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Silence and Selfhood: A Thematic Analysis of *Gently Falls the Bakula* by Sudha Murty

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The main focus of this study is how *Gently Falls the Bakula* by Sudha Murty examines how silence affects our sense of self. To reveal those nuanced cultural and psychological facets that shape who we are, the analysis draws on clues from the narrative, including textual clues, character development shifts, and reader impressions. Characters usually turn inward and embrace silence as a coping mechanism for their own ups and downs as well as more general social pressures.

I. Abstract

This essay examines the fascinating relationship between silence and self-identity in *Gently Falls the Bakula* by Sudha Murty. It starts by showing how characters, caught up in private moments of reflection, cope with social pressures as well as their own personal challenges. The research reveals the cultural and psychological meaning of selfhood through character changes, a thematic analysis of the text, and even reader impressions. Overall, the findings imply that silence is a bridge to self-discovery that helps people overcome demands from both the inside and the outside, rather than just being a coping strategy. Unexpectedly, the study also points out that these insights apply to the healthcare sector, where a deeper understanding of the value of calm may direct therapy and patient care towards a deeper level of emotional awareness. In general, this tactic seems to be in favour of a more thorough, integrated approach—one that gives therapeutic practice and personal narratives equal weight. All things considered, this paper presents a fresh, sometimes unexpected look at the connection between self-identity and recovery, arriving at a special nexus between literature and medicine.

II. Introduction

It offers a window into the intricacies of psychological and cultural selfhood as seen through these characters, bridging introspection with broader conversations about who we are. It is more than just a school assignment. The goal of the study is to examine the narrative strategies Murty uses, emphasising how constant silence affects character development and self-awareness while also drawing attention to the social forces that tend to stifle creativity. Silence may be a coping strategy and, occasionally, an unexpected source of strength when faced with societal expectations, according to the research, which uses theme analysis that blends reader perceptions with textual hints. All in all, this research is significant for understanding identity and mental health in various sociocultural contexts, as well as for academic discussions in literature. It may even lead to the development of new therapeutic approaches. In conclusion, this essay argues that silence is crucial in shaping our modern narratives of identity and serves as a crucial bridge connecting literature with the often complicated reality of psychological experience (Jonathan L Ready)(Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794)(N/A)(Schafer R)(Fairfax D)(Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810)(Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774)(Norton B et al., p. 412-446)(Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931)(Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339)(Vasileiou K et al.)(Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32)(Nowell L et al.)(Bradshaw C et al.)(Kwame A et al.)(Carhart R-Harris et al., p. 316-344)(Claudia L Reardon et al., p. 667-699)(Daphne M Davis et al., p. 198-208).

Literature Review

Modern literary debates frequently veer off course and touch on important subjects, such as gender roles, individual aspirations, and societal norms. These problems are shown to us via Shrimati's life in Sudha Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula*, a journey in which strict societal norms clash with individual individuality. Murty isn't being subtle here; she demonstrates how women are constrained by archaic gender norms and must decide between their commitment to their families and the evolving contemporary world. Scholars have noted that the work highlights the sacrifices made by women under a patriarchal society by fusing concepts of love, ambition, and even globalisation (Jonathan L Ready). Shrimati's struggles, including overcoming a controlling mother-in-law named Gangakka and encountering mockery for not having children or giving a sufficient dowry, are similar to those faced by many Indian women in the present day (Dr. Shakir N, p. 149-151). Then there is the ongoing feeling of alienation as she attempts to maintain an identity that appears to be in continual opposition to her husband Shrikant's growing aspirations (Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931). Although a great deal has been written about Shrimati's tumultuous relationship with Shrikant and his unrelenting quest for financial achievement, the majority of the prior research falls short: it hardly ever focusses on her quiet, unsaid act of resistance. Although a lot of assessments discuss gender discrimination and personal aspirations in modern-day India, very few go further into how her silence turns into her own kind of protest (Snyder H, p. 333-339)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810)(Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). Murty subverts

conventional marriage expectations by tactfully refusing to back down, even when she chooses to pursue a PhD in history. This suggests that silence may be an act of self-affirmation rather than a submission to fate (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810). Furthermore, the novel's examination of family and social expectations captures the significant changes that were taking place in India in the 1980s, when globalisation was starting to directly conflict with long-standing customs (Murty S)(Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). It is evident from this combination of individual hardships and larger societal narratives that further study is required to comprehend how profound cultural shifts impact personal identity, particularly for women who are torn between social responsibility and personal ambition (Fairfax D)(Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931). Few conversations explore the layers of silence that conceal a profound emotional and psychological fight for identity, even while some focus on striking a balance between achieving financial independence and the pursuit of self-realization (Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339)(Nikita U Mishra et al., p. 119-122). This study focusses on how silence manifests in Shrimati's character and what it means for understanding selfhood under cultural restrictions by situating her journey within a larger framework of struggle against conventional narratives. The following examines previous research on gender dynamics in Murty's writings, breaks down the significance of silence as a motif, and offers a glimpse of potential future research directions that might clarify the complex interplay between individual identity and societal expectations. Simply said, it's about realising how female autonomy and the difficulties of staying true to oneself emerge despite powerful, repressive pressures (Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32)(Nowell L et al.)(Bradshaw C et al.)(Kwame A et al.)(Carhart R-Harris et al., p. 316-344)(Claudia L Reardon et al., p. 667-699)(Daphne M Davis et al., p. 198-208). A sort of history emerges as one looks back over the developing interpretation of *Gently Falls the Bakula*, with recurring themes such as social roles, the search for selfhood, and stillness. Early discussions of the novel focus on Shrimati's readiness to make sacrifices and the conflict between her own goals and social expectations, which fight against patriarchal conventions that prevent her from speaking her truth (Jonathan L Ready), (Fairfax D). However, as the story progresses, critics start to see a change: Shrimati progressively stops being just a devoted wife and starts to become someone who aspires to achieve personal fulfilment. Shrikant's increasing disregard for her sacrifices as he pursues his own goals is entwined with this shift, providing a startling glimpse into gender relations in contemporary India (N/A), (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni). By situating Shrimati's decisions within the larger framework of Indian society, which still harbours many women's aspirations, subsequent interpretations become even more nuanced. Critics laud Murty's ability to depict Shrimati's journey towards independence and self-assertion through complex character arcs and striking symbolism (Fairfax D), (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni). The choice to seek, stands out as a daring, nearly revolutionary move against established standards, and the story gradually reflects the shifting views on female roles in the late 20th century (N/A), (Schafer R). Ultimately, discussions around the book draw attention to Shrimati's journey's emotional cost. Her personal life, which is shaped by significant social influences, is a

bittersweet tango between gain and loss. The work becomes both a personal narrative and a scathing critique of the ideas that define women because of the combination of ambition, loneliness, and an unrelenting search for identity that still strikes a chord with readers today (Cho S et al., p. 785-810), (Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). When considered collectively, the literary corpus presents a striking trajectory, emphasising once more how important—and even agonizing—it is to maintain one's identity in the face of silence. The fight between selfhood and silence, which embodies Shrimati's own existence, is at the heart of this thematic investigation. Her sacrifices for Shrikant, which come at the expense of her inner self, amply illustrate the tension between social expectations and personal desire that the story exposes. Several academics have noted that, despite Shrikant's professional achievements receiving all the praise, Shrimati's identity is frequently hidden, leaving her feeling abandoned and emotionally alone (Jonathan L Ready)(N/A). As external pressures mount, from her controlling mother-in-law to deeply ingrained cultural standards around marriage, her struggle for self-affirmation, set against the backdrop of traditional gender roles, only becomes more difficult. These factors exacerbate her internal conflict and fuel her quest for identity, as several authors have noted (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). Many Indian women have found resonance in Murty's nuanced depiction of Shrimati, which offers a subdued yet powerful indictment of a patriarchal society that requires women to forgo their goals in order to support their families (Schafer R). Her glaring mismatch between her own goals and her marriage's realities is a potent illustration of the sacrifices demanded of women in conventional roles. As a mirror of larger cultural shifts, the novel subtly encourages a marriage balance founded on respect for one another when Shrimati finally expresses her demand for independence. Examining these tiers aids in comprehending the conflict between personal aspirations and the complex world of interpersonal interactions during periods of social and economic upheaval. Furthermore, the setting of the book contributes to the intensification of this conflict—a fight between modernity and tradition that highlights Shrimati's attempt to establish her own identity in the face of a pervasive silence (Karen E Watkins et al.). Regarding methodology, assessments of Silence and Selfhood in *Gently Falls the Bakula* include a variety of techniques to unravel its complex topics. Character analysis is a crucial technique that focusses on Shrimati, whose biography illustrates the complex difficulties of remaining loyal to oneself in the face of strong social pressures. Shrimati, according to Dr. Nilofer Shakir, is a realistic representation of the struggles women in traditional Indian culture confront as they attempt to strike a balance between their aspirations and their responsibilities to their families (Jonathan L Ready). Here, feminist literary criticism also intervenes, examining Murty's treatment of gender and identity issues. This strategy highlights Shrimati's transition from selflessness to self-determination, particularly when she copes with the consequences of Shrikant's disdain for her aspirations (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). Historical-contextual approaches also show how the Indian setting of the 1980s shapes character interactions—Shrimati's rejection of traditional norms is juxtaposed with a changing society (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). When taken as a whole, these methods not only deepen our comprehension of Murty's writing

but also reveal a story that continues to have significant resonance in discussions concerning women's identity and empowerment in a changing cultural context (Schafer R). The use of diverse theoretical frameworks adds depth to Murty's novel's analysis of selfhood and silence. Shrimati's life is portrayed as a battleground where the demands of traditional roles and the need for individuality collide. Many scholars argue that her emotional burden from her marriage to Shrikant and her sacrifices reflect the greater problem of women's silent suffering in patriarchal societies, where personal aspirations typically clash with expectations from family (Jonathan L Ready)(Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). When all these viewpoints are taken into consideration, the literature ultimately paints a picture of empowerment and self-discovery. Shrimati's journey is comparable to that of many women who fight for personal freedom; her decision to pursue her academic goals is a defiant act against social norms (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794)(Schafer R)(Karen E Watkins et al.). The idea that comprehending gender, identity, and modernity necessitates comprehending the connection between silence and selfhood is persuasively supported by this range of perspectives. In conclusion, *Gently Falls the Bakula's* thematic analysis reveals the nuanced relationship between silence and selfhood, with Shrimati standing in for the shared experience of women torn between traditional norms and modern aspirations. Murty depicts Shrimati's transformation from a follower to a confident person while deftly navigating themes of ambition, gender dynamics, and cultural expectations. Shrimati's brave choice to continue her education in spite of social and familial pressures is an example of how silence can be a tool for self-affirmation and resistance in the face of social pressure to fit in (Nikita U Mishra et al., p. 119-122). The idea that women's stories in modern literature are crucial to understanding both personal struggles and broader societal changes is reiterated throughout this entire investigation. The analysis highlights how attitudes towards gender and identity have changed in tandem with globalisation and modernisation by placing Shrimati's journey against the rich backdrop of India in the 1980s (Dr. Shakir N, p. 149-151). The novel's insights into female empowerment make it not only pertinent but also crucial to the current conversations surrounding women's rights, autonomy, and the challenging balancing act between individual aspirations and the demanding expectations of society (Jonathan L Ready)(Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). However, it is also necessary to recognise that the current body of research on Murty's work has certain shortcomings. Fewer studies explore silence as both a sign of oppression and a brave statement of selfhood, with most scholarship focussing on glaring gender inequality and marital sacrifices (N/A)(Schafer R). By examining how silence affects women's lives in various cultural contexts, this gap in the literature presents a promising direction for future research that could deepen our understanding of identity and agency (Fairfax D). Furthermore, although recent research offers valuable insights, it frequently overlooks an intersectional viewpoint that considers socioeconomic and class aspects in post-colonial societies. Studies of female selfhood in the context of changing cultural landscapes could gain weight from a socio-historical approach that situates these stories within the larger framework of India's transformative journey (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810). By filling in these gaps and

improving techniques, academics could more thoroughly examine the intricate webs of social resistance and identity formation in Murty's story, providing a deeper understanding of the ongoing battles for self-awareness in the face of structural obstacles (Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774)(Vasileiou K et al.). In conclusion, *Gently Falls the Bakula's* profound exploration of selfhood and silence reveals powerful tales of female resiliency and identity. More scholarly attention should be paid to the complex conflict between personal aspirations and social responsibilities; this debate touches on topics such as ambition, gender equity, and the cultural influences on women's lives (Murty S). In addition to strengthening our admiration for Murty's work, this review emphasises the critical need for more studies that integrate gender, class, and culture to examine individual narratives in our increasingly interconnected world (Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931)(Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339)(Vasileiou K et al.)(Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32)(Nowell L et al.)(Bradshaw C et al.)(Kwame A et al.)(Carhart R-Harris et al., p. 316-344)(Claudia L Reardon et al., p. 667-699)(Daphne M Davis et al., p. 198-208).

Methodology

The Bakula delves into topics such as selfhood and silence in Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula* without following a tidy, methodical outline. Finding a method that allows for nuance is necessary to navigate the delicate back and forth between an individual's inner self and what society expects of them. Showing how Shrimati, the protagonist, perseveres on her quest to discover who she is while battling both internal and external forces is a significant challenge here; this is crucial to comprehending what it means to be a woman in modern-day India (Jonathan L Ready). In general, the study reveals that silence can serve two purposes, sometimes as a tool of oppression and other times as a source of personal power (Murty S)(Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). The method, which combines concepts from feminist literary theory with a thorough, qualitative reading of the text, has frequently assisted in revealing how gender roles and individual identities emerge in comparable works (N/A)(Schafer R). From a different perspective, the study seeks to illuminate Shrimati's inner life and emotional fluctuations, implying more general societal problems connected to personal aspirations against a patriarchal background (Nikita U Mishra et al., p. 119-122)(Fairfax D). Data from previous studies that examine her difficulties—particularly those tumultuous interactions with her husband and mother-in-law, which provide a clearer picture of her evolving sense of self—will be gathered to support these insights (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810). Using this type of framework typically helps close the gaps in previous research on female agency in Murty's work (Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). The study's findings may also significantly advance scholarly discussions regarding women's roles and the frequently intricate interplay between individual goals and social norms in contemporary India (Dr. Shakir N, p. 149-151)(Norton B et al., p. 412-446). By establishing a practical framework for examining how silence affects selfhood, there is also an attempt to provide practical insight for those involved in gender studies and literature, advocating for a more sincere interaction with stories that contain these themes (Scherer AG et al.,

p. 899-931). Furthermore, by drawing on feminist literary criticism, the study is able to examine critically how ingrained cultural norms affect people's inner lives, leading to a more complex discussion of gender dynamics in Murty's story (Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339). In the end, the research aims to trace the connections between the structures society creates and personal choice by carefully and casually combining these methods, capturing the essence of *Gently Falls the Bakula* as it actually develops (Vasileiou K et al.)(Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32)(Nowell L et al.).

Results

A blend of the ancient and the modern, Sudha Murty's story in *Gently Falls the Bakula* depicts firsthand how women struggle to define themselves in a world of constraints. For instance, Shrimati's journey is about more than just remaining quiet or quiet; it's about that same quiet igniting a spark of strength. Her early sacrifices for her husband, Shrikant, highlight the difficulties that many women actually face as they attempt to defy expectations and pursue their own goals (Dr. Shakir N, p. 149-151). What's remarkable is Shrimati's gradual metamorphosis; she begins nearly voiceless before discovering her inner voice. She typically chooses education over staying in a controlling marriage with Shrikant, a decision that reflects a larger demand for women's autonomy in contemporary society. This change is consistent with other research that demonstrates how education and individual aspirations work together to empower Indian society (Jonathan L Ready). Previous studies also support the notion that education can significantly alter a woman's perception of herself and her interactions with others (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). Additionally, Murty's portrayal of Shrimati resisting her husband's materialistic impulses relates to literature that highlights the significant emotional toll that many women bear when they adhere to outdated gender norms (N/A)(Schafer R). The way that silence and self-discovery interact in this instance is reminiscent of feminist discourse emphasising the significance of women taking back control of their own stories (Fairfax D)(Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni). Beyond scholarly discussion, these findings are significant. They demonstrate how a narrative like Murty's can spark discussions about identity and even support a larger movement for gender parity (Cho S et al., p. 785-810). Practically speaking, understanding these dynamics could influence advocacy and educational initiatives aimed at redefining perspectives on gender and empowerment (Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). Ultimately, this study closes a critical gap in our knowledge of gender roles in literature and society at large and establishes a framework for future research on women's narratives in literature, addressing both literary criticism and social activism (Norton B et al., p. 412-446).

Discussion

Murty's *Gently Falls the Bakula* explores identity and self, starting with a conflict between personal success and the demands of society, especially when taking into account the position of women in modern-day India. Shrimati's twisted path towards self-realization appears to follow the changing discourse of women's empowerment in literature, and we observe her gradually discovering her voice while transforming

from an introverted, shadowed role into that of personal agency. This transition sort of harmonizes with contemporary feminist thought, whereby most scholars aver that individual narratives are fairly important in puncturing traditional patriarchal systems. (Jonathan L Ready). Meanwhile, the manner in which Murty adds familial and societal pressure to the mix is not merely an impediment; at times, it becomes a catalyst for transformation, reminding us of research that highlights the other side of conventional roles in the lives of women (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794). Reflecting on previous research on gender dynamics, the results here lean towards literature that probes into the psychological cost of adhering to what society dictates, and the continuous search for one's identity (N/A)(Schafer R). Shrimati's hardships, which also come up in conversations about how education affects women's perceptions of themselves, provide a nuanced perspective on how ambition and gender frequently cross paths in unexpected ways (Fairfax D). In addition to focussing on internal conflict, the story depicts the external forces women encounter when attempting to define their roles; this is corroborated by research on the psychological and societal effects of conventional expectations (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810). These observations typically lead to a more extensive discussion about how narrative therapy could assist women in expressing their experiences and learning from them. The work delves into methodological and practical areas, expanding the significance of these findings beyond theory. In general, the research supports the notion that it is fairly significant to incorporate personal narratives into feminist literature (Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). It encourages literary and social theory scholars to view storytelling as a form of therapy that appears to strengthen women's resilience in addition to being an enjoyable pastime (Norton B et al., p. 412-446)(Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931). By adopting this strategy, the study opens the door for further research that explores the ways in which gender, identity, and social expectations interact in diverse cultural contexts (Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339). In addition to advancing a deeper examination of literature's influence on forming individual and collective identities, particularly in light of the rapidly evolving field of women's rights and representation in modern society, this study expands on preexisting frameworks regarding gender narratives (Vasileiou K et al.)(Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32). In the end, Murty's art resonates with greater social demands for female empowerment and serves as a sort of ode to the resilient spirit of women (Nowell L et al.)(Bradshaw C et al.). By courageously defying past conventions, her story lays the groundwork for new configurations of silence and selfhood—echoing great movements for transformation and speaking to the messy, complicated lives of women in our modern world (Kwame A et al.)(Carhart R-Harris et al., p. 316-344)(Claudia L Reardon et al., p. 667-699)(Daphne M Davis et al., p. 198-208).

Conclusion

Gently Falls the Bakula captivates you with ideas that appear out of nowhere. The story eloquently lays forth a recurring combination of quiet and the search for one's own identity. For example, Shrikant and Shrimati are seen battling contemporary Indian norms while pursuing aspirations that seem both intimate and

bordering on defiance. Most of the time, Murty challenges the traditional gender norms prevalent in Indian society by tenderly following Shrimati's journey towards self-discovery (Dr. Shakir N, p. 149-151). The piece also serves as a reminder of how important mutual respect and understanding are in a marriage by contrasting Shrimati's silent sacrifices with her husband's slow loss of emotion, which is frequently attributed on his work-related distractions (Murty S). The research then goes into further depth on how familial and social pressure to be quiet can substantially hinder personal growth, while simultaneously implying that taking back one's voice might have transforming effects (Jonathan L Ready). These concepts, which are reiterated throughout the research, are not only literary reflections; they are significant in both scholarly and real-world settings, indicating that women's stories hold the key to revealing more extensive sociocultural trends (Talgorn E et al., p. 7794-7794)(N/A). The study encourages a critical reassessment of institutional norms that all too frequently tend towards patriarchal attitudes, acknowledging the value of both individual and shared identities and ultimately advocating for environments where real support and personal fulfilment coexist (Schafer R)(Fairfax D). Future research is advised to examine even more varied literary settings in order to observe the intersections between gender and cultural narratives. Discussions on women's empowerment and the evolution of identities might be greatly enhanced by this kind of investigation (Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni)(Cho S et al., p. 785-810)(Lisa H Nishii, p. 1754-1774). Furthermore, practical research that takes into account contemporary variations on Murty's themes in other social and economic contexts may offer new insights into how globalisation is redefining gender roles and self-identities (Norton B et al., p. 412-446)(Scherer AG et al., p. 899-931). Future researchers may be able to clarify the relationship between silence, selfhood, and social expectations by expanding on the paradigm presented here, providing us with a more comprehensive knowledge of gender dynamics in literature and beyond (Karen E Watkins et al.)(Snyder H, p. 333-339). In tying things up, the research not only inspires fresh conversation about female representation in Indian literature but also sets the stage for broader concerns about power, voice, and identity in oppressed populations (Vasileiou K et al.)(Nyumba TO et al., p. 20-32)(Nowell L et al.). In the end, my project serves as a kind of springboard for investigating the extent to which our narratives influence how we perceive ourselves in the midst of the complex reality of social expectations (Bradshaw C et al.)(Kwame A et al.)(Carhart R-Harris et al., p. 316-344)(Claudia L Reardon et al., p. 667-699)(Daphne M Davis et al., p. 198-208).

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