



The Rift Between Haves and Have-nots in the Novels of Professor Vikas Sharma

Dr. Alka Sharma

Associate Professor, Department of English

Govt. P.G. College for Women, Panchkula.

Abstract: Writing is a way a writer uses to express themselves and their true emotions. More often than not, writers use their writing to talk about the problems of the society in an attempt to bring about a change in the existing social order. This way writing serves a much wider purpose than just being a source of entertainment or recreation, and hence, it serves a social purpose. Professor Vikas Sharma, who is a renowned name among the modern Indian novelists, can also be considered a social novelist. Most of his novels, which are also a part of the academic curriculum at many universities in India, increasingly deal with the problems of our society that is still in a developing stage and he highlights these problems while also raising his voice against the same on behalf of those who are underprivileged and are unable to raise their own voice. One such social theme that can be found throughout almost all of his novels is the problem of the underprivileged, especially the distinction and differentiation between the haves and have-nots. He aims to tell us about the people who are deprived of the basic necessities and resources and how their lives are adversely impacted because of this. He tells us how the privileged section of our society often dominates and exploits the underprivileged ones, thus, increasing the gap between them even further. The present paper aims to analyze this difference between the haves and have-nots from the perspective of Professor Vikas Sharma through an extensive study of his novels.

Keywords: inequality, exploitation, misuse, discrimination, distinction, struggle.

Introduction:

Professor Vikas Sharma is a name that needs no introduction. He is a renowned novelist and has established himself in the arena of Indian English novels. He can also be called the novelist of the corona virus period as it was during the period of lockdown due to the covid 19 pandemic that he started writing novels. His first novel, Raah Ke Pathar was written in Hindi, which was later translated in English and named Never Together Never Apart. After this, Professor Vikas Sharma started writing in English and his first English novel was Love's Not Time's Fool. After this, he never looked back and authored quite a number of novels which made him the established writer that he is known as today. Professor Vikas Sharma is

a social writer, this means that most of his novels deal with social issues and problems that are prevalent in our society. Hence, he often writes social novels. One problem that he often writes about is the problem of the underprivileged people in our society, that is the people who are deprived of basic resources and how this impacts their life in terms of the opportunities they are able to brag. He aims to highlight the distinction between the haves and have-nots and how this distinction makes one the exploiter and the other the exploited. He has written a huge array of novel to present this problem from various perspectives, these novels include, IAS Today, Love's Not Time's Fool, Ashes and Fire, Medicine: Light in Twilight, 498: Fears and Dreams, Hope Against Hope, etc.

IAS Today: Tinny and Romesh as the Privileged and Underprivileged:

IAS Today is one of the first novels written by Professor Vikas Sharma. IAS Today is a revolutionary novel and is also a social novel. It is the story of two friends or classmates named Romesh and Tinny. Tinny is the son of the S.D.M. and comes from a very well to do family. He has all sorts of facilities as well as luxuries available to him because of his father's good job and his family's respectable status in the society. Since his childhood, his father and his family made sure that he always had the best of everything. From being sent to the most respectable school to the most reputed college, Tinny always had access to the best clothes and other expensive luxuries. His parents provided him with good quality education in hopes that he would put his education to good use and bring grace to his family name. His parents invested their whole lives on their son who they loved dearly. Professor Vikas Sharma also presents a stark contrast here. He talks of Romesh while he addresses the character of Tinny. He tells the readers how Romesh struggles for every little thing only because he comes from a very poor family and his family's financial condition does not allow him to access a lot of necessities, let alone any luxuries. His father is a poor farmer and Romesh grew up in poverty.

In his B.A. Final year, a student from Bareilly, Tinny joined the classes because his father recently got transferred to Hapur. Since he opted for an English medium like Romesh, both came closer to each other and discussed contemporary national and international studies. But this new student Tinny Gaurav was also interested in playing cricket, ping pong and tennis. Unfortunately, Romesh had to return to his village as soon as the classes were off. But Tinny, being the son of the S.D.M. stayed in the officer's residence and could afford to reach the playground of the college after having his coffee and a potato sandwich.
(IAS Today, p. 7)

This way the writer tells us how both Tinny and Romesh are students of the same course and both had potential in them in the form of athletic talent as well as in terms of intellectual capacity. But because of the difference between their financial conditions, one of them was able to utilize his potential while the other's options and opportunities were limited. Romesh did not have the time or the resources to stay back after the classes for any kind of sports. He was bound by his family condition and had to go back to his village after the classes to help with the fields and the house while Tinny could stay back and take out time for leisure.

Professor Vikas Sharma not only presents a distinction between the haves and have-nots through the characters of Tinny and Romesh, he also tells us how people take the facilities they have for granted. Tinny has everything he needs but instead of making good use of these facilities, what he does is he misuses them and falls prey to the evils of smoking, drinking, theft and so on. On the other hand, Romesh, who does not even have the basic necessities, works hard to make use of whatever he has and becomes successful in life and even realizes his dream of becoming an IAS officer while Tinny falls in bad company and starts committing crimes and fails miserably in life.

Quite often Tinny used to smoke cigarettes and not Romesh. His friendship grew with the girls of the class and that was something Romesh failed to relish. Studies were taken non seriously by Tinny though his father inspired him regularly to become a civil servant. As the worthy father had no time for the son, the latter became a bit moody and careless towards his career. He felt delighted as and when he won a cricket match on the playground and mostly talked of various famous players, actors and actresses. On the contrary, Romesh wanted to discuss national, social, international problems that citizens face in the different parts of the world. Anyway, Tinny managed to get first division with 80 per cent marks and Romesh secured first division with the first position at CCS University, Meerut. (IAS Today, p. 7)

This way, Professor Vikas Sharma throws light on the fact that even with everything available to them, people like Tinny often get distracted and lose their motive in life. Tinny had all the resources he needed but he still could not utilize these in any good way that could have benefited him or his family. On the other hand, Romesh had to work day in and day out to earn what Tinny already had and took for granted. This shows that most of the times, even when people have everything, they take it for granted and fail to make any efforts to achieve anything in their lives on their own and even end up losing what they had in the first place. This is because they misuse their resources only for materialistic pleasures or other ill purposes and this becomes the reason for their downfall.

Love's Not Time's Fool: One's Luxury is the Other's Necessity:

Love's Not Time's Fool is Professor Vikas Sharma's first novel in English that was written in the lockdown period. This novel is the story of a rich woman named Richa Pandit. While Richa can clearly be considered to be one of the haves, the same does not apply to her lover, Abhilash. Abhilash is a young student who is also aspiring to become a civil servant and is studying for the same. While Richa is well off and can afford all the luxuries and everything she wants, at the same time, Abhilash, can not even afford the basic necessities of life. Dr. Payal Sharma says in her article, *Vivaciousness and Sparkling Dynamism in the Protagonists of Professor Vikas Sharma: A Character Analysis of Professor Sharma's Love's Not Time's Fool*,

'His zeal to reach the zenith or peak of his life and career is an obvious characteristic of an exciting youth in his twenties. That's why when he first encounters Richa and gets offered a job in Peppe and Tette Footwear Company, being practical, he at once accepts her proposal. The reason behind accepting the proposal was to get financial security and stability in his life....'

(Critiquing the Novels of Vikas Sharma, p. 39)

When Richa meets him for the first time, they are at a bookstore where Richa is buying books for leisure and entertainment purposes, while Abhilash is there to buy books for studying as he is preparing for IAS exam. This shows how a basic thing like books, is a necessity for the people who don't have basic necessities, like Abhilash, and how they have to struggle for such basic things while people like Richa can get anything and everything they want. While at the bookstore, Richa is buying books because she is bored and wants to entertain herself, and Abhilash can not even pay for the books he needs to buy.

This student wanted books on General Knowledge, general English, Essay writing (latest edition), Indian Culture and History (by A.L. Bhasam), World History by J.L. Nehru, World Geography by Dr. Jagdish Singh and Political Theories by Dr. M.G. Gupta. Fortunately or unfortunately all these books were available on this Lakshmi Narain Book Depot but the total cost of the books was more than twenty five hundred rupees. Unfortunately, the young man had only seven hundred rupees in his pocket. So, he chose to buy the first three books on compulsory papers and told the salesman to preserve the other four books for his next arrival. But the salesman lost his temper and misbehaved with him- 'Why did you ask me for a lot of books if you had only a little money in your pocket? This is quite a senseless way of buying books. I had to search them out for you and now you ask me to preserve them for you for your next arrival. What the hell!'

I heard the argument though the student tendered an apology for making trouble to him. But the salesman was not prepared to surrender easily and failed to appreciate the apologetic conduct of the student. Before the situation could take a bad turn, I came forward to help the student. I asked the salesman to prepare the receipt for all the books and offered my credit card for payment of eighteen hundred rupees. As the student felt hesitant, I said that- 'You can pay me later on. But the next time these books may run out of stock and may not be available here.' I added

'I am Richa Pandit, the manufacturer of Peppe and Tette Footwear.'

'I am Abhilash studying in St. John's College, Agra for M.Com. I wish to be an IAS Officer and for the examination, I wanted to buy the books. But then I never expected that the cost of books has gone up so much. Really thank you Madam!'

(Love's Not Time's Fool, p.6)

This shows how people like Abhilash who do not have the basic necessities and resources have to go through so much just to get what people like Richa Pandit, who are privileged and

are born into rich and well to do families, get for granted without having to do anything. Through this Professor Vikas Sharma shows us the distinction between the haves and have-nots of our society, how the opportunities of the latter are very limited while their struggle is everlasting.

Exploitation in Medicine: Light in Twilight:

Another novel by Professor Vikas Sharma is *Medicine: Light in Twilight*. This novel highlights the corruption and exploitation in the medical profession which is considered to be the most noble profession of all. Professor Vikas Sharma tells the readers about how people in power and position use their resources to exploit the people who are underprivileged and can not afford even the basic necessities of life. Kamya comes from a fairly financially stable family where her mother's father has practiced as a doctor himself. It was because of Vaidya Ji, her grandfather, that her interest developed in medicine and she decided to become a doctor. Now Kamya was not from a very rich family and when she told her family that she wanted to pursue her dream in the medical profession, her grandfather had to pull the strings and even arrange for a huge sum of one lakh rupees only to secure her a seat in the course. This shows how people like Kamya who do not come from a very influential background have to struggle so hard for something that people with powerful backgrounds and social resources can get very easily. Kamya and her family had to arrange for a sum of one lakh rupees and had to spend their life savings and hard earned money to bribe influential people for the young girl's education. More often than not, people who have a good position and exercise some sort of power in the society exploit the weaker sections of the society and forcefully extort money from them. People misuse their power and this puts the underprivileged people at an even greater disadvantage. Whatever little resources these people have are also snatched away by these supposedly powerful people who already have ample resources and instead of using them for the good of the society, what they do instead is they only focus on themselves and in an attempt to increase their own wealth, power and authority, blinded by greed, they exploit the poorer people or the have-nots as they find it hard to do the same to other rich people. In this way, the order of the society makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. This is a very regressive social order and this causes the wealth to accumulate in the hands of a few and the majority of the people are stuck in the never ending cycle of poverty. This increases the gap between the haves and have-nots to an extent that it is almost impossible to pit it.

Another example of this exploitation is what Dr. R.N. Aggarwal puts Kamya through. Dr. R.N. Aggarwal enjoys a position that favors him and he is well aware of this fact. He misuses his power and exploits young girls like Kamya who are in need of something that he is able to provide which is usually a seat in either the M.B.B.S. or M.D. courses or marks among other things or maybe even internships or other job opportunities. He asks them for sexual favors and continues to exploit them for as long as he can. He is a very corrupt man and he is not just exploitative of young girls who are prone to this exploitation. His character is something a man would be ashamed of. Not only does he exploit people sexually but he also exploits them financially. He is a man who can do anything for money. He takes bribes from

people and the sole reason he is able to do all this is because of the current position he is in. He has a powerful position and is also financially able. The fact that he is a member of the privileged class makes it possible for him to exploit other people. He finds it easy to pressurize the poor people who are in need or are disadvantaged because of one or the other reason. He uses his power and position to extort money and sexual favors from the ones who do not have a similar backing. When Kamya finds herself in a position where she is unsure of her admission in M.D. for gynecology, Dr. R.N. Aggarwal realizes it and knowing he has control over the situation and can potentially influence her admission, and so he decides to exploit her because he knew she would need his help.

Kamya had aspired to join M.D. in gynecology but felt depressed due to so many bottlenecks of her way. It was generally accepted in Maulana Azad Medical College that Dr. R.N. Aggarwal, Head of Medicine could manipulate admission for M.D. if he so desired. Unfortunately Kamya noticed lust in his eyes as and when he conducted the internal practicals of final year. Her project report didn't appear satisfactory to him and he told her outside the class- 'You need to work harder as your presentation of facts is confusing and illogical.' She pleaded politely- 'I've done my best to prepare the project report and in case you are kind enough to help me, I'll alter the paragraphs wherever the amendments are required. I'll come to the department if you are merciful towards me.'
(*Medicine: Light in Twilight*, p. 72)

This was Dr. R.N. Aggarwal's way of luring her into his plan of sexually exploiting her. Because of the fact that she was in need of his help to get a seat in the M.D. course, Dr. R.N. Aggarwal knew he was in a position where he could exploit her. He purposely misused her and lured her, all because he was more advantaged than her. This is what usually happens when there is inequality in the society, the people who are at an advantage always exploit the ones who are at a disadvantage. The haves always exploit the have-nots the first chance they get.

498A: Fears and Dreams: Tanvi and Gazala's Case:

Another example of this distinction between the haves and have-nots can be found in Professor Vikas Sharma's 498A: Fears and Dreams. This novel is a social novel in the true sense. It talks about a section of the Indian Penal Code, section 498A, to be specific, that is drafted to prevent cruelty against the wife by her husband or any relative of the husband. In this novel, which can also be called a social documentary in a written form, we come across many stories relating to dowry death and other cases of break down of marriage due to dowry demands and strained relations between the husband and the wife. Here, we come across the case of Jatin and Tanvi. Jatin is a normal man who comes from a middle class family. His marriage is fixed with Tanvi who is also from a very normal family and is not very rich. They get married and no demand of dowry is made by the groom or any of his family members. But once they get married, the unrealistic expectations of Tanvi start increasing and she starts asking Jatin for all sorts of luxuries and other materialistic pleasures that he obviously can not

afford and this leads to her becoming dissatisfied with her new husband. Tanvi ultimately leaves him one day and goes to live with her mother without saying anything. Few days later, when the father of Jatin meets her at a market, she tells him to pay her ten lakh rupees or else she would file a law suit against them. This way Tanvi exploits Jatin because of her mother's cunning nature and social connections. She extorts money from Jatin and his family and gets married to an influential and rich man who is a lawyer and is almost double her own age and is old enough to become her father. Professor Viaks Sharma shows us how the same provision of 498A is misused by people like Tanvi while people like Gazala who actually need it are not able to utilize it. This is all because of the difference in the social status and connections that Tanvi and her mother have but unfortunately, Gazala and her family do not have when in actual life, it is the latter who needs it more than the former. The narrator tells us about his student Gazala who was married by her parents in a good household. But really soon after the marriage is solemnized, her in laws start pestering her for dowry. Her parents try their best to help their daughter in every way possible but are unsuccessful at the end. Ultimately, her in laws kill her by setting her on fire alive and burning her to death. Her parents wander from place to place, from one police station to the other, all in an attempt of gaining justice for their dead daughter but fail. Her in laws, who are rich and influential people, influence the case and bribe the officers to destroy the evidence and shift the case in their favor. And they are successful in this and ultimately the case gets closed and the culprits are never punished. This is another example of how the haves exploit the have-nots.

Conclusion:

Professor Vikas Sharma is a social writer and all his novels are solely dedicated to one or the other problem of the society that we are living in. He explicitly writes about various social issues like discrimination, inequality, women empowerment, caste discrimination, wealth inequality, infidelity, etc. He highlights the problems of the society and suggests solutions for the same through his writing and this is why his books are more than just novels with a purpose of entertaining people. He causes his readers to think upon such issues that have great importance in our lives. He addresses the problem of haves and have-nots in almost all his novels and talks about the exploitation and struggle the latter have to go through and leaves it upon the readers to ponder upon the question of inequality.

Works Cited

- Sharma, Vikas. *Love's Not Time's Fool*, Diamond Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2021.
- Sharma, Vikas. *IAS Today*, Diamond Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2021.
- Sharma, Vikas. *498A: Fears and Dreams*, Diamond Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2022.
- Sharma, Vikas. *Medicine: Light in Twilight*, Diamond Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2022.
- Sharma, Vandana. *Critiquing the Novels of Vikas Sharma*, Diamond Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2022.