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Contemporary Problems and Solutions in Vikas Sharma's Novel *Sana*

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Abstract

Vikas Sharma's semi-autobiographical novel Sana is an informative novel comprising the multiple themes and precious messages for human beings. Primarily, it focuses on the life of an individual, the female protagonist's life as a whole and secondly, it has exposed A to Z problems of human beings in nutshell. Along with the exposure of the problems, the novelist has, very artistically suggested the solutions for the same. The entire novel is replete with magic realism, myth and cultural memory, so plenty of maladies of human life has been explored. The wonderful thing is that in the same proportion, Vikas Sharma has prescribed the remedies to liberate the mankind from such dangerous maladies. Indeed, this novel is supposed to be the gateway to meet with the mythological characters; all the Gods of Hindus including Shiva, Narada, Brahma, Lord Chitrugupta and so on. Such mingling of the facts and fiction is praiseworthy that exposes the human problems and the solutions. Through the mouths of mythical and realistic characters, Vikas Sharma has revealed his own philosophy regarding human problems and their solutions. Such problems and their solutions have been exhibited alphabetically in a very artistic manner. Through the mouth of Lord Chitrugupta, Vikas Sharma has revealed his own humanistic approach. The link between mythical deities and the mankind has been created in such a wonderful manner that it seems as if the entire happenings are occurring in front of the readers' eyes.

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Sana (2023) is one of the most notable novels of Vikas Sharma. Through this novel, Vikas Sharma has blended facts and fiction by using his multi-dimensional talent as a novelist. It is notable fact that Vikas Sharma by virtue is also a poet belonging to a well-known poetic family background so the fervour of poetic talent is apparently visible almost in all his novels. The present novel is not an exceptional case. Through the portrayal of female protagonist, Sana, the novelist has attempted to liberate human beings from the vices like lechery, envy, greed, fear, ego, and so many other negative things and inculcated positive thinking within the hearts and minds of human beings. Sana is a symbolical character. Through this character, Vikas Sharma has portrayed the character of such a woman who falls down into the ditch of adultery merely for her sexual thirst is unquenchable like Lady Wishfort of Christopher Marlow's play *The Way of the World* and Lady Booby of Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews*. Sana makes premarital relationship with Chandan and extra-marital relationship with Revati Prasad and Akshay Mohan. Actually, Sana is a realistic character associated with Vikas Sharma's life directly. She has been his assistant as pointed out by different critics. Monika Khurana and Dr. N.P.Singh confirm this fact in their paper entitled '*Sana: A Tale of Love, Adultery, and Ambition*' in which they write, "The protagonist of the novel, 'Sana' is a real-life person who was once close to the author and served as his assistant, as critics frequently point out. The cover page of the novel displays the protagonist of the real-life Sana i.e. Sunny. As we go through the novel, it appears that Vikas Sharma, the author, has closely observed the real-life personality in order to create the character of Sana. "(Khurana & Singh- 129)

What is going on in the corporate sector, how the present generation is falling down in the ditch of adultery in the name of love and what type of the differences are found between the lives of haves and that of have nots, everything has been exhibited in an interesting manner. The portrayal of mythical figures, literary heroes, and the ordinary men and women is unique and wonderful. This novel has focused on the sorrows and sufferings of human beings revealing their possible causes. In fact, the whole discussion between God Chitragupta and the worldly people and other creatures is worth appreciation.

The main objective behind writing this research paper is to show that Vikas Sharma's novel, *Sana* is a novel written for the sake of human welfare. Generally, we the ordinary people think that novels are merely meant for recreation and entertainment but this research paper breaks this notion revealing the fact that today's novels are having informative lessons and inspiring thoughts. Vikas Sharma's *Sana* is replete with such informative lessons. As we know that Vikas Sharma's novels are academic having intertextual quality, so it is necessary to have a look at *Sana*'s themes and precious information. Hence, to draw the readers' attention towards the characteristic qualities of a woman like Sana, social problems and their solutions, and the virtues and vices of human life is the main objective of this research paper. Pooja Rani in her research paper entitled, 'The Theme of Extra-Marital Relationships in Professor Vikas Sharma's *Sana*' writes, "Sana is an attempt to develop positive thinking among readers so that they feel inspired to give up lechery, ego, greed, and possessiveness and then embrace novel thoughts. It is asserted that mere physical beauty is not enough. "(Dr. Payal-162)

To draw the attention of the readers towards the mythical Gods and Goddesses is the need of the day as the present generation is badly lagging behind in the race of spirituality. The entire humanity is in doldrums. We, the people have lost faith in Gods and Goddesses so the problems are increasing day-by-day. Today's man has lost hopes and dipped his soul in to the ditch of fear, greediness and envy so this research paper identifies those things that are wrong and right for the human beings. Hypothesis used in this paper is that the readers would be aware with the humanistic approach of Vikas Sharma and the relevance of his novel, *Sana* in the present scenario of human society. It is also expected from the worthy readers to turn towards the 'Indian Knowledge System'(IKS) abundantly stored in mythical scriptures like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* so that plenty of social and ethical maladies can be eradicated.

In the construction of this research paper, a certain methodology has been used that is based on the comprehensive reading of the text of *Sana*, deep study of its themes, plot and characterization. Apart from the text-study, various research papers written by the various writers concerning to the proposed topic have been consulted. Analytical and critical study of the A-to-Z points mentioned in the

novel has been frequently done. In writing this research paper, descriptive and analytical research methodology has been used. Citation of various books and articles used is mentioned in MLA format. *Sana* is a semi-autobiographical novel. In this novel, Sana is the female protagonist. Mr. Salinder Ranga writes, “One of Professor Vikas Sharma’s most recent novels is called *Sana*. The most autobiographical novel claimed to have real-life connections to the novelist.” (Deshwal 107)

This novel comprises multiple themes and tremendous informative lessons for the emancipation of human beings. As we know that this materialistic world has created a number of problems for human beings. Due to these problems, the sorrows and sufferings are increasing day-by-day. Almost all the novelists have raised such problems of human predicaments but the solutions of those predicaments have rarely been discussed. It is Vikas Sharma’s *Sana* that has proper solutions. The novelist has carried his readers to the threshold of the mythical world and introduced them with many mythical heroes. Right from the beginning of the novel, the novelist’s quest for national integrity and world-peace is clearly visible. There is a wonderful co-ordination of the religious and historical figures whose unity has been portrayed in such a manner that it seems that Vikas Sharma himself wants to tell us that if our Gods, Goddesses, and the pioneers of all these religions could be united, assembled themselves to discuss on the common and sensitive issues, and gathered jointly to discuss their problems, then why do we, the human beings are not ready to establish unity among us all? Let us see the opening stanza of this novel, *Sana*:

Being free from routine creative jobs, Lord Shiva planned to enjoy for a few days along with other Gods and requested Muni Narada to inform Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, Allah, Christ, Zeus, Guru Govind Singh, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Kubera, Maa Durga, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahaveera etc. to meet Him next day in His hall to have first hand knowledge of the problems of human beings and animals alike. (*Sana* 3)

Lord Shiva plans to organize a programme to investigate the problems of all; human beings, animals or other creatures and to find out the ways and means of their solutions. Vikas Sharma writes:

Lord Chitragupta was made the custodian and controller of this programme, Vayuputras were asked to look after the transportation -first come, first served. The fundamentals of conduct were told to everybody who wanted to present his/ her problems to the Almighty. Lord Chitragupta checked the Devine internet if it was O.K. (*sana 4*)

Here, the way of presenting the narrative seems to be funny and entertaining that the programme of Lord Chitragupta was organized in such a manner that it seems as if it is organized in the present time. The imaginative power of the novelist seems to be strengthened and akin to a poet. However, Vikas Sharma is also a poet, the glimpses of the poetic talent are apparently visible in all his novels. Further, the novelist has focused on the systematic proceeding of the programme. Further, Vikas Sharma writes, “As per schedule, the Gods reached the court and saw a few persons were waiting for the solution of their complaints, grudges, grief etc. Lord Chitragupta asked- What brings you here Mr. A?” (*Sana 4*)

One of the major themes reflected in *Sana* is ‘the patriarchal nature of Indian culture’. Kamal Kant Sharma writes, “The patriarchal nature of Indian culture is further emphasized through characters like Brij Vrat who experiences deep discomfort with Sana’s increasing success. In the traditional Indian family structure, men are often expected to be the dominant achievers, while women’s successes are sometimes seen as a threat to male authority. Brij Vrat’s unease with Sana’s accomplishment at school climates in his decision to leave for Rishikesh unannounced, distancing himself from a situation that challenges his own sense of control and the roles he believes are natural for men and women. His retreat highlights the internalized patriarchy that many individuals, even those with progressive views, are unable to fully escape.” (Kamal Kant Sharma 73). Further, Vikas Sharma writes:

Muni Narada informed all the Gods concerned about the agenda of meeting and then came to earth and informed the old, the sick, the poor, the crippled people, and animals on internet that a (daily) meeting will be held under the supervision of Lord Shiva and His Supporting Gods to pay attention to problems of worldly creatures. People and animals must wait for their turn accordingly to alphabetical order to avoid inconvenience to the speaker as well as the listener. (*Sana 3*)

Let us see how Vikas Sharma has used his power of imagination and remarkable talent as a man of literature. Basically, he belongs to a literary and academic family; professor of English at C.C.S University, Meerut. His novels have unthinkable literary instances; not merely confined to Indian English literature but also the literature of the world. He is fond of literary quotes and references. He never forgets to connect his narratives with the literary figures and their works. This novel is also evidence of this fact. The issues of A-to- Z problems and their solutions have been commenced from the description of Sir Francis Bacon, the father of English essays. According to this novel, Bacon's problem is that he has been called 'the wisest, the brightest and the meanest of mankind' by Alexander Pope, the problem he feels why did Pope call him meanest? Replying to Bacon, Lord Chitragupta scolds him saying that he has been called the wisest and the brightest still he is not satisfied. Merely heeding upon the thing that he has been called the meanest, so he is sad, it is not fair.

Vikas Sharma wants to tell us that the main problem of human beings is over expectations. He wants to get everything. He is not ready to admit his weak points. He always expects praise from others and if someone criticises him pointing out his weaknesses, his face turns red and mouth gets hang. In front of Lord Chitragupta, other persons; three brothers appear. They jointly present their problems that they are victim of obesity so they are compelled to remain as bachelors. They want to seek solutions so that marriage proposals could arrive for them. Lord Chitragupta replies that they do not deserve to get rid of their problems since in the previous births they were very thin bodied and greedy for wealth. Due to wealth in abundance, they could not utilize their wealth in proper ways so they would remain as they are. Here, the worthy novelist gives the philosophic message that man's problems are caused by his greediness. If someone has enough wealth, one should utilize it properly.

Next turn is of Charles Lamb who is also a renowned literary figure; an essayist and regarded as the 'Prince of English essayists. Charles Lamb's problems are many. His problems are – his beloved Ann Simmons does not unite with him in spite of the fact that he is the prince of English essayists, his insane sister has killed his mother, God created his interest in music but he has made him stammer, he has very short height, is compelled to spend his whole life as a

bachelor, and everybody humiliates him. Lord Chitragupta consoles him saying that in spite of these several weaknesses, he is regarded as the ‘prince of English essayists. This thing is too much for him. Further the victims of chronic Asthma, blood cancer, brain tumour, loss of memory, insomnia, skin allergy, and kidney failure. Along with such patients, the other miser people also come; one was with his complaint that his pension is not being released properly, one feels bothered to think that he possesses tremendous wealth still he is not happy. He finds himself always in chains of sufferings.

Lord Chitragupta announces the solutions of all the clients one-by-one and says them that most of the victims are facing troubles due to their worse deeds committed in their previous births so it is needless to seek their solutions because they have to face their troubles as per the deeds already recorded. It means that Vikas Sharma has a wide range of knowledge replete with Indian philosophy and wants to make his worthy readers aware with such precious knowledge for the sake of human- emancipation. In short, the novelist, through the mouth of mythical character, Lord Chitragupta has appealed his people not to repeat the things as the forefathers of the mankind have done of which results they are getting in the present births.

The next clients are- the killers of Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and Indira Gandhi. They are too hesitated to raise their problems. Lord Chitragupta takes initiative himself and comes forward to declare that they would have to face troubles some more in three births further, so there is no remedy of their sorrows. In this chain, the major figure of the Mahabharata, Dhritarashtra appears with his son, Duryodhana complaining that although he was a king but his orders were not obeyed by his subjects so he felt dejected. His complaints are many including that he is a blind man. His all the hundred sons got tragic deaths. Upon his problems, Lord Chitragupta advises him to forget his griefs of the past and be optimistic towards his future. Lord Chitragupta points out the cause of his downfall saying that his pride is the main cause of his damnation.

Further, a woman appears before Lord Chitragupta saying that she has died due to burning in the fire. She is worried that her husband and brother tried to rescue her but she could not be survived. She could not see her children before her death. Saying to her, Lord Chitragupta consoled her that she would be able to

have some peace and pleasure in her fourth birth, so she should not waste his time weeping here. After her departure, a widow woman appears complaining that her husband was a physician. He was a drunkard and smoker. He had left her in lurch and there is no support of her from any side. Even I.M.A. (Indian Medical Association) is not providing her any kind of sympathetic assistance. Upon her complaint, Lord Chitragupta says that although she has committed no crime but some people face troubles due to their bad luck.

Now, we cast our eyes upon the Dalit issue, Vikas Sharma raises. A Dalit student comes forward to say something about his problem. He says that he belongs to a poor Dalit-family. He has rendered his services as a lecturer for ten years but now he is in the grip of serious pain in abdomen and due to operation, several side effects have taken place that's why he had died leaving his illiterate wife and five children in tight corner. Lord Chitragupta consoles him too saying that he would check his record. Just after the Dalit student, Ravana, the demon King appeared with folded hand praying, "O Lord! I don't wish to have Vibhishana as my brother in the next birth. Intolerable as he is." (*Sana 7*). Lord Chitragupta consoles him too saying that time has changed, everything would be all right.

Here, Vikas Sharma has drawn our attention on the importance of a brother. In the *Ramayana*, Vibhishana has deceived his own brother Ravana so the grief of Ravana has been portrayed. Indira Gandhi also comes to reveal her problem hoping to get some desirable solutions. She says that whatever she could do better for her nation she did yet she was shot dead, her both the sons; Sanjay Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi got tragic deaths. What was her fault? Upon her grief, Lord Chitragupta consoles her by saying that she should wait for some more births for the proper rewards for her rendering praiseworthy services to the nation and the sacrifices of her own and that of her two sons. The above description regarding Indira Gandhi, her dedicative services and sacrifices indicate that the great contribution of Indira Gandhi is praiseworthy and rewardable. Vikas Sharma has indirectly attacked over the worse system of Indian political system in which there is no proper security even to a well-dedicated the then Prime Minister of India. General Dyre, Lucretius, Socrates, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Sabana and many unnamed clients from Nigeria, Tanzania, and South Africa appeared before Lord

Chitrugupta for the solutions of their respective problems. Some Muslim soldiers from Afghanistan also appeared there with dejected faces. A number of Philistines consulted with Lord Chitrugupta apologising by their words, “Forget and forgive. No wisdom in keeping wounds green.” (*Sana* 9)

In the last but not least, some persons gathered to pray for one universal language. Their humble submission was that there must be a common language so that the people should not feel any kind of communitive problems. Vikas Sharma has drawn our attention towards the problems of the human beings and their solutions also. In fact, there are a number of problems we people are facing day-by-day. Some of them are natural and most of them are created by human beings themselves. The novelist, through his narrative, has raised a number of problems prevalent in human society across the world. The wonderful thing is that Vikas Sharma has artistically linked many things; realistic and fantastic. Myth and realism go parallel. The entire novel is concentrated upon the life-struggle of Sana, an ordinary girl. Indeed, in Vikas Sharma’s real life yet this novel has become important on the other issues of the world. When we make our entry in its reading text, it seems as if this is a metaphysical novel but as soon as we go deep and deeper the things are changed. Its beginning is mythical; middle is blend of facts and fiction and the end is purely realistic. Therefore, it is to be said that this novel is a bouquet of the deep philosophy of the novelist.

Ultimately, Lord Chitrugupta has fed up listening to the varied victims whose problems are unlimited without any measurement. Although, he has suggested the solutions one-by-one but when he reached on the conclusion that the problems of living and dead human beings are unthinkable in number, so he ends the meeting and leaves the place. The novelist writes, “Lord Chitrugupta promised to meet them next year for further discussion and there was no need to feel any panic. He said, ‘One’s real self is entirely different than what one feels.’”

When Sana feels dejected due to loss of her mother in-law and other relations, Swami Parmanand has been invited from Rishikesh to console her and liberate her from the emotional disappointment. Swami ji gives some moral boosting sermons to console her. Some words are as follows: “Everything appears permanent in nature. The universe is a fluid. Permanence is a question of degree.

This globe is a transparent law and not mass of facts. Accept human culture as the predominance of idea.” (*Sana* 165)

As a conclusion, it can be submitted that *Sana* is a novel in which the novelist has tried to show the worldly problems and their solutions. Its female protagonist is the inspiring character whose life is replete with the rises and falls in same proportion. Along with the depiction of Sana’s struggle for her survival, Vikas Sharma has picked a number of issues; social, economic, educational, ethical and so on. Even Gods are also worried to see human problems. Pooja Rani’s words are appropriate when she writes about the things Professor Vikas Sharma wants: “According to the author, the proliferation of ego, lust, avarice, aggression, deceit, falsehood, lack of wisdom, and hypocrisy are the detrimental aspects of our societal framework, resulting in its profound devastation. In order to foster societal prosperity and well-being, it is imperative to eliminate deceit, cunningness, and wickedness from our midst. The attainment of marital happiness can be facilitated for family members through adherence to principles such as tolerance, compromise, self-reliance, individual responsibility, and personal autonomy. (Dr. Payal-167)

Lord Chitrugupta, ultimately, has to postpone his meeting in which he was deliberately listening the problems of all the living and dead humans. Through this novel, Vikas Sharma has drawn our attention towards the national integrity. In the opening chapter, he has shown the remarkable and indispensable unity of all the Gods and Goddesses who sit and talk together. The founders of all the religions have been shown in mutual harmony. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain etc. have been portrayed as the reciprocals of one another so, here we find Vikas Sharma’s appeal for national and global integrity by going beyond the thought of caste and creed, region and language and so on.

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