



## A JOURNEY OF MARRIAGE FROM COMMITMENT TO CONVENIENCE

DEEPIKA GUPTA\*<sup>1</sup>, DR. ARCHANA DURGESH VERMA\*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Humanities, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow.

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Humanities, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow.

**Corresponding Author Email:** [dpv8mar@gmail.com](mailto:dpv8mar@gmail.com), [archana1120@gmail.com](mailto:archana1120@gmail.com)

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### Abstract:

Sudha Murty is a highly acclaimed Indian English author, a philanthropist and a technocrat. She is a Padma Shri and a Padma Bhushan awardee. She is not just known for her simple living and high thinking but also for her ingenious and skilful mind. Her writing explores inner trauma of women, their social status, their struggle, their sacrifices, quest for self identity, marriage and man-woman relationship. The present paper expresses how the beautiful bond of love and commitment turns into a futile bond of convenience and loses its existence; how muted sacrifices of the woman goes unrecognised because of the self-obsession and selfishness of her husband and in-turn destroys their marriage.

**Key Words:** Marriage, commitment, patriarchy, self- obsession, gender.

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### Introduction:

Sudha Murty is one of those prolific Indian women writers who successfully capture the real sufferings of the women in our society. Her writings are simple, comprehensible and are focussed on the significant issues of the time. She not only speaks for the destitute, marginalised and impoverished section of the society but also converse about the strong, educated women who are the victims of cultural, social and emotional bonds. She assigns her protagonists to discover her inner strength and establish her own identity within the circumference of our tradition.

Man and woman are the basic structures of the society and thus the relationship between them forms the main constituent of our society. The relationship between man and a woman as husband and wife forms the pivot of our society and all other relations are woven out of it. Man-woman relationship is very delicate and intricate. It needs constant care, respect, support, love and commitment to nurture it.

*Gently Falls the Bakula* emphasizes on the unrecognised sacrifices of a woman and also how the bond of love and commitment between a man and a woman gradually becomes a bond of convenience for the man because of his self obsession, selfishness and blind enchantment for success.

### The Immemorial time of Commitment:

Shrikant and Shrimati were not just neighbours but also competitors. They were class mates and Shrikant knows that Shrimati was much brighter than him as she defeated him in class

tenth board exams by achieving the first position in the entire state. Although this defeat was indigestible for Shrikant but somewhere he felt a strange attraction towards Shrimati because of her simplicity, humility and innocence. Shrimati was far more intelligent but was an emotional person who works with heart. She opted for Arts and Literature for her higher studies and this ended the competition between the two as Shrikant took up Science stream. Soon this attraction turns into a bond of friendship that blossomed under the bakula tree that stood in the middle of their houses. Shrikant and Shrimati were so dedicated towards this bond that they never missed their meeting despite of the rivalry that existed between the two families. Shrikant even asked Shrimati to address him as 'Shri' this somewhere indicates the blooming of their bond like the bakula flower.

After two years of friendship, Shrikant had to go to IIT Bombay for his higher studies and Shrimati had joined college for her graduation but they both were sad and a bit uneasy for not being able to continue their morning ritual of meetings. Both Shrikant and Shrimati had developed a strong attachment for each other and they both knew it was more than an adolescent crush. Thus before going Shrikant assured Shrimati, "...you know that I am highly focused. I am going there only for studies. I will look neither to the left not to the right. Nothing matters to me. I am and will always be your Shri." (GFTB31) And he also promised her to write to her every second and fourth week and asked her to reply back every first and third week. This reflects the kind of commitment they both had towards their relationship.

Their bond kept on blooming with time and they remained connected with each other through letters. During his visits home Shrikant tried to spend maximum time with Shrimati and during one such visit he proposed to Shrimati in the fear of losing her and Shrimati agreed and even rejected the proposal by Professor Collins for pursuing her Ph.D abroad for this marriage. Although this marriage was unacceptable by both the families yet Shrikant convinced his mother Gangakka and Shrimati her mother Kamala and they both got married in a simple ceremony with only few people and friends.

### **The unbearable times of Convenience:**

Shrimati was an unwelcomed daughter-in-law as she didn't bring big dowry and was thus mentally harassed by her in-laws by frequent taunts and her mother-in-law never allow her to enter the kitchen and criticized her and her family values. In our Indian society we just don't marry a person we marry his family and if you don't get the required love and respect from the family somewhere it diminishes the bond and Shrikant was although aware of this hatred from his family for Shrimati but he still ignored and remained unaffected. This harassment continued even when they moved to Bombay. Gangaakka made a plan of a fake educational loan for taking money from them and for which Shrimati dropped her idea of pursuing Ph.D and took up a job to repay this loan assuring Shrikant, "When you are mine, your loan is also mine. It comes as a package. I cannot say I want only my husband. His jobs and difficulties are also acceptable to me." (GFTB77) Although Shrikant appreciated her efforts but Gangakka didn't.

Shrimati gradually became the ladder of success for Shrikant. She worked endlessly not just as a home-maker but also as a secretary to take care of his accounts and send money to his

mother, a host to welcome his clients and to make all possible arrangements to make his life comfortable. She kept on postponing her dreams for his achievements. She went with him to Delhi and then to USA to keep up with his pace of success. She became a complete package for him, available all the time and for everything. Shrikant didn't even notice her dedication and commitment ironically like Bhamati who spent her life looking after her husband who even didn't recognise her face. But when he realises her sacrifices, he named the book Bhamati after her which took him forty years to write. Shrikant was so engrossed in his success that he even denied her request to become parents. Even Shrikant's colleague Harish could see Shrimati's dedication, "Shrikant had taken her for granted. He had a rare diamond in his hand but he was searching for a worthless glass of achievement." (GFTB108) But Shrikant didn't. Shrimati missed her old Shrikant and wondered, "What had happened to Shrikant now? The love, affection and sharing of ideas and dreams had disappeared. He hardly talked to her about the company or other business matters. The only time he spoke to her was to assign a list of chores for her to do. (GFTB117) Shrikant was only concerned about his business and his meetings. He forgot that he had some duties towards her family too.

Shrimati was tired of this artificial life where, "Every dinner, every conversation, every relationship was based on profit and loss. What a way to live, she had thought!" (GFTB119) She didn't want to be a part of this but she has to only to make Shrikant happy and Shrikant in-turn insulted her by saying that her subject and her education was worthless as she was unable to coordinate with his guests just for once. Shrimati just needed some time from his busy schedule for their relationship which he couldn't but he could manage some time from his busy schedule for a *puja* kept by her mother where even Shrimati was not invited. This insult was unbearable for Shrimati but Shrikant remained unbothered. She could easily observe Shrikant's indifference towards her. Shrikant believed his mother's dedication and sacrifice were important and valuable but dedication and sacrifices of his wife were worthless as they are just considered as the duties of a wife. This is the irony of our society that it has different set of rules for mother and sister and different for a wife.

She asked Shrikant, "Shri, tell me now. Who is important, your wife or your profession? Ask your heart and tell me." (GFTB148) Or she will not live in the house but Shrikant didn't answer and went for his work believing that when he will return everything will be back to normal and she will do whatever is asked to do. Shrimati had no patience left. Shrimati needed Shrikant's concern, his respect and his love but Shrikant had only materialistic comforts left for her. Shrikant was not bothered about her pain, about her loneliness and even about her respect. She had no choice left than to think for her own self-respect. According to Ernest Hemingway, "The most painful thing is losing yourself in the process of loving someone too much and forgetting that you are special too." She opted to move out of this relationship and join the Ph.D programme abroad on scholarship arranged by Professor Collins for her. Shrikant couldn't believe that Shrimati could leave him. He tried to persuade her but it was too late. After Shrimati left, Shrikant realised, "Actually she had 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.”(GFTB165) He understood that, “Poor Shrimati swallowed every poisonous insult, just to keep Shrikant happy.”(GFTB166)

### Conclusion:

Man-woman relationship is very delicate and complicated. They are just like a brush and a palette. If one doesn't support the other, one can't draw a beautiful life but our patriarchal set-up has always given a superior position to man and his contributions are important and valuable than a woman, who works endlessly throughout her life for her family. We need to understand and respect each other to strike a balance. A relationship needs constant care, respect and support of both the partners to grow. Every relationship functions on mutual understanding failing, it just falls like the bakula flower and loses its fragrance and texture forever.

Successes strengthen your journey to apex but it is often accompanied with arrogance, selfishness and rationalism. It makes you view everything within the periphery of profit and loss. Love, emotions, bond and relationship doesn't affect you as it blurs your vision of reality. As according to Harri Holkeri, 'Men and women have roles- their roles are different, but their rights are equal.' Men and women are equal in their capacity of their capabilities but they do possess some biological and psychological differences. Biological differences make them as men and women but psychological differences make them rational and emotional. Women emotionally sacrifices at every aspect of her life, as a girl, as a daughter, as a mother or as a wife but men rationally takes it to be her duty, a thankless duty.

As it is well said—'There is a **MALE** inside every **FEMALE**, **MR** in every **MRS**; **HE** in each **SHE**. Which proves that a **MAN** is incomplete without a **WOMAN**.' Sudha Murty, thus was able to present the true picture of the changing vision of the society in the contemporary world.

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