, hardworking, humble, empathetic, and deeply spiritual. • Role & Importance: The central protagonist whose transformation proves that age is no barrier to learning.
Sudha Murty (Narrator) • Introduction: A 12-year-old girl who acts as the narrator and teacher in the story. • Personality & Qualities: Observant, caring, patient, disciplined, and respectful of values. • Role & Importance: Acts as the catalyst and teacher who facilitates her grandmother's empowerment through literacy.

07. THEMES, CENTRAL IDEA & MORAL VALUES

CATEGORY	KEY CONCEPTS
Primary Theme	

	Empowerment Through Literacy: Education grants independence, self-respect, and freedom from reliance on others.
Secondary Themes	Age is no bar to learning; Reversal of traditional roles (Granddaughter as Guru); Gender disparities in traditional education.
Central Idea	With strong determination, sincere effort, and proper guidance, any obstacle can be overcome at any stage of life.
Moral Values	Respect for teachers (<i>Guru Parampara</i>), perseverance, humility, and family bonding.

08. ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY

WORD	MEANING	HINDI MEANING	SYNONYM	ANTONYM
Ardent	Very enthusiastic or passionate	उत्सुक / उत्साही	Passionate	Apathetic
Arduous	Involving strenuous effort	कठिन / श्रमसाध्य	Difficult	Easy
Conviction	A firmly held belief	दृढ़ विश्वास	Belief	Doubt
Independent	Free from outside control	स्वतंत्र	Self-reliant	Dependent
Reverence	Deep respect for someone	आदर / श्रद्धा	Respect	Disrespect

09. IMPORTANT EXTRACTS FOR PRACTICE

EXTRACT 1

"When I came back to my village, I saw my grandmother in tears. I had never seen her cry even in the most difficult situations. I was worried."

1. Why was the grandmother crying?

Ans: She felt helpless and embarrassed because she could not read the latest episode of *Kashi Yatre* during the narrator's absence.

2. What trait of the grandmother is highlighted prior to this moment?

Ans: She was a strong, resilient woman who rarely showed weakness or cried during tough situations.

3. What did the narrator do upon seeing her cry?

Ans: She immediately inquired about her grandmother's well-being and listened attentively to her explanation.

10. SELECTED SHORT & LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. Why was Kashi Yatre so popular among the villagers? (30–50 Words)

Ans: *Kashi Yatre* dealt with the relatable struggle of an old lady who wished to visit Kashi to attain spiritual liberation. Its realistic portrayal of rural values, self-sacrifice, and emotional depth resonated deeply with the villagers.

Q2. How did Krishtakka justify touching her 12-year-old granddaughter's feet? (30–50 Words)

Ans: Krishtakka stated that she was not touching the feet of her young granddaughter, but rather bowing to her **Guru** (teacher) who had lovingly taught her to read and made her independent.

Q3. "For learning, age is no bar." Elaborate on this statement with reference to the story. (100–150 Words)

Ans: The story strongly validates the proverb that age is never a barrier to acquiring knowledge. Krishtakka, at the age of 62, took the bold decision to learn the Kannada alphabet from scratch. Despite her advanced age, household duties, and initial hesitation, her unwavering determination drove her to practice relentlessly.

She set a deadline for herself—Dussehra (Saraswati Pooja)—and met it through sheer dedication, repeating lessons, reading aloud, and writing continuously. Her transformation from an illiterate woman to an independent reader proves that passion, sincerity, and hard work can overcome any physical or age-related limitations.

11. PRACTICE CORNER (MCQS)

1. What was the name of the weekly magazine that carried Kashi Yatre?

- (a) Chandamama
- (b) Karmaveera
- (a) Mayura
- (d) Sudha

Correct Answer: (b) Karmaveera

2. At what age did Krishtakka decide to learn to read?

- (a) 50
- (b) 60
- (c) 62
- (d) 65

Correct Answer: (c) 62

3. Which festival was set as the deadline for achieving literacy?

- (a) Diwali
- (b) Dussehra (Saraswati Pooja)
- (c) Holi
- (d) Sankranti

Correct Answer: (b) Dussehra (Saraswati Pooja)

12. ONE-PAGE QUICK REVISION SHEET

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[ Illiteracy & Dependence ]
      ↓
[ Crisis: Narrator Leaves for Wedding ]
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[ Realization & Strong Determination ]
      ↓
[ Daily Practice & Homework (Guru: 12 y/o) ]
      ↓
[ Victory at Dussehra → Literacy & Dignity ]
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Key Takeaway for Exams: Literacy is the foundation of dignity and self-reliance. Never let age or social background hold you back from learning.