



Achieving global well-being with a focus on Sudha Murthy's Gently Falls the Bakula

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"No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind."

Introduction

Issues still exist in all areas of female life – cultural, political, economic, social, and spousal. For example, women are under privileged; women are ill treated; women are paid less; women are discriminated; and women are suffered. In view of the fact that Gender equality advances the development of all the society, the importance of gender equality should be realized. The enterprise of the present paper is to focus on Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls the Bakula* and to consider how and whether wellbeing can be achieved in unequal Indian society and extended to global wellbeing.

Spousal Violence in an Indian Novel

Spousal violence against women is a nationwide vulnerability that has been discussed in majority of Indian novels, written in regional languages, in English or in translations. *Gently Falls the Bakula* is the story of a matrimony that goes down its system when aspirations and self-interests capture their toll. Sudha Murthy's initial fictional work remains incredibly pertinent in its inquiry of contemporary values and work ethics with lovers – couple as the protagonists. Shrimati and Shrikant reside as neighbours and also are recognised as star students of their school in the small north Karnataka town of Hubli. It leaves no one in surprise when they come first and second respectively in the final Board exams. Soon Shrikant discovers he is outlandishly attracted to Shrimati, a plain-looking yet fascinating one, who always does better than him in the exams. Shrimati too falls in love with the good-natured and good-looking Shrikant and the two get married. Shrikant joins an IT company and starts swiftly climbing the corporate ladder. He works uncompromisingly and reaches the peak of his industry, while Shrimati abandons her scholastic aspirations and becomes his accompaniment, dutifully fulfilling her duties as a corporate leader's wife. But one day, while chatting to an old professor, she starts probing what she has done with her velle and realizes it is bleakly blank and dynamically reshapes her life starting to pursue her PhD in her interested area, History.

A full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and in every decision-making means power and responsibility established between couple at home and extended to the communities. Equality between couples is a matter of condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for domestic peace and self development. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered spousal healthy relation. A sustained and long-term commitment is essential, so that women and men can make every effort together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Sudha Murthy will take a look at how well the agenda for women's empowerment has fared in India through her novels and the present work vouches the same. 'Was there real peace in any family? Were all these ambitious men as unconcerned about their wives' feelings?' (132) While Shrikant gives room for his wife's new behaviour in his thoughts but stops pondering once he reaches Nariman point. 'Computers, competition and products occupied that space.' (140)

Feminization of poverty

There is systematic discrimination and neglect of women in India, actually leading to the struggle against the unequal distribution of power both physical and economic between the sexes. Portraying

women as equals in the society is a subject that has been given low priority by the Indian community but a subject that has been given top priority by the Indian literature. The Indian family system calls for focus on gender sensitization and women issues in a crucial way as the status of women – educated; job doer; illiterate – is damaging for the women empowerment in India. In the light of these facts, the present novel focuses on feminine spousal issues in contemporary Indian society and role of literature in addressing the issues. It seems that their empowerment at in laws family is still a distant dream. There is gap between what the bride dreams and later experiences at husband's home with his parents and his other members or with him alone at a city where he works. According to Cambridge English Dictionary 'empowerment' means 'to authorize'. In other words, they have to be authorized to have power over their own lives. However, a woman in the role of wife is handicapped physically, psychologically and culturally to empower herself without any spousal help and positive action. The growing socio, economic, and educational disadvantages faced by them has to be neutralized. The female protagonist of the novel, Shrimati fails to convince her husband, Shrikant in going back to their native city, Hubli becomes silent. When questioned, she being silent, she says: "Shri, if you can't understand my silence, then you will not understand my words!" (134)

Laws Aimed at Empowerment of Women

The progress of a country exclusively depends on the social status of women. Women make up approximately one half of the globe's population and yet they are victims of exploitations by male dominated society. Women require to be empowered and men must disseminate their obligations towards women. Women go on with exploitation. The situation is similar far and wide whether developed, the developing or under developed countries. On one side, the woman is worshipped as holy being and on the other side she is oppressed, suppressed, depressed, exploited and victimized by the male dominated society. Women still suffer from discrimination, exploitation and victimization. When Shrikant announces his 2-3 week US trip cancelling their 2-3 day personal trip, she says: 'You never think of me as a human being or what hurts me or what makes me happy! You treat me like a machine. (148) The need of the hour is empowerment of women decentralizing authority and power. It means giving voice for voiceless. In India there are numerous laws aimed at empowerment of women and it would be proper to refer some of the most important legislations pertaining to empowerment of women. Some of the provisions of Indian constitution safeguarding the women rights include: Equality before law for women (Article 14); State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (1)); State to make special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3)); Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16); State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally, the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); Equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d)); To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A); State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42); State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46); State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and

the improvement of public health (Article 47); To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)); Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3)); and not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T 3) (Purnima, Global Media Journal: Women's Issues in India: Role and Importance of Media, VOL-IV | ISSUE-1 | Autumn 2010 & Spring 2011).

Assortments of Transgression

There are assortments of transgression against women both inside and outside of their home deep-seated in the existing Indian society. Masculinity has been commanding the space of India's social, economic, political and religious frameworks since time immemorial. Shrikanth Deshpande, her father and Shrikanth Deshpande, her husband had enjoyed the same exercising the power handed over so naturally and luxuriously through the institution of marriage. Indian conventional society is prejudiced by age-old habits and customs ceasing opportunities to the daughter – in – law to grow and flourish. As a result of which the quality of life is lowered for many Indian women. When Shrikanth's mother cautioned them a loan, Shrimathi joined in a small import – export company and every month she sent her entire salary along with some savings from his salary unrealising the foul play to buy some gold to daughter – Rama. Rama was thrilled. Neither she nor her mother realized that this money was at the cost of the bright young Shrimathi's future.(79) Later also when Shrikanth acknowledged his wife's contribution to clear the loan, his mother, Gangakka was furious when she read his letter. 'What is so great about Shrimathi? She did not bring any dowry, so she has repaid his loan, that's all.' (80) The meaning of violence stumbles on a say-so in a hierarchical society based on exploitative gender relations. "The persistence of a dominant family ideology which enjoins a strict sexual division of labor and age and gender hierarchy means that young wives have to invest a considerable amount of time and energy in foraging new relationships not all of which are caring or accommodative." (<http://www.sociologyguide.com/women-and-society/domestic-violence.php>) Even after so many years she never felt at home in Gangakka's house. She was still an outsider. But how could she explain all this to her mother or Shri?(88) The unequal nature of intra-familial behavior patterns within the framework of matrimony challenge many women attempt to negotiate space for themselves to assert their personhood leading to intra-couple discord over the roles and the woman's quest for her identity. She raises a question 'you do your duties to your company because you are paid and given a status. What about my work? And what is my role in this marriage? Just think over, whether you have discharged any responsibilities as a husband... you decide one way or the other. You have an obligation to your wife. If you do not fulfil it, I will not stay in this house.' (149) An indispensable share of the power relationship between spouses toughens inequality and in due course interspousal violence is prevalent. 'I used to welcome your guests, look after the house and fulfill the duties just the way your personal secretary does. I was your valuable, glittering ornament in the social circuit...(162) 'You can definitely live without me. You will find an excellent secretary who can do all this work for you.(163) Empowerment for women includes accomplishing wholesome economic power and excludes patriarch and social norms.(Pitt, Khandker, Cartwright) However, quantifying empowerment is complicated and weighs down too. 'I am going away only because I want to be like you.'(161) In the present novel of study here traces of both empowerment and disempowerment are shaded by typical spouse Shrikanth who exploits the intellectual wealth of his wife at times of need but ignores her miserably bringing the quality couple – time to sub zero. At her questioning stage holding his hand demanding an answer he responds: ... Shrimathi, the whole world says that you are more intelligent than me. You think over it and whatever you feel is right, go ahead and do it. I am leaving now.' (149) He took his bag and left leaving her dumbstruck. He thought: 'She would do whatever he asked her to' once she would be at home. She realized

that she achieved nothing. It was a big zero. History and Shrikanth make her happy. Minus Shrikanth, she has now pursuing doctorate in history before her as her fascinating option. When she found the arrangements done by Prof Collins for her doctorate, her joy knew no bounds. 'She could become a student again. She felt life had opened a new door for her. This time she was making a decision with her head, not with her heart.' Thoughts came about Shrikanth's wellbeing but she overcame and decided to find her own individuality. She decided to break the news to her husband and leave. Her husband's promotion as MD of the company his return day from US trip did not move her. Shrimathi closed her eyes, used all her will power and answered slowly. " Shri, I am leaving and I don't have any plans to return..." Kissing his forehead gently, hugging him warmly, when his wife left without even turning back with a small bag, he 'was caught in a whirlpool of thoughts... He thought all his success was due to his own efforts. Now he thought of Shrimathi. What was her share in his achievement? She always wished him progress, silently and constantly suffered her loneliness. Actually she deserved a lion's share in his achievements. But he never acknowledged it. Today she had broken his pride by rejecting his position, his achievements and leaving him.'

Forward-looking Strategies

Sudha Murty successfully portrayed the character of female protagonist who develops a sense of self – worth and put her life to energizing and filling it like Alfred Tennyson's Ulysses.

"It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me." (Alfred Tennyson, Ulysses, 1-5)

The Platform for Action

Shrimathi decides to explore the historical hidden avenues and rewrite it, if possible. She surely knows her ability to secure desired changes and the right to control her life and decides:

"...I will drink

Life to the lees"(6-7)

She so quickly, consciously, confidently and systematically gets back her ability to organize to influence the direction of social change in order to create a more social order generating choices and exercising desired power. There were years turned and she felt it a pause and dull too.

"How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!" (22-23)

She further decides to start her life again.

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought." (31,32)

Nothing bothers her and she so naturally takes back her chained life into her hands and starts reshaping it:

"When I am gone. He works his work, I mine. (43)

When she was not recognised and her sacrifice not acknowledged it was very cruel for her and she decided to be "strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." (69-70)

Conclusion

The shy, obedient but unique Shrimathi, who shared all his success even when he had taken the entire credit of each success to his own efforts, who wished him progress, silently and constantly suffering her loneliness, who deserved a lion's share in his achievements, acted on what she felt was right. She was more to Bhamati, the woman

who had never seen the outside world and did not know her capacity. Shrimati, knowing her capabilities and being aware of the outside world, dedicated her entire life to her husband but realized the evil doing in the family system and made it corrected in a best possible way.

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