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Brittle Matrimonial Bond in Sudha Murthy's Novel *Gently Falls the Bakula*

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Abstract:

Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls the Bakula* is one of the finest novels. It depicts an Indian love marriage that falls because of rising materialistic desires and selfish interests. Murthy's first book, written over thirty years ago, remains strikingly pertinent in its examination of contemporary values and work principles. The purpose of this research paper is to describe the lives of a married couple and the female protagonist Shrimati's battle to maintain her deteriorating consciousness and self-realization. Shrimati, a selfless beloved, becomes an equally committed wife, but Shrikant her husband stays entirely focused on achieving his goal, not realizing his wife's role in his accomplishment. As determination and selfish goals take their toll, the relationship loses its way.

Keywords: materialism, consciousness, deteriorate, selfish interests, selfless.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sudha Murthy is a modern Indian writer who works in both English and Kannada. In 2006, she received two renowned awards for her literary works. Her books are a meticulously produced and well-outlined group of literary works that have received widespread acclaim in several India and abroad. *Gently Falls the Bakula* is an outstanding narrative about an Indian love marriage in which determination and self-serving motives cause the husband-wife relationship to come to a standstill.

Sudha Murthy's works are largely on the challenges that wives and husbands in India experience in the corporate world. Her subjects range from affection, loyalty, and marital partnerships to ambition, the desire for success, and the difficulties that come with it. Her protagonists are genuine women dealing with real challenges.

Gently Falls the Bakula is one of Murthy's popular books, and it depicts a wife-husband relationship that has evolved through time but has lost its course owing to selfish desire and materialistic ambition.

II. DISCUSSION

Shrimati, the protagonist of the novel is characterized as "a slim, tall girl, with a wheatish complexion and good clear features. She always wears a string of bakula flowers in her hair. Shrimati was one of the brightest students in her class." (4) Shrikant is the husband of Shrimati's spouse. Basically, both of them were classmates. He looks "...handsome young man, he was known for his strong determination to be the best." (5)

Shrimati ranks first in the matriculation exams, yet she opts Arts group and subsequently selects History as her professional choice. She is quite clear about what she wishes to achieve in her life for personal development. Shrikant, who is tremendously ambitious, drifts the IIT entrance test and gets enrolled in IIT Bombay. He desires to be a software professional, to create his own firm, and to make money and a reputation for himself in India. They are opposed personalities. That is inevitably the source of the peculiar attraction between the two. Shrikant holds the Baluka flower in his hand and says:

“...why he was fascinated by this tiny flower. The flower was neither as beautiful as a rose nor had the fragrance of a jasmine or champaka. And yet, it was always very special to him. It held an inexplicable attraction for him.” (19)

As the attraction is nurtured, Shrikant and Shrimati marry despite their strained family relationships.

Shrikant and Shrimati begin their married lives in a smaller flat in Bombay. Shrimati runs the home with the small money she has, proactively taking good care of Shrikant in whatever way she can. When Shrimati chooses to follow her ambition of earning a Ph.D. in History, the responsibility of repaying Shrikant's college debt rests on her shoulders, and she voluntarily accepts a job in a tiny enterprise. The protagonist Shrimati is not selfish about her career but she supports her husband in everything. She says: “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)

Shrikant must relocate to Delhi if she is serious about pursuing a Ph.D. So, Shrimati sacrifices her passion once again and moves with Shrikant to Delhi. She is an excellent personal secretary for her husband, handling his paperwork and entertaining his visitors at company events. Despite her detest for the vanity of such gatherings, she does her job as a faithful wife. The scholars Nisha and Manju in their research paper which was published in a reputed journal quote:

“After industrialization, we have achieved technological progress and scientific advancement, financial independence and all other facilities but what we lost in this progress is the foundation stone of our life, our family.” (Nisha and Manju, 2017)

Shrikant disregards family in his pursuit of business success. Shrimati is becoming lonelier. She longs for parenthood, something she does not have. Her loneliness is exacerbated by her husband's carelessness, selfishness, and her inability to become a mother.

Shrikant is unaware of Shrimati's contribution to his success, however, Ravi, a friend of Shrikant, recognizes her impact, stating, “Shrimati has been unassuming, undemanding and totally submissive to your needs and to your achievements. Shrikant, without her, you would not have been what you are.” (102)

Shrimati feels Shrikant is merely the person that once she loved. In his quest for financial and economic success, he has changed immensely. Sudha Murthy, the author, writes about Shrimati's defencelessness:

“For him, she had undergone so much opposition, criticism, and nastiness from her in-laws. She had even given up her career, only because she loved him. But Shrikant was not the same person she knew before marriage. This Shrikant was only interested in name, fame, position, and status. He had forgotten his dear wife. He appeared a stranger to her” (118). Shrimati wanted to ask, “Shri, where have you gone? Where have I lost you?” (135)

Shrimati notices a hole in her life. She realizes she has done nothing in the years that have passed. She is truly disturbed by Shrikant's disrespect towards her passions so she often loses her cool and becomes impatient about little issues. Shrikant is taken aback when she lashes out at him with strong remarks, which is rare for his wife. “In that instant, Shrikant felt that they were two strangers living under the same roof.” (129) Shrimati's misery is difficult for him to comprehend since she has complete freedom and comfort whilst her spouse's mother does not live with her. Shrikant is oblivious that his feverish dash has robbed him of his finer sensibilities, creating a mental barrier between the two. In the article which was published in Pune Research International Journal, the researchers Punithashree and Keerthi opine that:

“The greatest gift one can give the loved ones are time, attention, love and concern. When one fails to show or receive these qualities, the marriage life becomes futile.” (Punithashree and Keerthi, 2017).

When a house becomes a residence having two facades along with a roofing system, delicate individuals such as Shrimati find it hard to stay. Shrikant's apathy, her adoration towards history subjects, her discontent as a businessman's spouse, as well as her absence of children all force her to leave the house and Shrikant. She opted to study in American universities to fulfill a long-held ambition of earning a Ph.D. in history.

In Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* the heroine Nora Helmer initially seemed like a playful, naïve child. She lacked knowledge of the word. After her marriage, she comes to see her position with clarity and finds her oppressive situation as her husband shows authority towards her. As Nora Helmer feels in *A Doll's House* the protagonist in *Gently Falls of Baluka* feels oppressed by his husband's carelessness and says to her husband Shrikant: “Shri, I am leaving and I don't have any plans to return, I am handing all the responsibilities of the house to you”. (160)

Shrikant could hardly believe his ears since it was not the Shrimati he had married. She was accustomed to complying with directions and lending him support in everything that he did. She has now resolved to forsake him and depart the home permanently.

III. CONCLUSION

Sudha Murthy has described an Indian marriage and its issues with reaching the threshold of the software organization thoroughly. Her characters are genuine individuals dealing with real issues in today's business world. She has attempted to communicate a message via her work that marital union, as a social construct, lives on the devotion and dedication of both partners. It would eventually go astray if one of the two persons got concerned with his or her uniqueness and attempted to take another individual into disdain.

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