

## **Over-Ambition and Self-Interest Leads to Alienation in Marriage (With Special Reference to Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls the Bakula*)**

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**Abstract:** "Where a man tries to raise himself to eminence by pushing and jostling all others, to achieve a distinction by which he prides himself to be more than everybody else, there he is alienated from that Spirit." (An excerpt from the first chapter of Rabindranath Tagore's book *Sadhana – The Realisation of Life*).  
"Women aren't free just because they are surviving, or even economically comfortable. They are free only when they have power over their own lives" – Shreen Essof.

As per the analysis of the U.N.O, the man's view on a married woman is to confine to home. Typically, even in our society and even in many societies, at most times, the life of most women after marriages, even educated, are constrained to fulfill the needs of their husbands and their kith and kin. While women are dedicating their lives for their husbands, men are neglecting their wives in the name of achieving their aspirations. The present paper elucidates it and its consequences through Sudha Murthy's novel ***Gently Falls The Bakula***.

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### **I. Introduction**

The protagonist, Shrimati, a well-educated and intelligent woman, after marriage, confines her life to her husband's companionship and his happiness. Therefore, Shrikanth, her husband, is successful in his profession. In return, he neglects her in all aspects except providing the basic needs. She bares her sad lot with much endurance for many years and follows him as his shadow. Later, she starts examining herself that her life is fiasco and questions her husband about her role in his life. When her husband is reluctant to give her answer Shrimati decides to lead her life on her own against Shrikanth's self-centeredness and resolves to come to blow with the traditional belief that "... a woman should stay with her husband, irrespective of what he was." Eventually, she leaves her husband not to earn but to be free herself to know her identity and to lead peaceful life. On the other hand, Tagore's notion came true in Shrikanth's life in letter and spirit.

The role of women in India from the colonial period seems to be dependent on their men. The tradition cowed down their position just to continue family line. They are denied from grabbing the opportunities of education and refinement. They have been excluded from social and political activities. They are ignorant of their basic right as individuals because of illiteracy and ignorance. Except a few women of the nobility, the life of general women is not worth living. In short, the admittance to social justice and equality are denied to them. The social evils from rites of Sati, Devadasi system, Pardha system, child marriage to infanticide and dowry deaths are some of the evils that have been caused to trim down the position of women in Indian society.

After Independence, Indian Constitution has enshrined many rights to women. Indian Government has provided equal educational opportunities to women. Ever since, it has introduced many schemes to empower women in many sectors. Depth analysis shows that women participation in work spots have been considerably increased comparing to men. With these, women stand in top positions in almost all fields. But all these are on one side of the coin. If we look into the other side the status of the women is deplorable. They are powerless and ill-treated inside and outside the home.

Apparently, women are being empowered in Modern India by acquiring education but it is not true to the fullest at all if sensed with reality. One of the most harrowing oppressions is marriage for many women. It empowers men and disempowers women. As daughters or sisters, they have status and more rights with in the family. However, by marriage they are deprived of their status as women in the society. Traditionally, women are confined to homes to discharge their household responsibilities such as courteous of their husbands, children, obeying in-laws' commands and shouldering different burdens. As a result, they have been relegating their position accepting, dedicating themselves for the upliftment of the family.

In her writings, Sudha Murthy, an ingenious writer focuses on realistic problems faced by women in the society and how they encounter with the problems. This paper reflects on the educated woman's role as a wife in love marriage, her submissive life who faces the problem of loneliness and turns to be subservient to her husband's egotistic tendencies tantamounting to realize her freedom as an independent woman in her novel ***Gently Falls The Bakula***.

Shrimati Shrikant Deshpande, the Protagonist, is an intelligent, plain-looking yet charming young woman. She has zest for Indian history writes many essays on Ashoka and Buddha. Shrikant Deshpande is an amiable and handsome person. Both are intelligent students and neighbours in Dharwad, Karnataka. Their families have a rivalry right from their ancestors. So the women have been at logger heads with bitter enmity. Bakula tree (a tree of fragrant flower) is a symbol that stands for love separates the two homes.

Shrimati and Shrikant are class-mates up to the X standard. They fall in love each other during their higher secondary and continue it in secret under the Bakula Tree until the end of their education. Though they are away, pursuing their higher studies they continue their love without break. She attaches bakula flowers to her love letters, as they like very much. The flower carries the aroma of their love that will never drop. Later, she qualifies herself as a postgraduate in history and he becomes an engineering graduate from IIT, Bombay. After completion, they get married convincing their parents with a great difficulty. To marry Shrikant, Shrimati willingly foregoes her research fellowship offered by a foreign visiting Professor, Mike Collins.

After the marriage, Shrimati enters the house of her mother-in-law as everywoman. As expected, she is unwelcomed by her mother-in-law. Still she tries to win her mother-in-law's support. As many mothers-in law, Gangakka, Shrimati's mother-in-law is cordial towards her daughter-in-law before her son but antagonizes her in her son's absence. Fortunately, soon Shrimati leaves for Bombay to stay with her husband. So as to repay the loan of her mother-in-law she prefers to take up a job in Bombay eschewing her coveted research work.

Shrikant a determined person from the beginning resumes his career as a Software Engineer in an IT company in Bombay. He climbs the corporate ladder in no time. On the other hand, Shrimati begins to feel nothing is more important to her than her husband's happiness, to this extent, brushes aside her Ph.D work in a foreign country. In her married life, Shrimati becomes the silent secretary to her husband at home. Her constant assistance enables him to achieve greater heights in his profession in short time. Consequently her desire to become mother is not satisfied and she earns the wrath of her mother-in-law to bear the blame of 'being barren'.

Sudha Murthy through the character of Shrimati refers the character of Bhamati, who dedicates herself to the sage husband when he is writing Dharmasastra and ultimately dies without achieving any thing in life. In this context, while Shrikant appreciates sage's tremendous concentration, Shrimati applauds Bhamati's silent support. Their view reflects their attitude and lack of right understanding between them.

In course of their life journey, Shrikanth reaches glorious heights and improves his material well-being but Shrimati's loneliness heightens day by day for not fulfilling her desire of becoming a mother. She prevails upon him for adoption but Shrikant does not evince much interest. Even though she entertains her idea of research but appears far remote.

When life goes on like that, once, Shrikant goes abroad on foreign assignment. During this period, Shrimati falls sick, but does not inform him as it disturbs him mentally. Her husband does not acknowledge even this goodness and humanity. How so ever Prof. Collins understands her sadness during his visit to India and advises her to take up the research work to rekindle the spark of happiness.

Ironically, artificial manners and absurd formalities do not please Shrimati in life. Once in a party when his friend Dolly criticizes Indian culture Shrimati reacts vehemently. Her husband rebukes her for her reaction. Shrimati, who usually be silent, expresses unhappiness and disagreement for the first time.

In due course, Shrikant becomes more materialistic, more selfish to grow professionally. On the other hand, Shrimati, who has helped her husband with perseverance to reach glorious heights, realizes that life is fiasco and decides to live her life where she finds peace and happiness. She recalls the story of Bhamati in desperation and thinks, "Every woman could not become Bhamati. Each woman had her own limits ..." (156) In Shrimati's life as well, end has taken place in respect of patience. She resolves to encounter Shrikant's egotism and stimulates herself introspect her stand in her family as a woman. She defies with the traditional belief "... a woman should stay with her husband, irrespective of what he was..."(157) and makes up her mind to leave that house.

Finally, in Shrimati wisdom dawns and we can see a sea change in her attitude towards wife and husband relationship. Her enormous turmoil in loneliness and frustration in life propels her to dismantle this very concept of abject obedience to her husband and sacrifice in life. Thus, in her own way, she puts an end to her loneliness and craves for freedom and identity from the very clutches of family bondage. She strongly appeals that she no longer bares loneliness, nor can live with artificial values that eulogize materialistic success. In fit of her tormentation, she tells that she has loved him more than her studies, respecting his sentiments, but the very decline in his attitude towards her feelings made her disapprove his deportment and free herself from slavish attachment with him any longer. As Norah Helmer in Ibsen's **A Doll's House**, she says to 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) Consequent upon, Shrikant feels that she has taken his spirit away with her and thinks his loving flower Bakula, gently falls from his life.

Sudha Murthy lively presents the characters of Shrimati and Shrikant, reflecting the mood and temperament of present day couple after the advent of Software Industry. Above all, the novel, projects post-

colonial sentiments and attitudes crystal clearly making the readers to think that life after marriage is not to live individual life but to live together with right understanding to lead a salubrious life.

#### **Works Cited**

- [1]. Murthy, Sudha. **Gently Falls The Bakula**. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 2008