

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MENTORSHIP IN SHAPING FICTIONAL LIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MASASHI KISHIMOTO'S *NARUTO* AND KALKI KRISHNAMURTHY'S *KALVANIN KADHALI***

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**Abstract**

The research article aims to explore the impact of mentorship in shaping the lives of fictional characters in two different cultural contexts. Specifically, the study focuses on the impact on Naruto by characters like Iruka Umino and Kakashi Hatake from *Naruto* series and the impact on Muthaiyyan by lack of mentorship from Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali*. Using the comparative approach, the study explores deeply how mentorship contributes to the characters' development and growth of their personality. Furthermore, it seeks to highlight the significance of guidance in one's life irrespective of the culture. This interdisciplinary study explores the developmental journeys and challenges faced by the characters to shed light on the complexities of life without proper guidance.

**Keywords:** Mentorship, Guidance, Darkness, Support, Encouragement

Both in real life and in a variety of cultural contexts mentoring is essential to an individual's growth. This research article aims to analyze the contrasting effects of mentorship on two well-known figures from various literary works: Muthaiyyan from Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali* and Naruto Uzumaki from the popular manga series *Naruto* by Masashi Kishimoto. Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali* is a Tamil novel that deals with the life of a dacoit

which was serialized in the weekly magazine Ananda Vikatan in 1937 and was adapted into a movie in 1955. *Naruto* was serialized in a weekly Shonen Jump magazine from 1999 to 2014. Later, from 2002 to 2007 it was adapted into an anime television series, and its sequel *Naruto: Shippuden* premiered in 2007 and ended in 2017. The series adapts some of its cultural references from Confucianism (Chinese belief system initiated by Confucius) and Japanese mythology. Though both the works belong to different genres (Novel and Anime series) still they share a common ground in depicting human emotions and psychology.

Naruto's journey as portrayed in the manga series created by Masashi Kishimoto, exemplifies the positive impact of mentorship on personal growth and character development. Naruto starts as an orphaned outcast, but through the proper mentorship of many guiding figures such as Iruka Umino, and Kakashi Hatake he realizes his true potential and becomes a formidable ninja. On the other hand, Muthaiyyan from Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali* serves as an example of the negative effects that result from the lack of proper mentorship. Muthaiyyan is a loveable but misguided individual who lacks the direction needed to deal with life's obstacles which leads to disastrous results for both him and those around him. The study intends to shed light on the enormous impact that mentorship and guidance may have on a person's life trajectory by critically analyzing and contrasting the mentorship roles in *Naruto* and *Kalvanin Kadhali*.

Naruto is a young ninja in the Hidden Leaf village. He lost his parents on the day of his birth. His parents protected the village from the Nine-Tailed fox's attacks and sealed it inside the newborn baby, Naruto Uzumaki, and by doing so, they ended their lives. Since, Naruto is the Jinchuriki (the host of the Nine-Tailed fox), the whole villagers despise him. He was able to sense the hatred of the villagers and he is certain that they do not validate him. As a reaction to it, he started to do all the mischievous activities around the village like scribbling and painting on the walls of the houses and shops. When nobody acknowledged

him, Iruka Umino Sensei acknowledged Naruto and guided him to lead a good life. Then, he started to evolve into the savior of the village and eventually became the Hokage (the head of the village).

Iruka Sensei, Naruto's first mentor is introduced in the early episodes of *Naruto* at the Ninja Academy. Among the many influential figures in Naruto's journey, Iruka Sensei serves as the central figure by acting as a mentor, father figure, and friend. Iruka's role in Naruto's life exceeds beyond the teacher. As an orphan, Naruto was neglected by the villagers and feared by everyone, as a fearsome Nine-Tailed beast was sealed within him. Regardless of the rejection and prejudices from the villagers, Iruka treated him with compassion and became the first person to acknowledge Naruto as an individual. By giving acceptance and love, Iruka nurtured a strong moral compass within Naruto.

Iruka's moral guidance and emotional support played a crucial role in shaping Naruto's character. Iruka acts according to the sayings of Alexander Pope in *An Essay on Criticism* in which he states, "To err is *Humane*; to Forgive, *Divine*" (525). Iruka forgave Naruto's mischievous attitude and offered him unwavering support which became the driving force for Naruto to achieve his ambition. Furthermore, Naruto always had a void in his heart due to the absence of parental figures and the hatred he received from the villagers. However, Iruka filled this void by offering emotional support and guidance. One illustrative incident is when Naruto was unable to pass the ninja academy, Iruka provided moral support and encouraged him to put his heart and soul into the progress. When Naruto managed to master the skills, Iruka gave him his very own headband, a symbol of ninja.

As Naruto progresses in his ninja academy, his mentorship shifts from Iruka to Kakashi Hatake, a highly enigmatic ninja. Kakashi takes on the role of Naruto's sensei, leading team 7, which comprises Sakura, Sasuke, and Naruto. Kakashi's teaching method

often involves challenging the limits of his students. Kakashi's mastery of various skills provides a wealth of knowledge for Naruto. From Kakashi, Naruto learns essential skills such as chakra control, strategic planning, and the significance of teamwork. In addition, Kakashi also imparts crucial life lessons to Naruto such as the importance of comradeship, sacrifice, and blurred lines between good and evil that reshape his beliefs and guides his actions.

Kakashi's bitter past resonates with Naruto's past. They both share the pain of loneliness and the inner struggle for acknowledgment. These shared trials create a deeper bond between Kakashi and Naruto. Moreover, Kakashi acts as a guiding force for Naruto and encourages him to build strong connections with his teammates. One illustrative incident is that during the bell test, Kakashi tests the harmony of the team by grouping them to obtain two bells that are tucked in his waist. When team 7 failed to retrieve the bells, he instilled a valuable lesson that true strength not only comes from individual abilities but also from the support and trust of others.

When Kakashi's unwavering commitment to his student's growth serves as the modern representation of mentorship, in the *Mahabharata*, Guru Drona's commitment to his disciples serves as the classic representation of mentorship. Guru Drona, an unparalleled warrior and a revered mentor, imparts essential lessons in warfare, ethics, and life values impartially to both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Despite the rivalry between these two parties, he fuelled their growth and advancement. Despite operating in different storylines both Drona and Kakashi impart combat skills, life lessons, and compassion to their students and become the key figures in unlocking the potential and greatness within their respective followers. However, the guidance of Iruka and Kakashi stands as a beacon which helps Naruto to lead a faultless life.

In Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali*, the protagonist Muthaiyyan consequently grows up in a bitter environment. The happy life of Muthaiyyan faced many misfortunes after the death of his parents after which he moved to Poonkuzham with his sister Abirami. He promised to take care of his sister Abirami and vowed to marry only after the marriage of Abirami. Because of the promise, he was unable to marry Kalyani, his beloved, who later got married to an old man. Frustrated with the situation, he moved out of Poonkuzham and went to Thirruparankovil. There, he was employed by Sangupillai who had the cunning motivation of getting Muthaiyyan's sister Abirami. When Sangupillai misbehaved with Abirami, Muthaiyyan resorted to saving his sister and tried to file a complaint against him. But Sangupillai to protect his name, made a false accusation of Muthaiyyan of stealing money and eventually, he got arrested by the police. Desperate to save his sister from Sangupillai he escapes from the prison with the help of his cellmate Chokkan. When the police started to look for him, he escaped into a forest and began his life as a dacoit. Eventually, he dies when he attempts to reunite with his childhood love, Kalyani.

Such a tragic fate resulted due to the bereft of wise counsel that could shape Muthaiyyan's character and guide him through life's storms. Mentorship is crucial for growth, both personally and professionally. The guiding light of the mentor's wisdom steers individuals away from pitfalls. However, the lack of mentorship steers Muthaiyyan right into the pitfall.

Lack of mentorship and faulty guidance made Muthaiyyan susceptible to poor decisions that shaped the trajectory of his life. He met Chokkan in the prison who misguided him to escape the prison and eventually made him a robber. Chokkan sees an opportunity to exploit the strength of Muthaiyyan for his personal gains. So, he convinced Muthaiyyan to become a bandit, promising him wealth and power that he never had before. Under his influence, Muthaiyyan starts to lead a life of crime by robbing wealthy merchants and ruling

over the forest as a dacoit. However, as time goes by, Muthaiyyan's life becomes plagued with guilt, loneliness, and a constant fear of capture.

Throughout the novel, Muthaiyyan struggles with his emotions because of the proper mentorship. The lack of proper mentorship exacerbates his struggles, preventing him from a mature relationship with his love, Kalyani. Due to the lack of mentorship, from choosing between love life and loyalty to selecting the right path amidst societal prejudices he finds it extremely hard to navigate these crossroads. However, the treacherous path he had chosen overshadows his innate goodness and leads him astray. Nevertheless, had he encountered a mentor who could have offered perspective and wisdom, his life's trajectory might have taken a different turn. Therefore, Kalki's *Kalvanin Kadhali* highlights the adverse effects of a lack of mentorship.

The knowledge garnered in this article shows the detrimental impact of the absence of guiding figures in one's life. By comparing the roles of mentorships in these two different narratives, one can understand the profound impact of mentorship in one's life. However, the significant role of mentorship shapes the destiny of the individuals by empowering them to overcome obstacles and lack of proper mentorship potentially leading them astray.

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