

# Feminine Well-Being: An Elucidative Fabrication Of Sudha Murty's Gently Falls The Bakula

Dr. Digvijay Pandya<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Ramita Kher<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India.

<sup>2</sup>Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India.

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## Abstract

Humans are the exquisite creation of God. This narration can be read in many facets of print media and is even discussed at infinite platforms. If this creation by the omnipresent is wearing the panache then the area of feminine well-being and its relevance and exigency in literature gathers the spotlight. Feminine well-being is not the biological difference between femininity and masculinity rather it is their social and cultural constructions in the society at large. The prominent Indian writer Sudha Murty through her works completely justifies the portrayal of her characters under this bracket. She is an eminent writer who skilfully pens down the social and cultural constructions of the males and females in the society. This paper presents an insight to understand her novel 'Gently Falls the Bakula' which stands at a pedestal in this rationale. The paper tends to create acumen and awareness among people to be more amenable and susceptible towards learning that feminine well-being is the pre requisite of a healthy nation. The novel even clarifies the concept of transcendence and aids the person to make right choices and decisions in life.

**Keywords:** Feminine well-being, woman, identity, Sudha Murty, transcendence, creativeness, destructiveness

## Introduction

'Gently Falls the Bakula' is a chef d'oeuvre by Sudha Murty. The basic vision of a human encompasses the entire story. Three prominent human needs by Eric Fromm that is relatedness, rootedness and transcendence are considered important in the psychodynamic theory of humanistic psychoanalysis. The paper tends to develop a temperament to understand the concept of feminine well-being in light of these three human needs.

In relatedness, submission can take the form of the first; power can be the second one and the third is love. Love is the ability to unite with another while retaining one's individuality and integrity. This need can solve our basic human dilemma, the urge to be with other people in the world. As human beings, we are aware of our separateness from each other. The need is so powerful that sometimes we seek it in unhealthy ways. Through submission, individuals who would seek a submissive dominant partner or in partner symbiotic mutualism hinder the development of integrity and psychological health, inner strength and independence. If the submissive becomes more passive and vice versa, the dominant power becomes stronger.

In this novel, the character of Shrikant becomes the dominant one and Shrimati is submissive. But the realization of herself enables her to love herself and so she experiences the satisfaction of the need to relate without leaving her integrity and independence. The concept of feminine well-being is significant in the novel as the protagonist Shrimati suffers mentally as well as physical trauma. She is dealing with the pressures of domestic rivalries on one hand and the so-called woman pressures of childbearing on the other. Shrimati is suffering the pangs of irrational childbearing trauma which is a direct pointing at her healthy reproductive system.

"But her mother-in-law's feelings towards Shrimati had not changed, even after five years of her marriage

to Shrikant. She had never shown any affection towards Shrimati. Though there was a phone at home, she never called her. Shrimati tried her level best but failed miserably to win her mother-in-law's confidence. Sangakkara no longer taunted her about dowry. Now it was about not having children.”(Murty,110)

Shrimati is under a strong sense of suffocation when the females surrounding her try to defame her. Shrimati is unnecessarily under the radar of those who have questioned her identity of being a healthy woman possessing a healthy reproductive body. It is redundant and superfluous to become a victim when the real culprit is different. “Shrimati felt suffocated in this atmosphere but did not have any answer to their comments. Many times she would feel like telling them to advise their son instead. But her shyness wouldn't allow her. (Murty,110)

Rootedness enables us to grow beyond the security of our comfort zone and establish ties with the outside world. With the non-productive strategy, we become fixated and afraid to move beyond the security and safety of our non-productive environment. But this results in turning an individual to work actively and creatively in the world of non-productive. This can be witnessed through the actions of Shrimati in the novel. She was a devoted homemaker whose efforts, love and zeal are overlooked by Shrikant all the time.

Even when Shrimati falls sick, Shrikant is not with her. Her friend Vandana is shattered at the fact that her husband Pramod was so affectionate and loving when she delivered a baby. The time when a woman delivers a baby is extremely sensitive for the lady as she is undergoing physical pain and even passing through mood swings. However, the loving support of Pramod at this point proved a boon for Vandana. She came back to reality witnessing the pathetic condition of Shrimati.

“Vandana was shocked. In her middle-class circle, she could not imagine any husband leaving his wife when she was so sick. She remembered her case. When she had gone into labour and the pain was unbearable, her husband Pramod had stood by her side comforting her and encouraging her. After the delivery, he had taken a month off to stay with her. The doctors teased her saying that Pramod had suffered more than Vandana! Vandana looked at her dear friend lying there, almost unconscious. For the first time, she pitied Shrimati” (Murty, 107)

Transcendence can be described as the urge to rise above a passive and accidental existence and into the realm of purposefulness and fullness and freedom. It is an urge to evolve from a passive and accidental existence towards usability and freedom. Humans can create. We want to be creators. There are many ways to be creative. We give birth, we plant seeds, we make pots, we paint pictures, we write books and we love each other. Creativity is, in fact, an expression of love. Unfortunately, some don't find an avenue for creativity. As a result, such individuals become frustrated and they attempt to transcend their passivity by becoming destroyers instead. We can hate as well as love. But in the end, it fails to bring us that sense of transcendence we need. In the novel, Shrimati turns out to be a creator and Shrikant is an embodiment of a destroyer.

‘Gently falls the Bakula’ portrays two major characters Shrikant and Shrimati who develop a strong affection for each other despite belonging to belligerent societies. The novel has been commended for the illustration of its characters. Sudha Murty's writing is relatable as many witnesses such circumstances or situations surrounding them. The story is written with modesty and moves on a single plot with characters as the main focal point. Shrikant is knowledgeable and creative, but Shrimati is more resourceful. Slowly they both develop intimacy towards each other and experience marital bliss. They move to Mumbai and Shrikant manages a job for himself. Shrimati rests all her dreams on Shrikant and gives up her professional growth.

This is the beginning of Shrimati's yearning for the needs of relatedness, transcendence and rootedness. The failure to the attainment of all the positive aspects of these three needs that is love, respect, care, and belongingness to a group association turns out to be a disturbing environment. It assuages unbearable anxiety in Shrimati and makes life possible by avoiding panic, yet it does not solve the underlying problem and is paid for by a kind of life that often consists only of automatic or compulsive activities. She turns towards some of the mechanisms of escape which are of relatively small social input, but such mechanisms can clearly be illustrated under Eric Fromm's theory. They are to be found in any marked degree only in individuals with severe emotional disturbances.

In this novel, both Shrikant and Shrimati reflect authoritarianism. Shrimati's escape from freedom is the tendency to give up the independence of her and to fuse herself with Shrikant and his family to acquire the strength that she is lacking or has simply withdrawn into. These are the most frequent forms in which her masochist drives appear when

she is filled with feelings of inferiority, powerlessness and individual insignificance. The analysis of persons who are obsessed with these feelings shows that, while they consciously complain about these feelings and want to get rid of them, consciously some power within themselves drives them to feel inferior or insignificant. Their feelings are more than realizations of actual shortcomings and weaknesses. These persons show a tendency to belittle themselves, to make themselves weak and not too much and not to master things. Quite regularly these people show a marked dependence on the world outside themselves, on other people, institutions, or nature. They tend not to assert themselves, not to do what they want, by until, but to submit to the factual or alleged orders of these outside forces. And in this case, Shrimati has given up on her whole life on the instruction laid down by Shrikant. Often they are quite incapable of experiencing the feeling of what that person desires and what that person is. Masochists' dependency is conceived as love or loyalty, inferiority feelings as an adequate expression of actual shortcomings and suffering as being entirely due to unchangeable circumstances.

The very opposite to them, sadistic tendencies are regularly to be found in the same kind of characters. One is to make others dependent on oneself and to have absolute and unrestricted power over them. This is reflected in the character of Shrikant. It consists of the impulse to rule over others in this absolute fashion, to exploit them, to use them, to steal from her; her identity. This desire can refer to material things as well as to immaterial things such as emotional or intellectual qualities a person has to offer. Shrimati is deprived of love, affection and recognition. At this point, the story moves ahead, but, Shrimati is unable to comprehend that her sacrifice will not be acknowledged and she would be left baffled. Experiencing the ups and downs of her life, Shrimati meets an old Professor.

Professor Collins said, "In life, everyone is not blessed with intelligence. People who have intelligence do not use it properly. I am surprised to see that you are leading such a fruitless life. If you hold water in your hand it trickles away. Your intelligence is trickling away with time. If Dorothy were here, I would have said the same thing to her. Maybe my culture is different so I view everything in detail. Living like this may be very common in your culture." ( Murty, 113)

Shrimati realizes that though both of them as a couple has experienced progress in their life, yet much more is yet to be accomplished. The exploratory and interrogative expressions weave a web around her. Shrimati who is remarkable in every work she undertakes; is yanked into the humdrum of a monotonous life of a woman after her marriage. She had happily given up her dreams and aspirations for the progress of her husband, but, he responds in the most unaffectionate manner. Her suffering is the mirror of the dispossession of many young women in society. This suffering can be physical, but here, it is mental suffering. It aims to hurt actively, to humiliate, to embarrass or to see the person in embarrassing and humiliating situations. While the masochist's dependence is obvious, the expectations concerning the sadistic person are just the reverse: Shrikant seems so strong and domineering, and his object, Shrimati is so weak and submissive, that it is difficult to think of the strong one as being dependent on the one over whom he rules. And yet close analysis shows that this is true. The sadistic person, here, of course, is Shrikant who needs Shrimati to manage his chores over whom he rules, he needs her very badly since his feeling of strength is rooted in the fact that he is the master over Shrimati.

However the sufferer, Shrimati thinks of herself to be understood, to solve the conflict between basic dependency and the quest for freedom. Destructiveness is the outcome of this un-lived life. The root of destructiveness is easily recognizable that is the isolation of the protagonist and the suppression of her expansiveness. Automaton conformity is the solution that the majority of normal individuals find in modern society. To put it briefly, the individual stops being himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patents, and he, therefore, becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be. The discrepancy between the main self that is the individual ought to be more precise that is "I" and the world disappears and with it the conscious fear of loneliness and powerlessness. The automatization of the individual in modern society has increased the helplessness and insecurity of the average individual. That is, the individual is ready to submit to new authorities which offered him security and relief from doubt. In this case, it had been ten years; Shrimati had surrendered her aspirations, her whole life in the hands of Shrikant.

“Shrimati was standing as still as a rock. But inside her mind, she was exploding like a volcano. She had been so happy that she can't have at last agreed to spend three days with him. She was looking forward to the trip with much eagerness. Now, she feels like a tired traveller in a desert, looking for an oasis. Her heart did

not want to accept that she can't care for her. But by his behaviour today she knew she was right. Srikanth was only living for himself and his ambitions. He was using her as a personal secretary at home. At least for his official secretary, there were timings, but for her, it was an all-time job. Her anger was increasing by leaps and bounds, superseding reason.”(Murty, 147)

There is another viewpoint for this need for transcendence that is if a person cannot create life the person tends to destroy it. To destroy life makes that person think that he is in the mode of transcendence. Man can destroy life is just as miraculous a feat as that he can create it, for life is a miracle. The ultimate choice for man, since he is driven to transcend himself, is to create or destroy, to love or to hate. The enormous power of the will for destruction which we experience like a man is just like the drive to create which is similarly rooted in the behaviour. To say that man is capable of developing his brain of developing his primary potentiality for love and reason does not imply a naive belief in man's goodness. Destruction is a secondary potentiality, rooted in the very existence of man, and having the same intensity as power and passion can have. Creation and destruction, love and hate, are not too instincts which exist independently. They are both answers to the same need for transcendence. In this novel Shrikant is of the temperament that he is a creator, creating millions of business deals. In reality, he is dooming into destruction. However, on the contrary, Shrimati who falls prey to Shrikant's destruction emerges as a creator. This satisfaction of the need to create leads to happiness for Shrimati and destructiveness to suffering, which the destroyer that is Shrikant himself undergoes.

“This was too much for Srikanth. He was dumbstruck. He had never expected Shrimati to lash out at him with such harsh words. She would usually cry and keep quiet but never argue with him so fiercely. As an individual, he was aware that her arguments were clear, precise and logical, but as a husband, he was unable to digest them. It was probably the first time in the ten years of their marriage that Shrimati had shown unhappiness and disagreement with Shrikant's way of thinking. In that instant, Srikanth felt that they were two strangers living under the same roof. He always thought that his own life was much more significant than hers and his own will stronger. But now he stood disheartened without Shrimati.” (Murty, 168)

## Conclusion

The symbol of 'Bakula Flower' when compared to Shrimati justifies the title of the novel. Shrimati is an embodiment of selflessness who realizes her worth towards the conclusion of the story. The novel begins with a small author's note which is magnificent and dazzling and acts like a guide to the entire novel. How human perplexities, their plight, their state of quandary and impasse has been the gridlocked through main characters in the novel forms the exegetic frame of feminine well-being. The novel influences our thinking and lays a path of self-discovery. It elucidates uniqueness and self-dom.

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