

SANA: A Semi- Autobiographical Novel of Social Challenge and Resistance

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Abstract:

SANA (2023) a semi- autobiographical novel is written by acclaimed writer Vikas Sharma. Prof. Vikas Sharma is a writer who inculcates in his novel social issues, interaction between men and women, real-life connection, corporate world and so on. The reading of Indian English literature particularly the novel through the lens of regional novel, the novels of R. K. Narayan and Chetan Bhagat reach two distinctive aspects of the society. The former canon is established in order to see race, ethnicity, culture, classicism and hegemony through new perspective. But the latter can show the reflection of elite, modern chap, corporate and modernism through the perspective of secondary life in prima face. Likewise Prof. Vikas Sharma is well acclaimed author of both Hindi and English novels. He is famous in the field of poetry as well as research work in literature. Despite his scholarly background and erudite disposition, frequently employs vernacular language in his novels to facilitate comprehension among the general populace. He employs a plethora of literary and stylistic technique. His narrative method is highly proficient and effectively captivates the reader's interest.

SANA (2023) may be viewed as an attempt to cultivate positive thinking among its readers and inspire them to renounce lechery, ego, greed, possessiveness, and other undesirable tendencies in pursuit of noble thoughts and values. The novel emphasizes that physical beauty alone is transient and inadequate, suggesting that true worth lies in the cultivation of inner beauty and moral character. It presents the various shades and complexities of a tumultuous contemporary life, with the corporate world emerging as one of its central concerns. The narrative opens on 25 October 2021, apparently during the festive period of Durga Puja, and incorporates spiritual and mythological elements into its narrative framework. The presence of Lord Shiva and his command to his followers to assemble the gods and devotees introduces a metaphysical dimension to the novel. At the same time, the narrative

portrays a world preoccupied with material pursuits, where people remain absorbed in commercial activities and the selling of goods associated with various festivals. The contrast between spiritual aspirations and worldly preoccupations becomes an important feature of the novel.

Keywords: - Culture, corporate world, ascetic plan, family-bonding, inner beauty, lavishing life, and material pursuits.

Introduction:

The galaxy of Indian novels in English is expanding among readers of the present day. Of course, creative talents lure appearing everyday with the advent of advance technology allowing more freedom and the space to the practioners of muse. Instant recognition and finding name on shining stars prompts many so-called Indian novelists in English to make episodes of the chapter as well as plots appear attractive. Meanwhile, when it comes to represent the word 'Indian', it becomes more embarrassing as the true Indian ethos requires something more that should inspire, enlighten, ennoble and entertain.¹

The study of Indian English literature, particularly the Indian English novel, through the lens of the regional novel reveals two distinctive dimensions of society in the works of R. K. Narayan and Chetan Bhagat. Narayan's novels establish a literary canon through which issues of race, ethnicity, culture, class, and hegemony can be examined from a fresh perspective. In contrast, Bhagat's novels reflect the lives and aspirations of the urban middle and elite classes, foregrounding modernity, corporate culture, the contemporary youth, and changing social values. Thus, while Narayan presents the socio-cultural realities of Indian society through the regional and localized experience of everyday life, Bhagat explores the complexities of modern urban existence and the emerging ethos of contemporary India.²

Likewise Prof. Vikas Sharma is well acclaimed author of both Hindi and English novels. He is famous in the field of poetry as well as research work in literature. He is giving his duties as a Head, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut, U.P. India. He is General Secretary of Association for English Studies of India. Eight English novels are so far to his credit and *SANA* is his prominent novel. It is noteworthy that Vikas Sharma is also a poet by virtue of his literary lineage and belongs to a well-established poetic family. Consequently, the fervour and sensibility of his poetic talent are distinctly visible throughout almost all of his novels.³

Vikas Sharma's *SANA* may be read as a semi-autobiographical novel in which the boundaries between lived experience, literary imagination, and fictional

representation appear deliberately porous. Although the novel is not an autobiography in the conventional sense, several aspects of its characterization, setting, professional environment, social relationships, and thematic concerns suggest a close connection with the author's personal experiences and observations. The semi-autobiographical dimension of the novel becomes particularly significant when the fictional narrative is examined alongside critical observations concerning the real-life sources of some of its characters.

M.S. Vimal says- "Sana is an attempt to develop positive thinking among readers so that they feel inspired to give up lechery, ego, greed and passiveness, and then brace novel thoughts. It is asserted that mere physical beauty is enough."⁴

The novel under review comprises Twenty-Eight (28) Chapters and is significant because of its focus on capitalism searching the position in the corporate world. Various aspects like, sensuousness, metaphysics, family-bonding, physical pleasure, want of lavish life and an illusion of modernism in the backdrop of our culture and tradition. The novelist exposes the openness of physique. No one novelist can dare write such type of paragraph-

"And he kissed her on her cheeks to check if she resists. But then she reciprocated kissing him twice. He hugged her tightly and pressed her hips and then boobs."⁵

M.S. Vimal further says- "One of Vikas Sharma most recent novels is called *SANA*. The most autobiographical novel claimed to have real-life connections to the novelist."⁶ The novel opens with a particular date i.e. 25th October 2021 probably during Durga Puja festival. An ascetic plan is covered into the chapter; Lord Shiva gives his command to all followers to arrange all gods along with devotees, bringing problems. There is a hope in the whole world and a lot of people are busy in selling various things for different festivals. Most of the worldly people won't turn up due to their busy schedule.

The autobiographical impulse is not restricted merely to the character of Sana. The novel's treatment of the corporate world, academic institutions, professional relationships, interpersonal conflicts, and contemporary social life indicates the author's sustained engagement with the realities surrounding him. Faridabad and Gurgaon, presented as important centers of business and corporate activity, provide a recognizable socio-economic setting in which the characters negotiate questions of ambition, money, desire, status, family, and personal fulfillment. Thus, the fictional world of *SANA* can be understood as a transformed representation of observed reality rather than as a simple reproduction of the author's life.

The protagonist Sana occupies the centre of this semi-autobiographical framework. Her educational qualifications, professional responsibilities, emotional experiences, marital life, and struggles with loneliness and social expectations provide the narrative with an intimate psychological dimension. Her movement through different social and professional spaces enables Sharma to explore the tensions between individual desire and social morality, modernity and tradition, material prosperity and emotional contentment. Consequently, Sana functions simultaneously as a fictional character and as a possible literary reconstruction of a personality known to the author.

The novel's semi-autobiographical character is further strengthened by its unusually specific temporal and spatial references. The narrative begins with the date 25 October 2021, thereby giving the fictional account a documentary or experiential quality. Such precise references create an impression of lived time and contribute to the reader's perception that the fictional narrative may have been shaped by actual experiences. At the same time, Sharma transforms these experiences through imagination, symbolism, mythology, and philosophical reflection. The appearance of Lord Shiva and Chitrugupta, "for instance, expands the narrative beyond personal experience and places individual human conduct within a broader moral and metaphysical framework."⁷

The corporate world constitutes another important area where personal observation and fictional imagination intersect. Through characters such as Mr. Naveen Nischal, Kavya, Sana, Silky, Katty, and others, Sharma portrays a world governed by competition, wealth, ambition, physical desire, professional insecurity, and the pursuit of social status. The novel does not merely celebrate material success; rather, it questions the consequences of excessive attachment to money, pleasure, and power. The recurring idea that money is necessary for life but cannot itself guarantee happiness reflects the novel's ethical and philosophical orientation.

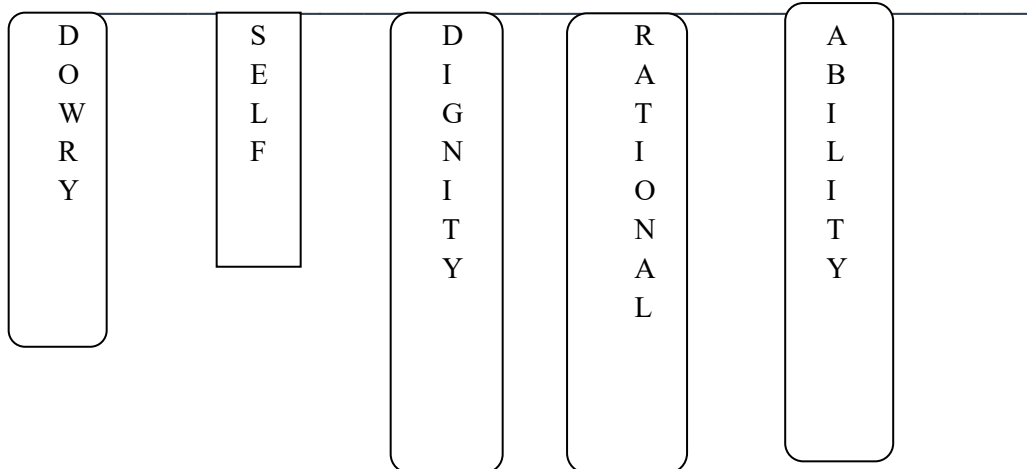
The semi-autobiographical mode also allows Sharma to transform personal or observed experiences into a larger critique of contemporary society. The experiences of Sana and other characters become representative of wider social problems involving patriarchy, sexuality, consumerism, corporate exploitation, loneliness, marital dissatisfaction, and the psychological pressures of modern life. In this sense, autobiography becomes a literary strategy through which the personal is converted into the social and the individual experience acquires a broader cultural significance.

Therefore, *SANA* should not be regarded simply as an autobiography disguised as fiction. It is more appropriately understood as a semi-autobiographical narrative, where elements of lived experience are selected, reshaped, fictionalized, and incorporated into an imaginative structure. Sharma's personal observations appear to provide the raw material, while his creative imagination transforms that material into a fictional world populated by characters that embody contemporary social tensions. The novel consequently occupies an intermediate space between autobiography and fiction, making the author's life and observations relevant to its interpretation without reducing the entire narrative to biographical fact.

In this respect, *SANA* exemplifies how contemporary Indian English fiction can employ the autobiographical mode to engage with changing social realities. Sharma converts personal experience into literary experience and individual memory into social commentary. The semi-autobiographical nature of the novel therefore becomes not merely a biographical curiosity but an important interpretative key for understanding its treatment of corporate culture, modernity, sexuality, family, materialism, morality, and the search for contentment.

As a semi-autobiographical novel Monika Khurana & Dr. N.P. Singh asserts- "the protagonist of the novel, Sana is a real life person who was once closed to the author and served as his assistant, as critic 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."⁸ Despite that Poorvi Garg sums up- "the novel provides particularly strong evidence, she states that Sana is considered Sharma's most autobiographical work and identifies real-life sources behind important characters."⁹

There is nothing 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. The process of evolution and birth will continue. The novel ends with up to the facts of universe and a man should always be remembered- "one man's justice is another's injustice; one man's beauty another's ugliness; one man's wisdom another's folly."¹⁰ Though, Chetan Bhagat uses Italic words in some paragraph. Likewise Prof. Vikas Sharma uses a normal vertical word such as-



Conclusion:

Comprising twenty-eight chapters, *SANA* significantly engages with the themes of capitalism, materialism, and the quest for identity and position within the corporate world. The novel explores several interconnected aspects of contemporary existence, including sensuousness, metaphysics, familial bonding, physical pleasure, the desire for a luxurious lifestyle, and the illusion of modernity against the backdrop of Indian culture and tradition. Through these themes, the novel presents the tensions between tradition and modernity, spirituality and materialism, and moral values and worldly desires. From a critical perspective, *SANA* also examines the intersection of gender, race, and class, thereby offering significant insights into the complexities and contradictions of contemporary society. In this sense, the novel functions not merely as a representation of corporate and modern life but also as a critique of the values, desires, and social structures that shape the individual in the contemporary world. The novels end with the aesthetic beauty in the world of fake beauty. On the day of Valentine Asha Apurva worships Naveen Nischal with metal lamp light and then putting Tilak on his forehead- "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Needless to deepen upon artificial beauty as beauty of heart and soul is superior to that. My life is full with your love and I don't wish to appear as any film heroine. Whatever, I am, I am and happy and feel close to your heart. Nice saree and necklace add beauty and that is satisfying to my real self. Above all, I feel that both of us are made for each other."¹¹

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