

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.86

ISSN0976-8165

# THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

14 Years of Open Access

Vol. 14 Issue-I February 2023

Bi-monthly Peer-Reviewed e-Journal

DR. VISHWANATH BITE  
Editor-In-Chief

DR. MADHURI BITE  
Managing Editor

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## **Beyond Feminism: A Study of Prof. Vikas Sharma's 498A: *Fears and Dreams***

**Sarwar Ahmad Najar**  
Research Scholar,  
Department of English,  
CCS University, Meerut (U.P)

**Article History:** Submitted-04/01/2023, Revised-31/01/2023, Accepted-04/02/2023, Published-28/02/2023.

### **Abstract:**

The novel *498A: Fears and Dreams*, published in 2022 is a great attempt by Prof. Vikas Sharma in which he not only raises the real but also the burning issue of the contemporary times of our country i.e the menace of dowry. However, at the same time it is also seen that a woman may use it as a tool for troubling others. Since 498A, a law that was formed to safeguard the married women and punish those who practice the dowry, the novelist artistically takes up the issue in *498A: Fears and Dreams*. Here, he not only deals with the issue of dowry but also of the misuse of the law, 498A. The author highlights the graveness of the situation, and how it harms the husband-wife relationship and their families. In the novel the value and importance of family is also highlighted beautifully.

In the novel, *498A: Fears and Dreams*, Prof. Vikas Sharma holds the belief that the right use of knowledge, philosophy, and behavior are the main pillars of society where as ego, greed, violence, falsehood, ignorance, and hypocrisy pose a great threat to the society and family. A happy and prosperous society evolves only when people give up greed, deception, cunningness, and wickedness. Married people can live happily if they follow the principles of tolerance, compromise, self-help and obligations towards each other. Tanvi, Anjula, and G.K. are themselves responsible for their loneliness and miserable life because they could not understand the reality of their marriages. Both men and women need to understand and realize that human beings are not just toys to play with. Every human being must realize the responsibility towards his family and society as a whole.

**Keywords: Feminism, IPC-498A, Marriage, Rights, Law, Dowry, Empowerment, Deception, Family, Crime, Revenge, Greed.**

## **Introduction**

Prof. Vikas Sharma is head of the Department of English, CCS University Meerut. He has been teaching English Literature for more than two decades. He is having deep interest in Literary Theory, Fiction, Indian English Writing, Hindi Literature and Poetry. His interest also lie in Language, History, Culture and Politics of the society around him. Besides teaching M.A courses in the department of English, CCS University, Meerut, he has been actively supervising his Ph.D research scholars. He has fifty research papers to his credit, published in national and international Journals. Ever since his first hindi novel, *Raah Ke Pathar* published in 2021, Prof. Vikas Sharma is hailed as a distinguished author. The English version of *Raah Ke Pathar* has been published in 2022 under the title, *Never Together Never Apart*. The other novels authored by Prof. Vikas Sharma include *Love's is not Time's Fool*, *IAS Today*, *498A: Fears and Dreams*, *Medicine: Light and Twilight*, *Ashes and Fire*, and *Hope against Hope*. He has also to his credit two short story and poetry collections entitled, *Epiphanies*. Prof. Vikas Sharma has the privilege to be the member of the editorial board of the three national and international journals.

Prof. Vikas Sharma is one of the profound literary authors of our times. He has contributed a lot in the field of contemporary Indian English literature. Apart from fiction writing, Prof. Vikas Sharma is great at poetry recitation as well. He holds the power to explore various aspects of romanticism which can be felt throughout his novels and poetry collections. The most important aspect of his fiction writing is that his fictional world delves deep into the realistic world. Since laws are framed to give right direction to an individual, family, society and nation, but many a times the laws are misused by the wrongdoers that brings catastrophe to the genuine people of any society.

## **Methodology**

As women did not enjoy much freedom earlier. They were considered to be a burden to their families. The women were married, so that the society would not look down on them. A woman's happiness depended entirely on her parent's approval until she got married. Once married, women lost control over their possessions and their fate became their husbands' property, "women can be seen as oppressed victims of a patriarchal society, subordinate first to their fathers and, then, to their husbands who had, of course, been selected by their fathers" (Swords). The women, however, in modern societies started creating a space for themselves. Because of their

education, awareness, rights granted to them in education, politics, jobs in democratic countries, they started taking decisions on their own in matters related to their lives. They not only fought for their equal rights in civilized societies but also raised voice against all kinds of injustice, discrimination, and mistreatment meted to them. This also led to the emergence of women writers depicting female as both a suppressed being in the male dominated society and as a strong voice fighting for her rights to live a dignified life and to make a place of her own. Though earlier women writers used pseudonyms to get their works published as writing used to be considered the domain of the men. However, with the changing times women have shown greater strength and talent in writing. The emergence of feminism also led to the development of women as a strong voice in the contemporary world. Feminism incorporates the belief that societies give priority to the male point of view, and hence women are treated differently and unjustly within these societies. Efforts to change including fight against gender stereotypes, establishing the educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and outcomes for women that are equal to those for men. In Indian English Writing both men and women writers have taken up the issues of the women. The representation of women in Indian English Writing has been there for long. Indian English Writing provides a rich variety of themes- from the theme of a conventional woman to that of the new woman, reflecting in the process the changes that have been going on in the society. Post-Independence Indian English Writing including feminism portrays all the trends and voices concerning women for an equal, just and dignified way of life. Over the years, the image of the woman in India gradually changed.

## **Discussion**

The present novel, 498A: Fears and Dreams of Prof. Vikas Sharma has also been dealt with the same enthusiasm. The novel not only talks about a few fictional characters and their romance and struggle but is far beyond it. The novel talks about the sad reality of Indian law system where laws are being used by the selfish people to only satisfy their egos and to harm the innocent people but victims of laws. 498A, a law is framed to provide justice, equality and protection for half of the population of a country who were being marginalized and suppressed for many centuries. The women who raise their voice against the injustice done to them in the form of dowry. In her article, Anshu Devi observes:

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 truly justifies in the novel that he keeps all the feminist perspectives in his concern. He talks about one of his students, Gazala who is married to a greedy husband. Her in-laws continuously ask her for the dowry and would often humiliate her. They demand her to bring cash from her parents. She ultimately becomes the victim of dowry in the hands of her in-laws who burn alive. Since nobody comes to get rescue and she is not provided any justice. Such cases are found in heaps and that is why a law called, *498A* is formed by the government to safeguard married women from such brutality, so that they may live happily after marriage and won't suffer in the hands of their in-laws. However, on the other side, there are so many cases where men can be seen becoming victims. The law, *498A* is framed for the protection of women and their rights is misused in some cases by married women. The law *498A* is thus used as a weapon not only to torture the in-laws but also to demand money from the groom and his family.

Prof. Vikas Sharma fictionalizes a few real events in *498A: Fears and Dreams* beginning with the story of God and Satan's conflict about the Department of Divorce. Then the novelist talks about different philosophers, writers, and saints who never talk about dowry or money in the institution of marriage. But the story shifts from mythical to real world where Jatin is an engineer who is working with a private company and gets a handsome salary but his father is financially weak and he is supposed to support his family. His parents fix his marriage with Tanvi Dixit. She is an educated girl but has too high expectations in life. She doesn't like the kitchen work though eager to enjoy delicious dishes. The salary which Jatin gets is not sufficient to fulfill the demands of Tanvi. She wants to live a luxurious life and asks for a refrigerator, TV, AC, and costly furniture. Jatin tries to never let her down and always does his best to fulfill the expectations of his wife, though he has to look after his parents as well. Ms Aparna rightly puts the character of Tanvi and her married life with 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 fulfil 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 fulfil his wife's demand but when it has been aroused continuously, he failed to woo her (02).

With things going from bad to worse as the demands of Tanvi are rising, her high expectations could not be fulfilled by Jatin's salary. "Tanvi found it very uneasy and difficult to continue her marriage with him as according to her he is incapable of doing anything." Tanvi leaves Jatin's house without informing anyone. Jatin also shifts to another place in search of a new job. Since both Jatin and Tanvi had an ego clash with each other on the one hand and Tanvi's ever increasing demands become reason for their separation. Jatin goes to the USA with Joseph Beverly who later becomes Jatin's godfather and Jatin accepts Joseph's proposal to be his son Joe. Consequently Jatin becomes the heir of Joseph Beverly's property. Meanwhile Jatin's father informs Jatin that Tanvi met him and threatened both of them under section 498A. She blamed Jatin's father for the absence of his son. She not only wanted to get divorce from Jatin but also ten lac rupees as alimony. On the other hand, Tanvi's mother feels tempted to the offer of a Delhi based advocate, a widower. He promises to pay her fifty lac rupees for the hand of Tanvi. Tanvi thus driven by her desires chooses a path which wasn't appropriate for her. Since Tanvi was guided by her desires and too many expectations from life, she does not acknowledge the love and care of her husband, Jatin and his effort to make her life beautiful with the resources available with him. In this way Jatin and Tanvi leave each other, and Tanvi is tempted to choose the advocate and marries with him. With passing time Tanvi lives her life according to her whims. She sometimes gets confused with her own decisions but at the same time enjoys the luxuries and comforts of his rich husband. Since her second husband can't fulfill her physical desires because of his old age and busy schedule. As they fail to develop any physical relationship, Tanvi feels need to turn towards her stepson, to satisfy her physical needs.

The story of the novel then shifts to other characters- Anjula and Vipul. Anjula develops a relationship with her brother-in-law, Salil Shanthi. Meanwhile, Shanthi abducts Anjula and gets Vipul and his family jailed under the law, 498A. Anjali in the beginning couldn't not understand as what was happening with her at the start of her life. After she got married, she never gathered courage to talk about her past life to her husband. She is kidnapped by her brother-in-law, and with the help of 498A, put her in-laws behind bars. In the novel, we are told a number of cases where

women under the garb of 498A law put false allegations over their husbands and their in-laws to satisfy their egos and get alimony. Anshu Devi in her article writes about 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**

Dowry has remained a big hurdle to develop a cordial relationship between couples and their families in the Indian subcontinent since time immemorial. This evil practice has eaten up countless innocent souls. For safeguarding these precious lives, the Government of India framed a law, 498A. By means of this law women may protect and save themselves from this evil practice of dowry. In the recent times, however, it has taken an ugly turn as women have used 498A law as a tool for blackmailing their husbands and in-laws. The women in many cases have made huge amount in the name of maintenance. In the novel the misuse of the law, 498A is very beautifully depicted with the amalgamation of history, philosophy, and literature. With the stories of Tanvi, Anjula, and GK, the author shows as how these people manipulate reality for proving themselves right by misusing the law, 498A by creating mess in the lives of their in-laws.

Prof. Vikas Sharma comments on the people who do not treat their wives with respect, who demand dowry and in many cases, women are killed for failing to fulfill the dowry related demands. The novelist desires social reform and continuously attacks the merciless and cold-hearted people who consider their life partners mans and objects to fulfill their mundane desires. The Indian society is still male dominated and married men often take their wives for granted:

It is true that physical beauty of the girl pays 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 feels deeply sympathetic for the women who are subjected to cruelty and other kinds of sufferings by their husbands and in-laws because of the evils of dowry. This makes his novel 498A: Fears and Dreams more eloquent and he is able to raise various questions about the society and social conditions. The interrogative tone of the novelist is manifested in the novel itself:

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.

Prof. Vikas Sharma artistically projects how to sustain a beautiful married life by paying respect to each other and the families. Showing gratitude to life and other human beings, giving mental, and social freedom and taking care of each other. The novel also thus shows the importance of families, especially in this too much materialistic world, where everyone and everything is weighed and valued in terms of money and property.

### **Works Cited:**

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

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 Sharm*. 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.