



UNPARALLELED SACRIFICE VS SINGLE-MINDED PERSEVERANCE WITH REFERENCE TO SUDHA MURTY'S *GENTLY FALLS THE BAKULA*

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ABSTRACT

Change is the statute of life. Traversing this change, Indian English literature has travelled a lengthen voyage to reach its magnificence and stateliness. Along with this journey, the status of women all over the world has also been undergoing a rapid transform in recent times. By tradition, the Indian women accepted the frame work of family with blind faith and ever showed a spirit of rebellion. But slowly the times have moved and they started moving towards attainment of self hood and independence. The present paper spotlights how the self-centered notion of her better half makes her to take toll once more as a self-interested and ambitious woman.

Key words: *Sacrifice, perseverance, self-interest, ambition*

INTRODUCTION

Indian novel marks a striking departure from the depiction of the female as a dependent adjunct to her counter parts in society. A galaxy of women novelists has sprung up and they have contributed to the development of the Indian novels by inclusion of new themes, with special focus on the issues that concern women. Sudha Murty is one of the most significant of the contemporary Indian women novelists in English. In *Gently falls the Bakula*, Sudha Murty draws Shrimati, the protagonist, from the middle class family set up who is intelligent,

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educated and sensitive. Sudha Murty in this novel depicts how Shrimati, a determined woman on whom the central plot revolves, becomes the victim to her husband's perseverance and how the muted voice has freed itself and come on stage to air its concern.

Shrimati, a charming girl and Shrikant, an amiable and handsome boy fall in love with each other and get married. They move out of the small town in Hubli to Mumbai. Shrikant becomes a super successful IT professional and starts rapidly climbing the corporate ladder. He works obstinately and reaches the height of his trade, while Shrimati with a masters in history, discards her academic ambition and becomes his uncomplaining shadow, silently fulfilling her duties as a corporate leader's wife. When Shrimati examines and realizes that her sacrifices and compromises were unacknowledged, she finds her life drearily vacant.

Shrimati enters Shrikant's house as an unwelcomed daughter-in-law. Though she tries to win over Shrikant's mother, Gangakka teases Shrimati and blames her for the family's unfortunate situation as Shrimati hails from poor family. Gangakka was unable to tolerate her rival's daughter as her daughter-in-law. Gangakka frequently taunts Shrimati and it makes her dejected. When Shrimati tries to help her in kitchen, Gangakka avoids her presence by saying, "You have just married. You do not know our customs. So please don't bother about cooking." (70).

Napoleon Hill says, "Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness." The question is on whose forfeit the achievements have been accomplished. Shrimati, for the love she had for her husband Shrikant and to repay the loan her mother -in-law had taken before their marriage for Shrikant studies, postpones her research work and works in a small import-export company. Unaware of the plot entwined by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law, she sends her entire salary including the savings every month to her mother- in-law. As a typical Indian wife, she takes her husband's burden as her own. When Shrikant questions her for repaying his loan she answers, "When you are mine, your loan is also mine. It comes as a package. I cannot say I want only my husband. His joys and difficulties are also acceptable to me."(77)

When Shrimati is ardent about registering for her Ph.D in History, the opportunity knocks the door of Shrikant to go to Delhi. When Shrikant publicizes his transfer and said that he may abstain from his promotion if he declines the transfer, Shrimati compromises her passion and moves to Delhi along with Shrikant. When Shrikant opines that she may stay alone in Bombay to continue her studies and he can come there once in a month, as a devoted wife, she doesn't accept his idea. She comforts Shrikant by saying " No Shri, neither option is acceptable. I do not want you to forgo your promotion by rejecting this offer nor do I want to



stay alone. We will stay in Delhi for one year and I will take up my studies next year. Anyway north India has a lot of historical places I can visit.”(84).

In short span of time Shrikant climbs up the ladder of success in business because of his hard work and good performance. As a General Manager, Shrikant becomes a sedulous, committed, determined and a tireless worker. According to him “Success is never accidental, One has to plan for it.”(94) But he fails to take in that his constant triumphs are because of his wife’s give ups. With their new status, their life has extremely distorted for Shrikant and Shrimati. When Shrimati concerns about not having children, Shrikant advises her to use her ‘energy for constructive work’.(99)

Shrimati was taken aback by idea of Shrikant intention in having heirs. Gangakka no longer insults her about wealth but now for not bearing children. Shrimati reminds of her mother-in-law’s and sister-in-law’s comments of not having children. Though both are capable of having children, Shrikant, because of his over ambitious nature, pays no heed to his family responsibility as a husband. This makes her long for “Wouldn’t Ashoka, Vikramaditya, Siddhartha Gautama, about whom they had talked so much before marriage, be born in their family? Would there not be any heir to Shrikant and her intelligence?.....All the children she had dreamt of would remain only dreams.”(98)

As Mother Teresa says “Love begins by taking care of the closest ones-the one at home”, disregarding her illness, Shrimati performs all house hold chores and also remains as hostess for Shrikant’s guests. She is a torch bearer who clears all the obstacles that comes on the way of her husband. Not minding her contribution towards his success, Shrikant takes her for granted. Her sacrifice, compromise and cooperation are unrewarding when she finds Shrikant was focused only on his business. When she realizes this, “she felt a vacuum within herself, that the work she was doing was against her wishes, that she wasn’t enjoying it.”(116)

Shrimati at a snail's pace realizes that the love, affection and sharing of ideas and dreams they both had have disappeared in course of time. She becomes unenthusiastic in doing things which was no more interested. While meeting guests, “Shrimati was very tempted to say, ‘I am extremely unhappy at meeting people like you an wasting my time’ ...she smiled artificially and said, ‘I am glad to meet you’ ”(118).

Episodes in the party and Shrikant’s fuming words towards her mentioning the values of history becomes an acute offense for Shrimati. She was immensely humiliated by Shrikant’s remark and felt for the first time that he had attacked her individual freedom. When she tries to explain history to him, he blunts her by saying ““Enough of your lecture, Shrimati. Don’t talk about your worthless subject. The world of business is so different from yours. History



cannot feed you. Don't behave like a historian at such parties... After all, what is there in India's history to boast so much about?"(124)

The greatest gift one can give the loved ones are time, attention, love and concern. When one fails to show or receive afore mentioned qualities, the marriage life becomes futile. Shrikant's sharp words torn apart Shrimati's feelings and 'chopped the tender tree of their relationship.'(125). She starts wondering whether it is possible to return to the good old days of Hubli. When she opines this view of moving to Hubli, her suggestion was scoffed at by her husband. He insists her to be practical and says "Shrimati, the past is always beautiful because we cannot get it back. Childhood looks beautiful when you are young. Youth looks romantic when you are old. Whatever we lose is always precious. Think of adjusting and looking forward to an ever changing world. Don't get into the past."(134)

Shrimati, when ascertains that Shrikant lives his life for himself and for his own ambitions, feels like a worn-out traveler in a desolate tract looking for an oasis. She feels like "a planet which shines with reflected light, rather than that of a star which radiates its own light." (150). Once Shrimati comprehends that their interests, likings and insights were different, her grief grows as deep as the ocean. She decides history as her future instead of Shrikant now.

"A house is made up of four walls. But a home is where there is love, affection and a meaningful relationship. When that was not there it was only a house and the best thing was to get out of it." (152)

Shrimati explains thus " Shri, I loved history and I loved you. In fact, once upon a time I loved you more than history. But when you lost your finer sentiments, chasing the success in the world of business, I was left alone with nothing other than history...you knew your goal. Now, I am also clear about my goal and I want to achieve it."(162)

"Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of heart. O when may it suffice?

W.B.Yeats (Easter, 1916)

Shrimati who becomes annoyed, heated, dissatisfied, restless, and above all on every occasion where her anticipation were bluntly deprived of, starts exploring her situation and ponders the next decision to be chosen. Prof.Collins' guidance, her concern for history, her discontentment as a businessman's spouse, her childlessness, her husband's refutation for the adoption all these had made her to pick the role as a student of history hoping to find autonomy and contentment though not for wealth but at least to discover her distinctiveness.



At last, in Shrimati wisdom sunup and there is a transformation in her outlook towards bondage in nuptial life. Her massive chaos in aloofness and aggravation in life forces her to disintegrate the perception of hopeless submission to her husband and give up in life. Thus, in her own policy, she puts an end to her solitude and pines for freedom and identity from the very clutches of family bondage. Shrikant, who becomes the victim of authority, aspiration, status and success, feels helpless without Shrimati. He senses that Shrimati has taken his spirit away with her and realizes his adoring flower Bakula, gently falls from his life. Sudha Murthy, thus, depicts the qualities of Shrimati and Shrikant, replicating the spirit and temperament of present day couple after the dawn of IT Industries.

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