

A Critical Study of Sudha Murthy's 'Gently falls the Bakula' in terms of women empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Many Indian novelists attempted to reveal the genuine state of women and Indian society. We have seen that every facet of human existence was portrayed in Indian books. We are aware of how some of these books depicted Indian women's battle to establish their own identities, statuses, and positions inside their homes and in society at large. This research paper aims to examine Sudha Murthy's work 'Gently Falls the Bakula'. She aims to inspire women to be strong and brave under trying circumstances. Reading her books is fascinating because she has braided together her personal experiences from her time working at Infosys, traveling, and interacting with people. the true state of women, including their hardships and struggles. Sudha Murthy's realistic fiction book 'Gently Falls the Bakula' explores women's empowerment and deftly intertwines identity with self-discovery. The story closely tracks the journey of a female heroine who bravely asserts her rights and uniqueness while navigating the complexities of marriage and social expectations, asserting her rights and individuality. Murthy's moving portrayal highlights how social standards frequently restrict and impede a woman's personal development by illuminating the nuances of her battle to forge her identity beyond the traditional roles of wife, mother, and daughter. Murthy fervently supports women's empowerment and social equality, inspiring readers to consider the difficulties faced by women in their unrelenting quest for both personal fulfilment and equality.

Keywords: Identity, Individuality, Empowerment, Acceptance.

INTRODUCTION

Sudha Murthy is a prolific author of Indian English literature. From childhood to old age, she has written numerous books on a wide range of topics, including men and women, children, family life, art and culture, literature, customs and traditions, rituals, ethical values, the ideal life, student hood, humanistic issues, women's predicament, identity crisis, and issues pertaining to both rural and urban women. The devadasi system, poverty, illiteracy, unequal wealth and power structure, starvation, and subaltern issues are just a few examples of social issues. Other issues include those pertaining to family, human relationships, societal expectations, socio-cultural upbringing, travel experiences, life lessons, the vulnerable position of women, the difficulties, tabulations, and crises that arise both inside and outside of the family, student unrest, their problems, issues of unwed mothers, professional women, and careers.

Born on August 19, 1950, in Shiggon, Haveri District, North Karnataka, Sudha Murthy is an Indian novelist, social activist, and philanthropist. She chairs the Infosys philanthropic NGO and was a co-

founder of the Infosys Company. She was raised in a pretty traditional Brahmin Madhwa Kannadiga household and is passionate about using charity and kindness to uplift women and other socially underprivileged groups. Her siblings include a gynaecologist, an astronomer, and the creator of the Deshpande Foundation.

‘Gently Falls the Bakula’ written by the Indian author Sudha Murthy is a realistic fictional book, which was released in 2008. The plot of this book centers on the lives of two characters, Shrikant and Shrimati, who were once classmates before getting married. The changes they go through as Shrikant rises to the top of the business ladder and their married life progressively loses its appeal and identity are vividly depicted in the book. The simple yet endearing story of a couple and the incidents that genuinely rocked their family life is told in this book.

The two primary characters of Gently Falls the Bakula, Shrikant and Shrimati, are introduced as living next door to one another in the unremarkable village of Hubli. They were first depicted as bitter enemies in school, but eventually they warmed up to one another. Despite sharing a residence, the families of Shrimati and Shrikant had a history of hostility. But like the Bakula blossoms on the tall Bakula tree between Shrikant and Shrimati's bedroom, their love remained vibrant. Following graduation, Shrikant travelled to Bombay to continue his education at IIT, while Shrimati studied literature and history at a nearby college. They exchanged a number of love letters that documented their romance. Despite the animosity between their families, Shrikant and Shrimati were married. Shrikant was hired in Bombay, and Professor Collins gave Shrimati a scholarship to study history in America. Shrikant accepted his work offer in Bombay, while Shrimati had to decline the chance to study overseas in order to move to Bombay with him. This effectively demonstrates how patriarchy has persisted throughout history. Shrimati only abandoned her passion for history in order to wed Shrikant. Now that he was employed in a business environment, Shrikant was only focused on his personal growth and took Shrimati for granted. In addition to feeling awful and alone in the busy city of Bombay, Shrimati's mother Gangakka was treating her horribly.

Due to his corporate employment, Shrikant was often exhausted and required more time to keep his marriage intact. Shrimati never would have imagined that days of loneliness and hopelessness in Bombay would replace her quiet, beautiful, and modest life in Hubli. Additionally, as time passed, Shrikant's focus on his work caused his love for Shrimati to wane, which resulted in arguments and fights between the two. Because her second love, Shrikant, was waning, Shrimati, fed up with her miserable life in Bombay, made the decision to take care of her first love, History. She got in touch with Professor Collins, who offered her a scholarship to attend an Asian American institution to study history. Professor Collins eventually made her the same choice, but this time Shrimati chose to follow her aspirations in order to discover her identity and her goals. Traditionally, the story concludes with Shrimati departing India and Shrikant powerless to alter anything. As the title suggests, "Gently falls the Bakula," the Bakula flower represented the gentle descent of love between Shrimati and Shrikant. The book tells the story of a marriage that dissolved because of a lack of communication, time, and self-confidence. The book tells the story of a marriage that dissolved because of a lack of communication, time, and self-confidence. Shrimati's decision to empower herself by going after her PhD in history serves as a reminder of how crucial it is to pursue our goals. Despite the tragic conclusion, the book lives up to the title.

The Search for Identity

Since both of their families are rivals, Shrimati's mother was extremely concerned about her daughter's choice because she believed her mother-in-law would reject her and mistreat her. However, Shrimati was strong and brave in her decision, and she convinced her mother and married Shrikant happily, demonstrating that she is an independent woman who makes her own choices. Following his marriage, Shrikant starts working for an IT company and quickly moves up the corporate ladder. He strives to be the greatest in his industry, and Shrimati sacrifices her academic goals to follow him closely and fulfil her position as the spouse of a corporate leader. She and her spouse relocated to Bombay ten days after getting married, and they were living a contented life there.

Shrimati's mother-in-law Gangakka was physically apart but still had to find a way to annoy her. As Shrimati was her rival's daughter and Shrimati was compelled to work for a company to settle Gangakka's debt. Shrimati holds a degree she comes forward to work in a company and because of that she was able to settle her mother-in-law's debts. As Shrimati started earning money, Gangakka stopped making fun of the dowry and started concentrating on her not having children. Shrimati remembers being referred to as a woman incapable of bearing children by her mother-in-law. Shrimati realized that love and affection could not be bought or learned. Sincere displays of affection should come from the heart. It doesn't matter if the person is affluent, smart, or gorgeous. In her situation, despite the futility of the practice, she persisted in holding out hope that one day things would change. Shrimati felt the weariness of an exhausted traveller looking for a desert oasis. She refused to admit that she wasn't loved by Shrikant. Shrikant was just interested in himself and his objectives in life. At home, she was his secretary. Even though he worked there full-time, he didn't have time for Shrimati, his personal secretary. He was becoming increasingly angry every day due to the dominant cause. Matrimony symbolizes a transcendent union of two people's hearts, minds, and ambitions as well as a societal accord.

Shrimati once read a letter from Ravi, a US-based friend of Shrikant's, who expressed his admiration for her astute judgment and clear reasoning. He also said that "She knew what she liked, and she did exactly that" (GFB, P 103). She discovered that in the same letter that, "I also remember, the other hand of yours, who is behind your success. She has been unassuming, undemanding and totally submissive to your needs and to your achievements". (GFB, P 102). Harish, a friend of Shrikant's from an IT company, questioned how Shrikanth could have achieved such rapid success. He responded that someone with a wife like Shrimati who never made demands would undoubtedly succeed.

In order for her female characters to develop resilience and carve out a space for themselves, Sudha Murthy provides them a challenge to conquer. Her protagonist, who was conscious of her Indian heritage, was notable for her capacity to embrace, adjust, and assimilate her own culture. Finally, Shrimati came to the realization that Shrikant prioritizes his career before hers. Shrimati just accepts a pleasurable job as a private secretary in Shrikant's life. She realizes that she is not to blame for their relationship's lack of love, devotion, and purpose. She now bears responsibility for her role. By sacrificing everything for him and his career success, she gave Shrikant total control and authority to treat her in this manner, to give up on her, and to take her for granted. When she looked back, she

had nothing. Her existence has no purpose. At last, she had a purpose when she spoke “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”. (GFB, P 152)

When Shrimati learns how dissimilar their preferences, passions, and viewpoints are, she is appalled by the depths of the ocean. She now picks history as her future instead of Shrikant. This is how Shrimati clarifies it: “Shri I loved history and 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 want to achieve it”

Shrimati gave up her career ambition and gave her entire life to her husband. However, all of her hopes for a contented family life were dashed when Shrikant refused to spend time with her or at the very least acknowledge her contributions to him. Her spouse failed to recognize her unwavering commitment, so she made the difficult decision to leave him since she wasn't prepared to live with things that didn't matter. After realizing her faults, Shrimati decided it was time to take charge of her own life. She boldly informed Shrikant that she would be pursuing a Ph.D. in America on a scholarship, and she told him that she would not be bringing anything with her, just as she didn't bring anything with her when she married him.

Although her step would not be appreciated by anyone in this male-dominated culture, Shrimati had left him without even considering the opinions of others. As an empowered woman, she had chosen to follow her ambitions and had done what she believed was right. Murthy has shown a strong woman discovering who she is.

Conclusion

The limitations of Shrimati's culture and self-identity have been overcome by her persona. Nonetheless, this brings Shrikant's persona closer to the materialistic realm. In the book “Gently Falls the Bakula,” Sudha Murthy skilfully illustrates how culture affects a person's life. When Shrimati is annoyed, frustrated, restless, or—most importantly—when her expectations are not met, she investigates her position and plans her next course of action. She wants to be someone else and be released from the constraints placed on her by her family as she ends her time alone. Life's journey is depicted as one of experiences of learning and unlearning, facing innumerable obstacles to test one's patience and fortitude. Although it was a tough choice, she found the fortitude, purpose, and direction to forge a new course. Understanding our value allows us to reconfirm our dedication to our principles, even though it requires ongoing effort. The path to self-discovery requires both understanding and suffering. Here, the main character musters the bravery to face a new day.

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