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SYMBOLISM OF THE BAKULA TREE IN SUDHA MURTY'S *GENTLY FALLS THE BAKULA*

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ABSTRACT

In Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls the Bakula*, the Bakula tree emerges as a central symbol that reflects the emotional and psychological journey of the protagonist, Shrimati, and her complex relationship with her husband, Shrikant. This paper explores the multi-layered symbolism of the Bakula tree, analyzing its role as a metaphor for love, sacrifice, and personal transformation. Initially, the tree symbolizes youthful love and innocence, embodying the early, idealistic stages of Shalini and Shrikant's relationship. As the narrative progresses, the tree's decline mirrors the emotional distancing and sacrifice that characterize Shalini's life. Ultimately, the renewal of the Bakula tree parallels Shalini's personal growth, suggesting the possibility of resilience and self-realization after emotional turmoil. Through an exploration of the tree's symbolic evolution, this paper examines how Sudha Murthy uses the Bakula tree to underscore themes of emotional decay, societal expectations, and renewal, offering a nuanced commentary on the dynamics of love and self-discovery. By focusing on the Bakula tree's transformation, the paper highlights the novel's deeper reflections on the cycles of life, growth, and the potential for emotional and spiritual rebirth.

KEYWORDS: Bakula, love, transformation and Sacrifice.

INTRODUCTION

In Sudha Murthy an Indian writer whose writing spans across fiction, children's literature, and nonfiction, and she has authored several bestsellers in both English and Kannada. Her writing is known for its simplicity, warmth, and insightful commentary on human emotions,

relationships, and the social fabric of India. In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, the Bakula tree acts as a significant symbol that echoes throughout the novel, mirroring the emotional terrain and the experiences of the central characters. The tree serves as a symbol of change and development while also representing ideas of love, loss, sacrifice, and metamorphosis. Start by highlighting the key importance of the Bakula tree in the storyline. The tree appears from the narrative's outset, and its connection to Shrimati, the main character, is essential for grasping the novel's emotional undertones. The tree represents more than just a physical entity; it symbolizes the development and deterioration of the characters' connections, particularly that of Shrimati and her spouse, Shrikant. The Bakula tree is noted as a symbol of profound importance, flourishing in the village where Shrimati spent her early years. Shrimati's memories from childhood are connected to this tree, serving as a symbol of time's passage, lost innocence, and unachieved dreams.

1. The Bakula Tree as a Symbol of Love and Innocence

In the early stages of the novel, the Bakula tree symbolizes immature love and innocence. When Shrimati and Shrikant are youthful, the Bakula tree is a space of romantic idealism and participated dreams. It's under the shade of the tree that their bond is formed, and it becomes a symbol of their love, pure and untainted by the complications of majority. Shrikant's room faced the bakula tree. Throughout the year.....He had developed a special attachment to these flowers ... (23)

The tree's presence during Shrimati's youth highlights the agreeableness and simplicity of the love she shares with Shrikant. before the pressures of ambition and career catch their relationship. Beforehand on, the Bakula tree is a symbol of the absolute connection they partake, reflecting the chastity of their passions.

Holding a bakula in his palm, he was wondering 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. Shrikant remembered many ancient stories that connected the bakula with romance. (24)

2. The Bakula Tree as a Symbol of Separation and Sacrifice

As the novel progresses, the Bakula tree undergoes a metamorphosis, mirroring the changes in the relationship between Shrimati and Shrikant. It's no longer a symbol of immature love

but rather becomes a symbol of separation and the emotional distance that develops between them. As Shrikant grows more absorbed in his career and neglects his emotional liabilities, the tree's deterioration can be read as an outside sign of this growing emotional ocean. The gradational fading of the tree also resonates with Shrimati's particular offerings. Just as the Bakula tree loses its luster, Shrimati's own solicitations, dreams, and expedients are overshadowed by her commitment to her family and her husband's success.

One day as he was holding the bakula in his hand, he suddenly realized why the flower meant so much to him. The bakula was now, for him, a symbol of Shrimati, a personification of her! Shrikant collected all the bakula flowers in a small bag and placed it beneath his pillow. He knew that the scent from the flowers would not fade with time. (37)

3. The Bakula Tree as a Symbol of Personal Growth and Transformation

Toward the end of the novel, the Bakula tree symbolizes particular growth and the possibility of renewal. Just as Shrimati undergoes a trip of tone- consummation and independence, the tree's symbolism shifts from one of bare nostalgia and anguish to one of stopgap and eventuality.

Shrimati's Transformation After times of particular immolation, Shrimati eventually acknowledges the need to reclaim her life and dreams. Her trip parallels the tree's capability to regenerate, emblematising the adaptability of the mortal spirit and the capacity for renewal indeed after emotional desolation.

CONCLUSION

In *Gently Falls the Bakula*, Sudha Murty masterfully uses the Bakula tree as a powerful symbol to mirror the emotional, relational, and personal journeys of the characters, particularly Shrimati. The tree's transformation from a symbol of youthful love and idealism to one of decay and separation poignantly reflects the complexities of human relationships, especially the sacrifices and emotional costs that often accompany them. As the narrative unfolds, the tree's eventual regeneration serves as a beacon of hope and renewal, paralleling Shrimati's own journey toward self-awareness, independence, and emotional healing.

The Bakula tree thus embodies the cyclical nature of life itself—representing both the inevitability of hardship and the potential for growth and transformation. Through this symbolism, Murty not only critiques societal and personal expectations but also emphasizes

the importance of self-realization, resilience, and the possibility of new beginnings even after emotional devastation. The Bakula tree is more than just a natural entity; it is a reflection of the human condition, constantly in flux, shaped by love, loss, and the capacity for renewal.

Ultimately, the tree's evolving symbolism in the novel invites readers to reflect on their own emotional growth and the ways in which personal relationships, societal pressures, and individual choices shape their paths. By weaving the Bakula tree's fate with Shrimati's journey, Sudha Murthy underscores an essential truth: that even in the face of decay and sacrifice, there lies the possibility of rebirth and the renewal of hope, love, and identity.

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