



Social and Legal Concerns in Prof. Vikas Sharma's *498A: Fears and Dreams*

Asha Rani, Research Scholar

Department of English

CCS University, Meerut (U.P.)

Abstract: Prof. Professor Vikas Sharma, in his capacity as a novelist, adeptly captures the essence of both male and female characters, portraying them with authenticity and vitality. These characters possess distinct qualities that contribute to their individuality and shape their behaviour. In order to engender intrigue and allure within his novels, the author deliberately avoids cultivating an atmosphere of fear or exaggerated drama that may potentially intimidate his readers. The author effectively portrays the complex nature of human temperament, encompassing various aspects such as ambitions, emotions, feelings, obligations, and obsessions. In contrast, the author's novels do not portray any supernatural entities such as ghosts or witches, instead focusing on the portrayal of everyday life. Professor Vikas Sharma is an artist who focuses on depicting actual events and occurrences within society. He abstains from discussing the likelihood or potentiality of future situations. The characters in his works are representative of the current era and exhibit the distinctive qualities and characteristics that are emblematic of the modern age. In addition to depicting the temporal activities of the individuals, the author exposes the internal cognitive processes of his characters, including their conscious, subconscious, and unconscious minds, which are made manifest in the narrative. Hence, it can be observed that the theory of stream of consciousness is also employed to explore the internal workings of the human psyche in the novels of the author.

In his novel titled *498A: Fears and Dreams* (2022), Professor Vikas Sharma delves into a comprehensive exploration of pertinent social concerns, including but not limited to gender discrimination, ethnicity, and human rights. The author also initiates a discussion regarding the current condition of marriage in India and sheds light on the detrimental consequences arising from the misapplication of Article 498A of the Indian Penal Code. The author emphasizes that the fundamental pillars of society are comprised of correct knowledge, proper philosophy, and appropriate conduct. 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 the adherence to principles such as tolerance, compromise, self-reliance, individual responsibility, and personal autonomy.

Keywords: Social, Legal, Concerns, Revenge, Rights, Law, Marriage, Deception, Dowry, Family, Empowerment, Crime, Greed, IPC-498A, Feminism,



In the novel *498A: Fears and Dreams*, Prof. Vikas Sharma asserts that the proper application of knowledge, philosophy, and behaviour are the fundamental foundations of society. Conversely, ego, greed, violence, deception, ignorance, and hypocrisy pose significant dangers to both society and the family unit. An affluent and thriving society can only emerge when individuals relinquish their desires for excessive wealth, deceit, manipulation, and malevolence. Married individuals might experience a state of contentment if they adhere to the ideals of tolerance, compromise, self-reliance, and mutual obligations. Tanvi, Anjula, and G.K. are accountable for their own loneliness and terrible lives due to their failure to comprehend the true nature of their relationships. It is important for both males and females to comprehend and acknowledge that individuals are not mere objects for amusement. It is imperative for every individual to acknowledge their obligation to their family and society as a collective entity.

Prof. Vikas Sharma is a highly esteemed and influential literary author in contemporary times. He has made significant contributions to the realm of contemporary Indian English writing. In addition to his talent for fiction writing, Prof. Vikas Sharma excels in the art of poetry recitation. He possesses the ability to delve into diverse facets of romanticism, which are palpable in his books and collections of poetry. The fundamental feature of his fiction writing is in its profound exploration of the reality realm within his fictional world. Given that laws are established to provide proper guidance to individuals, families, societies, and nations, it is unfortunate that there are instances where wrongdoers use these rules, resulting in catastrophic consequences for the legitimate members of society.

Women had less freedom in the past. They were perceived as a source of financial and emotional strain for their family. The women entered into matrimony in order to avoid societal disapproval. A woman's pleasure was contingent upon her parents' endorsement until she entered into matrimony. Upon marriage, women relinquished control over their belongings and their destiny became the property of their husbands. They can be perceived as downtrodden individuals in a patriarchal culture, initially submissive to their dads and then to their spouses, who were naturally chosen by their fathers. Nevertheless, women in contemporary society have begun carving out a place for themselves. As a result of their education, awareness, and the privileges afforded to them in education, politics, and employment inside democratic nations, women have begun making decisions regarding their own life independently. They not only advocated for their equal rights in civilised societies but also protested against all forms of injustice, discrimination, and cruelty inflicted upon them. This also resulted in the rise of female authors who portrayed women as both oppressed individuals in a society ruled by men and as powerful advocates battling for their rights to live with dignity and establish their own identity. Historically, women writers employed pseudonyms to get their works published, as the field of writing was predominantly associated with men. Nevertheless, women have demonstrated increased resilience and aptitude in the field of writing as societal norms evolve. The rise of feminism has empowered women to become influential figures in the modern world. Feminism encompasses the notion that civilizations exhibit a bias towards the male perspective, resulting in differential and unequal treatment of women within these societies. Efforts are being made to combat gender stereotypes and ensure that women have equal access to educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and



outcomes as men. Both male and female writers in Indian English literature have addressed women's issues. The portrayal of women in Indian English literature has existed for a considerable period of time. Indian English Writing offers a diverse range of issues, encompassing both traditional and modern portrayals of women, so reflecting the ongoing societal transformations. Post-Independence Indian English Writing, including feminism, encompasses several ideas and perspectives that advocate for women's equality, justice, and a dignified way of life. Over time, the perception of women in India underwent a steady transformation.

The current novel, *498A: Fears and Dreams* has also been approached with equal passion exploring various social and legal concerns. The work not only delves into the lives of fictional characters and their romantic relationships and challenges, but it also explores far more profound themes. The story explores the grim realities of the Indian legal system, where laws are exploited by self-serving individuals to gratify their egos and inflict pain upon innocent victims who are subject to these laws. The law known as 498A was established with the purpose of ensuring justice, equality, and protection for a significant portion of the population that has historically faced marginalisation and suppression for numerous centuries. Women who vocalise their opposition to the injustice inflicted upon them in the form of dowry. Anshu Devi, in her article, makes the following observation:

Professor Vikas Sharma's novel *498A* is weaved around a topic of legal interest and relevance because the theme of this novel is a law that was created to combat the evils of the practice of dowry in our Indian society (298).

The author effectively presents and supports feminist viewpoints throughout the narrative. The author discusses one of students, Gazala, who is wedded to an avaricious spouse. Her in-laws frequently ask her for the dowry and would often humiliate her. They insist that she retrieve cash from her parents. Ultimately, she falls prey to the practice of dowry at the hands of her in-laws, who subject her to a fatal act of burning. As no one comes to rescue her and she is denied justice. Instances of such nature are many, prompting the government to enact a statute known as 498A to protect married women from such acts of cruelty. This legislation aims to ensure that women can lead a contented life after marriage without enduring mistreatment from their in-laws. Nevertheless, there are numerous instances where men can be observed as victims. The statute, 498A, which is designed to safeguard women's rights and provide them with protection, is occasionally exploited by married women in certain instances. The legislation 498A is employed as a means to inflict suffering upon the in-laws and to extort money from the groom and his family.

Prof. Vikas Sharma incorporates elements of fiction into certain actual occurrences in the book titled *498A*. The narrative commences with the clash between God and Satan regarding the Department of Divorce, delving into their fears and aspirations. Subsequently, the novelist discusses several philosophers, writers, and saints who abstain from discussing dowry or financial matters within the context of marriage. However, the narrative transitions from the realm of mythology to the actual world, where Jatin is employed as an engineer at a private corporation and receives a generous salary. Despite this, his father is financially disadvantaged, and Jatin is responsible for providing financial assistance to his family. His parents arrange his marriage with Tanvi Dixit. She is a well-

educated individual, yet, she possesses too lofty aspirations in life. Despite her eagerness to taste delicious dishes, she does not appreciate kitchen chores. Jatin's pay is inadequate to meet Tanvi's demands. She desires a life of opulence and requests a refrigerator, television, air conditioning, and expensive furnishings.

Jatin endeavours to consistently meet the expectations of his wife, while also assuming the responsibility of caring for his parents. Ms. Aparna accurately analyses the personality of Tanvi and her relationship with her husband, Jatin:

Everything seemed to be fine in the lives of Jatin and his family until he came in a wedlock with Tanvi Dixit, a young, overambitious, squandering, highly materialistic, fun loving, middle-class lady. Time-to-time she got lessons from her mother Mrs. Sumitra Dixit, to ask from Jatin to fulfill her desires and to provide her a luxurious life. This started creating disputes in between her and Jatin, as he works for Larsen & Tourbo with a minimal salary. Though he tries his best to fulfill his wife's demand but when it has been aroused continuously, he failed to woo her (02).

As Tanvi's demands increase, Jatin's income is unable to meet her high expectations, exacerbating the situation. "Tanvi experienced significant discomfort and challenges in maintaining her marriage with him, as she perceived him to be inept in all aspects." Tanvi departs from Jatin's residence without notifying anyone. Jatin relocates to a different location in pursuit of a fresh employment opportunity. Both Jatin and Tanvi experienced a conflict of egos, which ultimately led to their breakup due to Tanvi's escalating demands. Jatin travels to the United States accompanied by Joseph Beverly, who subsequently becomes Jatin's godfather. Jatin agrees to Joseph's proposition of becoming his son, Joe.

As a result, Jatin inherits Joseph Beverly's land. Meanwhile, Jatin's father notifies Jatin that Tanvi encountered him and issued threats to both of them under section 498A. She held Jatin's father responsible for his son's absence. She wants both a divorce from Jatin and 10 lakh rupees as alimony. Conversely, Tanvi's mother is enticed by the proposition of a widowed advocate from Delhi. He pledges to give her five million rupees in exchange for Tanvi's hand. Tanvi, motivated by her goals, opted for a route that was unsuitable for her. Tanvi, driven by her desires and high expectations, fails to appreciate the love, care, and efforts made by her husband, Jatin, to enhance their life with the resources at his disposal. Jatin and Tanvi part ways, and Tanvi is enticed to select the lawyer as her partner and marry him. Over time Tanvi leads her life based on her own caprices. Occasionally, she experiences uncertainty over her own choices, while simultaneously derives pleasure from the opulence and amenities provided by her affluent spouse. Due to her second husband's advanced age and hectic schedule, he is unable to satisfy her physical needs. Due to the lack of a physical relationship, Tanvi experiences a desire to seek satisfaction for her bodily demands from her stepson.

The narrative of the work subsequently transitions to other characters, namely Anjula and Vipul. Anjula forms a bond with her brother-in-law, Salil Shanthi. Meanwhile, Shanthi kidnaps Anjula and falsely accuses Vipul and his family of a crime under the legal provision, 498A. Anjali initially struggled to comprehend the circumstances surrounding

her early existence. Following her marriage, she refrained from discussing her previous life with her spouse, lacking the fortitude to do so. Her brother-in-law abducts her and, utilising the provisions of Section 498A, successfully secures the imprisonment of her in-laws. The story presents several instances in which women, using the 498A statute as a disguise, falsely accuse their husbands and in-laws in order to satisfy their egos and obtain financial support. In her piece, Anshu Devi discusses the novel.

The novelist criticizes the loopholes of the judiciary and judicial system quite openly. He also targets the NGOs that claim to work for the women and society but actually work for their own selfish motives. Professor Vikas Sharma has a deep sympathy for the women who were subjected to cruelty and other sorts of sufferings because of this ill practice of dowry. This makes his writings more eloquent and he raises various questions about the society and social conditions. The interrogative tone of the novelist is very remarkable (300).

Conclusion: Professor Vikas Sharma aims to address societal concerns by instilling virtues such as courage, honesty, forbearance, and patience in the minds and attitudes of individuals within the nation. He achieves this objective through the portrayal of vibrant and dynamic characters in his literary works. The practice of dowry has long been a significant obstacle to fostering harmonious relationships between couples and their families in the Indian subcontinent. This malevolent habit has consumed innumerable innocent souls. To protect these valuable lives, the Government of India enacted a legislation known as 498A. This law empowers women to safeguard themselves against the detrimental practice of dowry. Recently, there has been a negative development where women have been exploiting the 498A statute as a means to extort their spouses and in-laws. Women in numerous instances have acquired substantial sums under the guise of maintenance. The novel skilfully portrays the misapplication of the law, specifically Section 498A, by incorporating elements of history, philosophy, and literature. Through the narratives of Tanvi, Anjula, and GK, the book illustrates how these individuals alter reality in order to validate their own beliefs, by misusing the statute known as 498A, and so causing turmoil in the lives of their in-laws.

Prof. Vikas Sharma discusses individuals who fail to show proper regard for their spouses, those who insist on dowry, and the unfortunate instances where women are murdered for not meeting dowry expectations. The novelist seeks social improvement and consistently criticises the callous and unfeeling individuals who view their life partners as mere possessions and tools to satisfy their ordinary demands.

The Indian society remains patriarchal, with married men frequently exhibiting a sense of entitlement towards their spouses.

It is true that physical beauty of the girl plays a major role in family life. Yet the lustful young men often wish to have extra-marital affairs and don't care for the demands of the wife. If a worthy wife becomes a hindrance in his way, she is killed or burnt alive – How could she dare to oppose him?

Prof. Vikas Sharma expresses profound empathy towards women who endure mistreatment and many forms of hardship from their spouses and in-laws due to the malevolent practice

of dowry. This enhances the eloquence of his novel *498A: Fears and Dreams*, enabling him to raise several inquiries regarding society and social problems. The novelist's interrogative tone is evident in the novel.

Who is ready to follow the code of conduct as prescribed by society and law? Rare people bother for seven rounds of fire; the slokas pronounced by the priest, purity of mangal sutra, vermilion etc. and accept symbols of pure marriage. Many guys don't care for the divine powers of goddess Fire as it is one of the five elements of Nature.

In the novel titled *498A: Fears and Dreams* the author explores the multifaceted aspects of the 498A section of the Indian Penal Code. The author delves into the fears and dreams associated with this legal provision. According to Vikas Sharma, it is observed that a significant number of young girls in India, due to their lack of wisdom, fall victim to the misuse of the law known as 498A, resulting in detrimental effects on their familial relationships as they pursue personal freedom. The absence of limitations on aspirations and ambitions ultimately leads to significant suffering. The novel titled *498A: Fears and Dreams* explores a multitude of legal intricacies, familial conflicts, and the challenges faced by children abandoned by capricious fathers.

Works Cited:

Sharma, Vikas. *498A: Fears and Dreams*. Diamond Pocket Books, Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 2021.

Singh, Nisha. *The Concept of Womanhood in the Novels of Vikas Sharma*. Women Press, Delhi, 2023

Tanwar, Bhupender, "Misuse of IPC Section 498A" [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lawtendo.com/blogs/misuse-of-ipc-section-498a> 28 Apr, 2021.

Pandit, Tejaswi, "Cruelty to Women [S. 498-A IPC and allied sections]" [Online]. Available at: <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2018/12/03>

Swords Barbara W. "Woman's Place in Jane Austen's England." *Persuasions* 1988. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.

Showalter, Elaine, (ed). *The New Feminist Criticism: Essay on Women literature and Theory*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

Abrams, M.H and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Cengage Learning India Pvt. Ltd., 2009.

Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2019.

Sharma, Vandana. *Critiquing the Novels of Vikas Sharma*. Diamond Books (P) Ltd. Delhi, 2022.



Devi, Anshu. *Pro. Vikas Sharma's Language and Style in 498A: FEARS AND DREAMS. Critiquing the Novels of Vikas Sharma.* Diamond Books (P) Ltd., Delhi, 2022.

Aparna, Ms. *Money and Materialism in 498A: Fears and Dreams.* Global Thought (An international Peer Reviewed Refereed Quarterly Journal) Issue 25, July 2022.