



Art and Ethics in the novels of Vikas Sharm: A Study of *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*

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Abstract

Aim: *After the success of his eight novels, Vikas Sharma wrote Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow to assert his positive attitude to life. Suicide, pessimism, dormant nature, irrationality, imprudence, indecency etc. have no place in his scheme of things. As an awakened citizen and university professor, he meets several kinds of people in his daily life and paints those who have stayed in his memory for particular deed or feeling or passion. In this research paper the psychology of the characters of this novel has been minutely analyzed. Secondly, ethical values as asserted by the author, have been illustrated and elaborated as they have stood the tests of time and place. Like Buddha, Vikas Sharma admits*

that Time changes and then life changes with it. Every 'tomorrow' may not be gay and yet hope is the inspiration to work hard and face the uncertain oddities.

Methodology and Approach: *The study is based on the novel Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow by Prof: Vikas Sharma as a primary text. The novel employs optimistic approach towards life.*

Outcome: *The novel depicts complexities of the contemporary society that have become alarming and challenging for each and every individual. The novel carefully paints different shades and colors of human feeling. The artist answers the question- How to live? and he never shows any indifference to ethical values.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *Thus, Vikas Sharma has written purposeful novels with due emphasis upon art of narration, technique of plot construction, with significance to round characters etc. Secondly, he introduces several shades of realism in his novels and rarely mixes the natural and supernatural characters. In the novel Hope Against Hope also he has added due significance to positive approach to life. Same is the case with Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow as this title makes us think about future, future that turns into present and the present that gets naturally converted into past.*

Keywords: Tomorrow, annihilate, obliterate, civilization, subservient, unconscious mind, with and without, renunciation, imprudence, etc.

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William Shakespeare never expected that many lines of his plays would become very popular among the audiences, readers and scholars and they would interpret them with reference to changing eco-political and social scenario of 21st century. Towards the end of tragedy *Macbeth*, he expresses — 'Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow' and that is regarded as the symbol of hope and cheerfulness in future. Dr. Vikas Sharma attaches due importance to future bliss and joy but warns the readers that second tomorrow may not be as bright as first tomorrow and the third tomorrow might be disgusting and desperate. Like Lord Buddha, he believes that Time changes and situations change accordingly as change is the law of nature.

In this novel *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* the artist follows Emily Dickinson's theory that hope is eternal in human breast. Hope inspires human beings to make experiments in science and medicine. Hope inspires the scholars of various branches to write new books on new topics. A mother looks after her children with the hope that they will be good citizens of democracy and solve national problems. Politicians contest election with the hope of getting victory and then introduce reforms in socio-political set up of the nation.

Emily Dickinson uses the word 'hope' with full emphasis upon freedom of thought, merciful attitude and regards it eternal 'bird'. She says that this bird of hope sings songs for human heart and mind and hence the songs are abstract. But wise people like Saira, Sabir, Pritesh, Shraddha, Rachita etc. understand the wisdom hidden in positive approach to life. This music 'never stops' though the monarchs have lost their kingdom and people are enjoying the benefits of democracy.

Like Emily Dickinson, Vikas Sharma accepts that the complexities of 21st century have become alarming. Violence has increased though the police officers and intelligence officers work hard 24x7 to check the crime-rate. There is delay in courts of law and rogues kidnap girls for selling them to Muslim countries. There

are hoarders who sell things when prices go up in the market. Above all many young educated people like Pritesh are unemployed and young girls too feel frustrated while working on low wages. Boot-legging, exhortion and gold smuggling are hard realities of our economic system. And yet the music of bird of hope is 'heard in the chilliest land'. Even in extreme penury, this bird does not demand any food as it is abstract in nature — directly appeals to human heart. This bird is pretty small and yet meanings of its songs are sublime, grand and lofty.

Victorian poet Robert Browning created hope in the heart of contemporary people with his poems and asked them to ignore the chaos and anarchy as created by industrial growth in the country. He told them that there is no death for God, soul, heaven and *The Bible*. In the poem *Prospice* he called himself 'ever a fighter' and hence ready to fight even death. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra* he advised people that old age is the best period of life and there is no need to be afraid of it. In *Morte De' Arthur* Alfred Tennyson declared they 'old order changeth yielding place to new'. *Morte De' Arthur* hoped to take birth again after this physical death. Similarly T.S. Eliot used to assert that every end has a beginning because every beginning has an end. This cycle of death and birth will go on forever. On the death of twins Shraddha tells Pritesh to sing songs, dance, play tennis and enjoy other games as new life, new situation, new people, new flowers, new joys, new adventures etc. wait for them too:

Let us dance, sing, play games, meet friends, enjoy the beauty of seasons and listen the songs of cuckoo and nightingales and eat fruits of our liking. Forget the past and plan for new tomorrow and welcome new tomorrow. (194)

In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf remarks:

These are unpleasant instincts to harbour, I reflected. They are bred of the conditions of life, of the lack of civilization, I thought, ...

And, as I realized these drawbacks by degrees fear and bitterness modified themselves into pity and toleration ... (40)

Following the above statement of Virginia Woolf, Vikas Sharma records the contemporary socio-economic and political conditions of rural and urban Haryana. Like Virginia Woolf, he analyzes the psychology of Pritesh, Shraddha, Toshi, Kammo, Shanu, Yukti, Kamala Nain, Naini, Dipali, Chanchal, Dhania, mother of Pritesh, etc. and makes them different from each other. For example, Toshi, Kammo and Shanu show grace under pressure after they had been kidnapped. Toshi killed the kidnappers Talu, Birju and Bhandari. She didn't feel nervous at all. She was bold enough to face the aggressive police officers as they had failed to control the anti-social elements in Panipat. Boot-legging, prostitution, gold smuggling and extortion were common in the town and the authorities failed to take action against culprits. M.L.A. had his own whim — to favour or harm the rival. Virginia Woolf analyzes the problems of a woman novelist and the faults critics find in her art:

Alas! A woman that attempts the pen,
The fault can by virtue be redeemed.
They tell us we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play,
Are the accomplishments we should desire;
To write, or read, or think, or to inquire,
Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time ... (60)

But Vikas Sharma does not concentrate merely upon the female clothes of latest fashions and his characters don't merely play tennis, billiards or badminton, they have some noble aim to work for. People like Sabir, Saira, Pritesh, Shraddha, Arora, Monit Arora, Anekant etc. have grand aims to struggle for though they often go astray.

Being the follower of James Joyce, Henry James, Virginia Woolf etc. he peeps into the conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious mind of his male and female characters. As a follower of Sigmund Freud, he has analyzed the dreams of Pritesh, Yukti, Shraddha etc. in this novel as so many 'impressions' come to their mind. In other words, he paints characters from within and without.

In *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* he analyzes — What does Pritesh think of his early poverty? What does he feel about the limitations of his Papa? What does he feel when his Papa sells his mummy's two Kangans for his education? What does he feel seeing the beautiful figure of Shraddha while playing badminton and billiards with her? What does he feel about Yukti in his dreams? What does he feel getting a lot of deposits in his new bank account? What is his reaction when she appoints him attorney of all her assets in case of her death? How does he feel enjoying romantic moments of love with her before marriage and after marriage? What are his expectations when she is pregnant? What does he feel when Mirdul is raped and killed? How does he admire her for her philanthropic deeds? How does he appreciate her management skills? (Blanket trade, agricultural farm, milk dairy, hostel affairs etc.) What does he feel on the death of twins? How does Shraddha ask him to arise, awake and enliven himself for better tomorrow? For her children are dead but then the sky has not fallen upon them. In his book *Novel as An Art Form* Vikas Sharma accepts the relationship of art and morality and condemns the theory of art for the sake of art:

... many literary artists such as J.J. Rousseau, Clara Reeve, Oliver Goldsmith, Anthony Trollope, Daniel Defoe, Smollett, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Eliot, Flaubert, R.L. Stevenson, Chekhov, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Balzac, R.N. Tagore, Chetan Bhagat, Shobha De, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande etc. followed the theory of art for morality and did not ignore ethical values such as fortitude, mercy, generosity, wisdom,

prudence, forgiveness, right conduct, right philosophy, self-restraint etc. Their novels answer the question — How to live? (132-33)

In the very beginning of the novel *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* the author pays tribute to Lord Shiva who is the parent of all ideas and who removes the gap between 'within and without'. In the first chapter of the novel, he sympathizes with the poor people who fail to get good education. As a result, the uneducated people have to struggle hard for their existence. For example, Naini feels forced to give up education due to the suspension of her father and marry Ajoy.

In second chapter Pritesh visits Shiva Temple with his Papa to get His blessings for future life. Here reference is made to the poverty of Lal Bahadur Shastri who became the Prime Minister of India in spite of his early poverty. Towards the end of this chapter the narrator reasserts the importance of self-control and self-discipline. Pritesh admits:

... I often listened the sermons of saints of all sects who delivered lectures on soul, righteousness, mercy, fortitude, pure personality, self-knowledge etc. I made a promise to myself to remember and practice the word 'Awareness. (17)

In the middle of 4th chapter, the author refers to *The Bhatgwadgita* and confirms the importance of 'detachment, renunciation, liberation, duty of man etc.' (29) For example, Shraddha donates all the money that she gets from the sale of Mridul's ornaments and devotes herself for the welfare of orphans.

Shraddha is the symbol of dedication and positivity. In spite of being a young widow she teaches theatrical skills to young guys of Ambala but then stops that work as they don't pay attention to learning and try to flirt with her. She guides Pritesh for practical life as he had no means to become a college lecturer — he was supposed to clear N.E.T. and then work hard for Ph.D. degree.

In seventh chapter the author describes the utility of books for the students of 21st century too. Kamala Nain succeeds as a journalist, a novelist and a biographer because she possesses self-restraint. In tenth chapter the author confirms the importance of 'trust' in life and Shraddha expects only 'trust' from Pritesh and Right conduct is regarded most essential in life. In the 20th chapter Vikas Sharma gives brief details of the fundamentals of *The Bhagwadgita* to confirm that moral lessons are essential in the period of violence and violence is no solution of anti-social activities.

As a supporter of industrial growth in India Vikas Sharma does not plead that Marxism is the only weapon to create equality in society. It is true that Pritesh had studied Marxism in his student life. But Shraddha puts forward before him the plan of blanket trade and they earn money for their living. Here the author asserts new economic theory — one ought to become job-giver rather than be a job-seeker only. In the blanket trade he provides job to Mr. Singhal, Naini etc. Through the episode of Kamam Chand and Mohan Dass, he condemns 'greed' for dowry.

With his major and minor female characters such as Toshi, Shraddha, Kammo, Shanu etc. the author highlights the importance of N.C.C. in real life — girls ought to be made fit for self-defence as even-teasers and victimizers have increased in large number. Kidnapping has been condemned in the novel *I.A.S. Today*. In *I.A.S. Today, 498A: Fears and Dreams, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* etc. he admits that literature is the mirror of life. He never escapes from the hard realities, complexities and uncertainties of modern life as we are all living in the age of cybercrimes.

At the same time the author hates the romantic conception of war like G.B. Shaw and refers to the Kargil War (1999) in which Shraddha's father and father-in-law died. Reference is made to Sergius and Raina who are proud of war.

But then through Bluntshli, this conception of war and romance is exposed by the writer — Peace hath its own bright side and hence there is no glory in war.

Following Damian Grant's theory of realism, Vikas Sharma has presented various shades of realism in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* such as social realism, political realism, economic realism, psychological realism, historical realism, existential realism, moral realism, emotional realism etc.

The most remarkable quality of Shraddha, which puts her above other heroines of Vikas Sharma, is her prudence. She is conscious of her self-reliance and the artist admires it through Pritesh. Like a prudent person, she plans the future of her family and on the death of husband she does not feel totally heart broken. She admits her grief on the death of her father, father-in-law, husband and then Mirdul and yet prepares herself for new challenges in life. When she witnesses the death scene of murder of Kammo, Sanu and Ladu at her door, she does not lose her patience of mind. Finally, her own twins depart from her life and yet she prepares herself for new adventures in life. She aptly believes that life continues in the world inspite of role of death. She has already told Pritesh that the wheel of 'Kaal' has ever been moving, sparing none. Then how could the criminals escape from divine judgment?

Quite often Pritesh feels upset when things don't happen as planned and expected. He had expected to be M.A. in two years and then become a degree college lecturer. But U.G.C. rules have been implemented recently and hence his journey for job becomes troublesome. He feels sad as tomorrow seems far away and beyond his grip. But then Shraddha proposed for blanket trade and his pleasure knows no bounds. His happiness starts growing with every tomorrow. But then Madam Shraddha postpones her visit to Amritsar all of a sudden and he feels sad. No happy tomorrow as he had hoped to see Amritsar that day. On the contrary both feel forced to return Ambala for the funeral of Mirdul — unhappy tomorrow. When Shraddha listens the sound 'Maa', that creates new hopes in her.

He tells her —'Nobody knows what'll happen the next minute. ... Try to forget the funeral ethics. ...' (97)

The very next moment he feels that life is uncertain. (98) Due to his optimism, he feels —'... God Himself opens the last door when ninety-nine doors are closed. Of course, the door was open and I was to prove my worth with hard work.' (99) Here patience, optimism, vision and hard work have been asserted by the artist as these are most essential qualities for success in life. Towards the end of 17th chapter, he feels 'This tomorrow had started passing though I had become a responsible husband.' (112)

This above line is highly meaningful because Vikas Sharma's heroes may often indulge in amorous activities and yet never forget their duties to wife, job, friends, society and the nation. Like the heroes of Ernest Hemingway, they follow a code of conduct. Affectation hypocrisy, black-mailing, irrationality, imprudence etc. have been condemned by the artist in each novel.

Love of Pritesh for Shraddha is pure and it is for the sake of marriage. Her beautiful physique and skills as a player of badminton and billiards attract him and here is God's plenty. There is a direct difference between lust and love as Professor of S.D. College Ambala loves Yukti for sexual pleasure only. There is no feeling of pure love between them and hence Yukti feels forced to forget him forever. Love of Dipali for Prince Inderjeet is pure and it is for the sake of marriage. Both of them feel happy in the arms of each other. Pritesh consoles Shraddha when she is nervous, dormant and dull. Regarding pure love in the novels of Vikas Sharma Nishant Kumar Saini aptly remarks:

... the physical love is subject to decay, destruction and death. But spiritual, Platonic, divine or celestial love otherwise known as the alliance or union of true hearts, conquers everything. It is not subordinate or subservient to time. Time can run down everything

with its omnipotent sickle or slash but it cannot annihilate or obliterate genuine feelings and passions. (231)

Regarding the wide range of Vikas Sharma and also his understanding the tendencies of urban and rural people Dr. P.K. Jain remarks:

Due to his sympathy for poor people, he quotes the theory of Karl Marx in his novels and hence to be regarded an activist. Like G.B. Shaw, he didn't write novels for the sake of pleasure only as he likes purposeful fiction and supports the theory of art and morality. In spite of a few baths room scenes, he does not show any indifference to Indian culture and ancient Indian Classics (196)

Dr. Sandeep Gupta confirms this opinion of pure love in *I.A.S. Today* and remarks 'Like G.B. Shaw, Prof. Vikas Sharma has his views on love, marriage and sex. He does not unite his characters physically until they are married.' (207) Shradha's dreams create fear in subconscious mind though she sees them unconsciously. She fails to understand the meaning and significance of her dreams. It can be said that dreams are illusions and hence far away from reality.

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