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**Womb, Soil, and Soul: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Womanhood and Nature in *Honey Trap* (2025) by Professor Vikas Sharma**

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**Abstract:**

Vikas Sharma's novel *Honey Trap* (2025) tells a wonderful story about the intersection of gender, nature, and emotional trapping, making it a great place for ecofeminist research. This study, "Womb, Soil, and Soul: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Womanhood and Nature in *Honey Trap*," looks at how women and nature are both exploited by patriarchal and capitalist systems, the rape of Dr. Kuntal by four Sea pirates, and Dr. Sanmati on Holi by four young guys are worth mentioning. This paper examines the womb as a symbol of fertility, creation, pain, and resilience; the soil as a representation of the exploited natural world associated with economic gain, the war between Russia and Ukraine destroyed nature and her fertility badly which has been portrayed by Prof. Sharma in the end of this novel; and the soul as a reflection of the emotional, spiritual, and psychological endurance of both women and nature. The story explores themes of womanhood, emotional alienation, empowerment, material ambition, and survival via the adventures of individuals such as Dr. Kuntal, Sanmati, Shivanshi, and Madona. Nature, depicted through imagery of seasons, the moon, landscapes, and agriculture, serves as both a silent observer and a symbol for women's suffering, endurance, and renewal. This study posits that both women and nature are regarded as resources to be exploited, dominated, and commercialized, while also possessing the capacity for regeneration, healing, and transcendence. So, *Honey Trap* (2025) is an important book for ecofeminist literature because it skillfully combines eco-spirituality, feminism, and social and cultural criticism.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Womanhood, Nature, Motherhood, Patriarchy, Fertility, Exploitation, Regeneration.

**Introduction:**

*Honey Trap* (2025) is a wonderful novel by Prof. Vikas Sharma. It demonstrates significant influence from Barry Linton's *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, G. B.

Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, Galsworthy's *Strife*, Karl Marx, and Emerson. The narrative commences with Mangesh Raju, the younger son of feudal ruler R. K. Raju Rai Bahadur of Aurangabad, who is a medical student at Shivaji Medical College. The plot development introduces several additional characters, including his wife Devrani and their five children: three sons and two daughters. The work is enriched by the love, passion, and intimacy between Dr. Mangesh and his adored, Dr. Kuntal, the key character, who is distinguished by her medical degree, daring disposition, considerable accomplishments, and inherent grace. The narrative of the novel revolves around the medical profession, encompassing the struggles, problems, and competitiveness faced by physicians. It also furnishes critical information pertaining to medical disciplines. The key concept of the story, "passion succeeded as a honey trap (104)" is very symbolic and offers various interpretations of how individuals become trapped emotionally, sexually, psychologically, and financially. The narrative includes multiple intimate encounters with Dr Mangesh and Dr Kuntal, Dr Sanmati and Prabhu Raju, Dr Anmol and Dr Kuntal, Sumant and wife Shivanshi, Prabhu Raju and Fanny, Kumar Vividh and Satya, Arnav and Roshni, as well as the European pair, Cabbot and Madona. The narrative of the work is enriched with a mosaic of references to several other works of literature that evoke Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). The challenges of human existence are artistically shown; Professor Sharma has carefully crafted the narrative, blending romanticism with the stark realism of the devastating conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This political conflict not only concludes the narrative of this novel but also terminates the chapter in the lives of the Indo-European couple, Dr Prabhu Raju and Dr Fanny, as they fulfilled their duties. The conclusion of the novel is profoundly stunning and heart-wrenching, compelling many to weep at the stark reality of death, which serves as life's ultimate entrapment.

The story of this novel possesses several dimensions. It is not merely a romantic narrative set in an imaginary world, but also recounts the struggles and hardships of life. It reflects his extensive reading and profound comprehension of various texts, which is evident throughout the novel. It is also stated in the *Essays of Criticism* thus, The greatness of a writer consists in his power to see life steadily, and to see it whole; and his criticism of life will be of a correspondingly large and wide order. He will not be a mere dealer in isolated effects, but will give us a sense of proportion, balance, and completeness. (Arnold 11)

In Honey Trap, prof. Vikas Sharma exemplifies the attribute that Matthew Arnold indicates to a great writer, "the power to see life steadily, and to see it whole". Instead of depending solely on disjointed brilliance or spectacular intrigue, Honey Trap offers a balanced and ethically serious perspective on contemporary life influenced by power, desires, surveillance, and ethical compromise. Sharma does not present dramatic moments as mere "purple patches"; rather, each event serves as a component of a cohesive critique of human fragility within political and personal systems of control. The characters' internal

struggles, and progressive disillusionment collectively create a unified perspective on life where passion, philosophy, and conscience converge. In this regard, *Honey Trap* corresponds with Arnold's critical ideal by providing proportion, depth, and moral gravity, so validating its status as a work that aspires to a whole vision rather than episodic sensationalism.

There comes next the similar view stated in the famous book *The Great Tradition* (1948), "The great novelists are those whose work bears the most serious relation to life" (Leavis on accordance with Leavis's argument, Professor Vikas Sharma's *Honey Trap* (2025) presents a tale rooted on moral realism rather than amazing excitement. While the book functions within the parameters of emotional manipulation, it declines to idealize desire or power. The relation between Dr Kuntal and Mangesh transcends mere imagination or romance; it is profoundly serious, particularly after Dr Mangesh had a heart attack after many years of marriage to Dr. Anmol, yet she continues to assist him and states:

'Take it as your home as I'm here. What troubles you even in bed?

It is sad, you have greatly changed Mangesh. You rarely visit me and if I'm not wrong, you have almost forgotten our former friendship.

Can't you revive and refresh the same? Why don't you remove the dust that has settled upon our relationship? (*Honey Trap* 111).

Dr Kuntal stands out as a significant character in the story, representing an image of modern women characterized by discipline, ambition, and emotional wisdom. Her enduring relationship with Dr Mangesh, formed during their MBBS and continuing into their professional medical careers, is shown as truly exceptional due to its foundation in trust, mutual respect, and intellectual camaraderie rather than rivalry. This friendship exemplifies a unique ethical solidarity within the rigorous medical profession, where emotional support frequently takes a backseat to professional demands. Among the female characters in the novel, Dr. Kuntal is particularly commendable for her optimistic perspective; she is independent, resolute, and professionally adept, epitomizing a woman who constructs her own path through efforts and courage.

First, she obtains her MD, thereafter serves as the president of a convent school, assumes the role of chancellor at a university, leads the Lions Club in Aurangabad, and establishes a prestigious medical institution, which she built following the demise of her husband, Dr Naveen. Her zeal for medical services and dedication to her beloved Dr Mangesh is praiseworthy. prof Sharma has shown her as a model of competence while emphasizing that, despite her passionate and emotional disposition, she accomplished her objectives without wavering from her goal.

She established herself in the medical sector and then assisted her lover Dr Mangesh, by providing him with many chances. "She requested Mangesh take over the post of secretary and became its president herself" (Dr Kuntal 16). Initially, she proposed that he assume the

presidency of a convent school to provide financial assistance; then, she secretly managed a payment of one lakh rupees to transfer the Lions School into his name when she announced this.

Without consulting Dr Mangesh, Dr Kuntal declared that Lions School will now be called Mangesh Lions School as Dr Mangesh has consented to donate the amount. But Dr Mangesh felt badly upset with this declaration, as he still owed twenty-three thousand rupees to LIC. But Dr Kuntal told him, 'Don't worry about the amount. I've already deposited it on your behalf (17).

This was a significant distinction for Dr Mangesh, who was indebted to the LIC for twenty-three thousand; yet, she did not cease her efforts there. Dr Kuntal also recommended him to help in the maternity unit for five hundred rupees on every delivery case. She manages the operations in the evening so that they may have quality time together after the delivery. This became a daily routine, revitalizing their prior feelings for one another, and Dr Kuntal intended to arrange a delightful encounter outside the city. She suggested Dr Mangesh to accompany her to the International Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Mauritius. There they stayed in VIP hotel and fulfilled their desires for each other, "They made love after a long and passionate foreplay and he entered her. He gave her strokes to the shaking of her knees and she felt pleased. There was a glitter on her cheeks and he kissed her on the cheeks" (*Honey Trap* 25). As change is the rule of universe, a drastic change she has to experience after this sexual gratification Dr Kuntal has to pay this journey by physical, mental, sexual assault by four Sea pirates.

She asked - 'Who're you? What do you want?' 'We are your lovers and we only want you at present. Either surrender willingly or else both of you will be killed.' He put the pistol upon her naked breast. She found herself helpless and said ... OK. Let me go to the washroom first, wash, and come back ... She had the ugliest experience of her life and thanked God it happened outside India. (29)

Thus being a practical minded lady she saved her life along with Dr Mangesh and they came back to their home. As written also in the article "The clash between materialism and idealism in Professor Vikas Sharma's novel *Honey Trap*" (2025). Kuntal is not a woman who gives up. Despite multiple tragic incidents like the loss of her husband and her own victimization abroad, she does not take a moment to step back and reflect on her life and choices. Instead, she chooses to fill this void created by pain and tragedy in materialistic ways. (Kumar 461)

This female character of Professor Sharma encounters successive challenges but does not succumb to the circumstances. Dr Sanmati stands beside her with boldness, courage, and confidence. She is thirty years old, married to an unappealing engineer employed in

another city, and has a son enrolled in a residential school of Mumbai, thus residing alone in Aurangabad. She develops an attraction to Dr Prabhu Raju. She cultivates a sense of intimacy with him and invites him into her home, and both become entrapped in the pull of a sexual desire: “When he was sure she was almost ready to welcome him from the depth of her heart, he put his hand on her naked thighs and to his surprise there was a volley of kisses and both forgot themselves due to the growth of passion” (*Honey Trap* 59). But this relationship could not stay long, a tragedy happened with her on the festival of Holi when she was raped by A, B, C and D when she revolted against them, she was threatening to kill. But the females of prof. Sharma are not timid, victim or subjugated. They know well how to stand in opposite circumstances. His women are psychologically strong as stated, “Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf emphasize that strong female psychology is not innate but constructed through independence, intellectual freedom, and conscious resistance to social limitations” (Beauvoir 283; Woolf 4). Dr Sanmati resists consciously, intellectually when they again entered in her chamber how smartly she protected herself and counter attacked over them by supplying the gas of cylinder and left them locked in room to give them a lesson: “As she came out of the room, she closed the door and bolted from outside. Within seconds she supplied gas to the bedroom and naturally, they felt badly choked and suffocated” (Sharma 67). This is how Dr Sanmati came out from danger and handed them to the police and on the suggestion of Dr Kuntal migrated to Nainital and start a fresh life from the name of Dr Nadira in a semi-rural area for her livelihood. The character of Fanny and Madona are also interesting, both are European women but ideal in their love relationship. Madona reunited with her lover Cabbot after a long struggle hardness of life. She settled with him in Ukraine so that cannot be separated from her loving son Edward and his wife and child. Fanny the daughter of Cabbot got settled in Ukraine with Dr Prabhu and his son. One day they both sacrificed their life while operating a patient: “When Prabhu and Fanny were operating on a patient to remove the bullet from his abdomen, two bombshells were dropped on the hospital killing the physicians along with the patient and nurses” (147). Here closes the description of her women characters.

The novel has mostly been read through the lens of womanhood, romance, lust, the search for identity. It has several characters, relationships and symbolic meanings that make it possible to read it from an ecofeminist point of view. Ecofeminism says that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are similar in how they work and that both come from male systems that value control, order, and treating things as commodities over care, mutuality, and interconnectedness. This study hopes to show that the way *Honey Trap* shows women and nature can be understood in ecofeminist terms, revealing deeper stories of how the political conflict between Russia and Ukraine oppressed women, men, children and destroyed nature.

Prof. Sharmas’s portraying of Nature seems very calm, soothing and solacing amid the hardship of fast life. The description of nature by Samant Raju is very remarkable: “He

was extremely happy in the surroundings of Mother Nature and enjoyed the beauty of flowers. The rivers, the fountains, the hills, and the animals captivated him so much that he wished to settle here rather than in Mumbai” (Samant 88). The natural surroundings of Aurangabad fascinate Samant to stay in his motherland not in Mumbai as suggested by his wife Shivanshi who was practicing there as an advocate. Another beautiful description of nature is mentioned here: “Nature is beautiful. The stars and the moon shine every night. Cuckoo and other birds sing songs. Flowers blossom regularly. And your Kuntal is by your side forever” (Dr Kuntal 112). This statement of Dr Kuntal about Nature is delivered to Dr Mangesh after his miner attack of typhoid. She wanted to enjoy the beauty of mother nature. This presentation of natural surrounding by prof. Sharma shows his love for nature.

**Conclusion:**

A thorough analysis of this novel reveals that Professor Sharma has intricately interlaced the narrative with numerous literary allusions, including the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Malik Muhammad Jayasi’s Padmavat, Keats’ Ode to Psyche, Milton’s Paradise Lost (allusions to Satan and Beelzebub), G.M. Hopkins’ God’s Grandeur, and Gray’s The Progress of Poesy, among others. This novel was intriguing and demonstrated his extensive comprehension. The depiction of contemporary issues, such as the challenges faced by working women outside the domestic sphere, economic and emotional fulfilment, sexual gratification, extramarital affairs, materialistic desires, and particularly the intertwining of international matters specifically the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and its profound impact on the lives of Dr Prabhu and his wife, Dr Fanny—culminates in the narrative’s conclusion with the inquiry, 'Who will bell the cat?' links this story to the imminent future of Ukraine and validates his position among established authors.

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