



A Chronicle Learning of Womanhood in Vikas Sharma's *I.A.S Today*

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Abstract:

The status of women in India has undergone substantial changes throughout recorded Indian history. In ancient times, particularly in Indo-Aryan speaking regions, women experienced a decline in their social standing, and this subordination continued until India's early modern period. This paper aims to study four major women characters who are portrayed as elevated beings with the ability to transform and be transformed. These characters possess intellectual superiority, discriminatory power, decision-making capabilities, resilience, boldness, and an unwavering attitude to combat evil and speak out against injustice. The four characters under analysis are Shivangi Shrotriya, Trishala Vasu, Rewati, and Swati. Throughout the novel, all of these women undergo personal growth, transitioning from a state of ignorance to knowledge, from negation to affirmation, and from imperfection to perfection. These women characters are depicted as intelligent individuals who play a fundamental role in advancing the plot. They serve as guiding forces, each holding their own domain of expertise where they bring order, provide solace in times of distress, and exemplify beauty.

Keywords: affirmation, deteriorated society, summum bonum, patriotism, 'purush', 'prakriti', transformation.

Vikash Sharma is a renowned author of both Hindi and English novels. In addition to being a novelist, he is also a poet and researcher. He has often been compared to Chetan Bhagat. His first novel, *Raah Ke Pathar*, was published in 2021 and received a warm reception from many writers. The novel revolves around the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity. His second novel, *I.A.S. Today*, is considered a masterpiece and holds a prominent place among contemporary fictional works. Another notable work by Prof. Vikash Sharma is *Love's Not Time's Fool*, which explores a variety of themes.

Prof. Vikash Sharma is known for his realistic approach, as he portrays in his novels what he observes in society. His works reflect the concerns of the modern world and serve as a mirror to Indian society today. His novels vividly depict a society that has degraded itself by prioritizing wealth over the cherished values of honesty, integrity, selfless service, and honor. This immoral, corrupt, and deteriorating society is exemplified through the character of Tinny. Similar to Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Tinny is described as an "abhorred slave" capable of all ill. Like Ratan Rathor in Arun Joshi's novel, *The Apprentice*, Tinny believes that money is the ultimate goal in life. He states that without money, a person is devoid of worth and compares money to supreme power. Tinny's perspective is that money holds more influence than patriotism and that it brings respect, security, and even friendship, surpassing the limitations of laws.

In analyzing the text, it becomes evident that Ruskin's statement, "Shakespeare has no heroes; he has only heroines," can also be applied to Vikas Sharma's novel. Similar to Spenser, the author portrays his female characters in a dignified and elevated manner. The character of Trishala Vasu effectively embodies the concept of woman as 'shakti' or power. Shivangi's character is portrayed as fearless and courageous, as she successfully overcomes the malicious intentions of the villainous and deceitful Devadutt. Rewati undergoes a transformative journey and serves as an example to others that it is never too late to make a fresh start in life. This mindset and determination have the potential to save us from utter destruction. It is worth noting that the catastrophe in the story is caused by Tinny and his criminal activities involving forgery and murder. Only Rewati, by rejecting this corrupt world, manages to escape its grasp. Swati proves her worth as a woman by teaming up with Karmveer, a Police Inspector, to identify the true culprit, Tinny, and precise her revenge by killing him.

Trishala Vasu is a central and influential female character in the novel, playing a transformative role in Romesh's life. She serves as his mentor and catalyst for change. According to the Shankhya system of philosophy, women, referred to as "Prakrati," possess an active force, while men, known as "Purush," are considered inert and inactive. It is through contact with women, men become active. Women have the power to persuade men towards union, enjoyment, and the fulfillment of life. In the novel, Trishala Vasu embodies this concept of "Prakrati. She not only seduces Romesh, but also transforms him into a better human being. She is his source of strength

and empowerment. Following the traumatic incident of rape involving a female lecturer on the university campus, Romesh expresses deep concern for his wife Vasu, conveying his possessiveness and captivation. She is energetic, charming, humorous and beautiful girl with sparkling wit and unfolding charm. She is brilliant and suitable of taking right decision at right time. She chooses Romesh as her life partner and betrays her mother who feels happy over the suitable selection, but asks her to wait for the consent of her father. Her father is Prospero-like who after investigation permits her daughter for marriage.

When Romesh was initially assigned to share room number 105 with Miss Trishala Vasu from Dharasthala Karnatka, he felt a sense of unfamiliarity. It was a completely new experience for him to be in the company of a girl who came from a higher social class and followed a more modern way of life. Romesh and Vasu differed not only in their food preferences but also in their thought patterns. However, as time went on, Vasu managed to win Romesh over, and they both began to feel comfortable in each other's presence. Romesh, who was known for his innovative ideas, also started to express his views in an impressive manner. Furthermore, he quickly developed a command over the English language.

Romesh and Vasu decided to take a trip to Kempty Falls, which was planned by Vasu herself. During this trip, they felt a strong attraction towards each other and made the decision to become life partners. Trishala Vasu sent photos of their trip to her mother, who saw Romesh as a suitable match and advised to wait for her father's consent. Abhipal Vasu reached out to the District Magistrate (DM) of Hapur to gather information about Romesh's parents. At Abhipal's request, the DM visited Romesh's village and met his parents, discovering them to be simple and kind-hearted individuals.

Upon successfully completing their training, both Romesh and Vasu were assigned postings in the state of Haryana. They lived happily ever after.

Shivangi Shrotriya undergoes a transformative journey from ignorance to knowledge in the novel. Initially, as a young and inexperienced individual, she harbors dreams of becoming a celebrity without understanding the challenges involved. She challenges Romesh, stating that she will make more money in life as a stage performer compared to him as a teacher. However, after the loss of her father, Shivangi sells a portion of her agricultural land to establish her own company called the "Parvati Music Group. She charges fifty thousand rupees for one-night performances. Her ambition to become a celebrity leads her to Mumbai, where she encounters Devadev, a fraudulent and deceitful person. Devadev sees Shivangi as nothing more than a puppet and object of physical comfort. During a dance, he physically attacks her and attempts to touch her inappropriately. In response, Shivangi bravely confronts him, brandishing a knife and challenging him to attack her if he dares. She refers to him as a "son of a pig" and warns him that he will be killed if he chooses to engage with her.

Realizing that Mumbai is a place where success is difficult to achieve without connections and influence, Shivangi decides to return to her hometown and chooses Danny as her life partner. She supports him in completing his engineering degree. Through her experiences, Shivangi learns the valuable lesson that not everything that appears attractive is actually valuable, symbolized by the phrase "All that glitters is not gold. She matures and grows as an individual, applying her newfound knowledge to make positive decisions based on her past experiences.

Rewati, a character diverse from other female characters, undergoes a transformative process after killing Vallu, who had attacked her in a drunken state. She emerges as a completely changed person, now avoiding everything that previously tempted her. Existential questions about her identity, the purpose of existence, and the meaning of life constantly surround her. Consumed by guilt, she recites the "Gayatri mantra" and chants "Om Namah Shivay" in order to find solace and depict that her soul is still alive, guiding her towards the right path. Eventually, she relinquishes all worldly temptations and seeks peace and perfection in life by living in an ashram.

Initially, the death of her husband and extreme poverty forced Rewati to seek refuge in the home of her sister-in-law, Kanti, and her husband Jay Tapse, also known as Tinny. Jay is attracted to Rewati's beauty and willingly allows her to stay in their house. This also comforts Kanti, who wants to assist Rewati. Tinny develops a physical relationship with Rewati and manipulates her by using her Aadhar card for his own selfish and fraudulent purposes. Things go on smoothly until Rewati kills Vallu using the bottom of a brass flower vase, resulting in his death. After Vallu's death, she becomes consumed by guilt and suffers like Lady Macbeth. Her guilt makes it difficult for her to sleep, and she dreams of Vallu "riding on a black horse" while asleep. Initially, she tries sleeping pills and reciting the Gayatri mantra to help her sleep, but to no avail. Ultimately, she decides to leave a life of crime and seeks peace by living in an ashram, far away from the chaos of the world.

In a dream, Anand, a popular disciple of Buddha, appears to Rewati and confronts her with existential questions. He explains that earthly beings have no true home and must eventually return to their eternal home. He compares human beings to tenants who briefly stay in this prison called home but ultimately need liberation. As a saint, he has no desire to return to a life of bondage and earthly limitations. Anand also reveals his own journey to self-illumination and divine enlightenment, stating that once he has mastered control over his five senses, he will shed his physical body and become a part of the divine soul.

Rewati feels guilty for not resisting the worldly temptations offered by Tinny. However, she now wishes to break free from the web she has woven herself. She resolves to transcend greed, violence, pride, lust, anger, restlessness, falsehood, and other vices. Chanting "Om Namah Shivay" brings her peace. Inspired by the example of Mother Teresa, who resigned from her position as the principal of a senior secondary school to serve the poor and needy, Rewati also leaves behind the hotel with the ornaments she received as gifts from Jay.

She departs from the room, leaving a note for Kanti: "I am going out in search of peace and light. The burden of bondage has become unbearable for me. I am giving you my earthly possessions out of love and affection. I will forever be grateful to both of you for your timely support. Perhaps, worldly things are not meant for me, and that is why I am leaving. Take care. Wearing a white sari, she arrives at the ashram and donates two crore rupees to the trustee of Brahmakumari Vishwavidyalaya, intending not to be a burden on them. By renouncing the corrupt world and joining the ashram for the sake of peace of mind, Rewati saves her soul.

Swati is the widow of the bank manager who was killed by a bank robber while he was resisting. She is courageous and takes on two challenges. First, she fights against poverty by becoming a bar manager at Aurobindo hotel. Secondly, she seeks revenge for her husband's innocent killing during the bank robbery. She is determined to find the person responsible for supplying AK-47 to the robbers.

With the help of Karmveer, a police inspector, Swati successfully uncovers the criminal racket responsible for robbing and killing innocent people, including her husband. Her bravery and intelligence make her comparable to the heroic women of ancient Indian mythology. Just like Savitri, who used her intelligence and bravery to bring her husband back from the God of Death, Swati uncovers the criminals who have caused death and deception. Exposing the criminals and killing Jay Tapse, also known as Tinny, was no easy task. Swati acts boldly and wisely. Her determination won't allow her to rest until she obtains information about the criminals and ensures they are punished for their villainous acts.

Swati contemplates the innocent killings of six people in a matter of seconds and the criminals' easy escape. The police's inability to find and punish such culprits fills her with grief. She remains vigilant and observant of her surroundings. The mysterious deaths of Praveen Nikhil, Kumar Sayam, and Gannu raise suspicions in Swati's mind. She concludes that Praveen Nikhil's car number could lead her to the truth. Swati seeks help from Inspector Karmveer Singh, whose sincere efforts lead to the discovery of the car driver Nehi Singh. Nehi reveals that the AK-47s used in the bank robbery came from Krishna Colony, Gurugram.

During his investigation, CID chief Romesh notices a striking resemblance between Jay Tapse and Tinny. He also suspects that Nirmal Kant's signature matches Jay's. The names Kanti, Master Kanti, Nirmal Kant, and Jay Tapse are unfamiliar to Romesh and the D. of Greater Noida. They instruct the officers to locate Kanti, Rewati, and Jay, also known as Tinny. The phones of Kanti, Jay, and Rewati are traced to Love Nest Apartments in Dwarka. It becomes clear that Jay has changed his identity, which Karmveer reveals to Swati. To fulfill her revenge, Swati puts drops of Potassium Cyanide in Jay's wine, and a sip of it ends the life of Tinny alias Jay Tapse, a symbol of deceit and terror. Uttering the words, "Rascal. This is justice," Swati feels content as she has avenged her husband's death.

Conclusion:

Professor Vikas Sharma is a highly accomplished and progressive novelist of the modern era. His works highlight the importance of female empowerment and advocate for the respectful treatment of women. He firmly believes in the equality of men and women, viewing them as two essential components of society. Recognizing the significance of addressing women's concerns, he supports radical changes and rejects the use of immoral means to achieve success. Instead, he upholds the principle that hard work is the key to success. In his novels, Vikas Sharma portrays characters that are vibrant, passionate, and realistic. Despite facing challenges such as poverty, corruption, male chauvinism, exploitation, hunger, and deprivation, characters like Rewati and Swati exhibit great resilience and determination to overcome their adversities. They possess an innate ability to adapt even in unfavorable circumstances. Ultimately, all the female characters in Vikas Sharma's novels successfully reach their desired goals. Trishala reunites with Romesh after triumphing over obstacles, Swati finds satisfaction by uncovering the criminal responsible for her husband's unjust death, Rewati renounces worldly temptations to join an ashram and attain peace and happiness, and Shivangi gains knowledge through her life experiences.

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