

Adultery, Morality, Ambition and Exploitation in Vikas Sharma's *Sana*

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Abstract:

SANA is a novel by Professor Vikas Sharma that critiques contemporary society, focusing on adultery, the decay of moral values, the exploitation of relationships, and ambition driven by excessive materialism. The narrative revolves around the protagonist, Sana, an ambitious and self-serving young woman who embodies the moral and ethical decay of the modern generation. The story explores her involvement in a web of opportunism and extramarital affairs, where she exploits her relationships—with her husband, lovers, and colleagues—to fulfill her professional and material goals. The novel depicts widespread moral decay across corporate and familial settings, where characters prioritize lust, ambition, and personal gratification over loyalty, love, and integrity. SANA analyzes a profound crisis of faith in traditional cultural values, familial bonds, and ethical conduct. Ultimately, the novel serves as a moral allegory and a mirror to the ethical dilemmas of today's generation. It warns of the social chaos that results from abandoning ethical principles in a world driven by professionalism and materialistic aspirations, urging readers to reflect on the consequences of their choices.

Keywords: Adultery, Morality, Materialism

Introduction.

Professor Vikas Sharma's novel, *SANA* (2023), stands as a powerful critique of 21st-century Indian society, incisively examining adultery, the erosion of moral values, the dominance of materialism, ambition, exploitation, and the commodification of personal relationships. Sharma, a versatile author skilled in both poetry and prose, has quickly

established himself as a significant voice among contemporary Indian English novelists. Within just over seven years, he has authored several notable works, with *Sana* being a prime example of his literary prowess. The novel uses its titular character to explore the corrosive interplay of these themes, particularly within corporate and family spheres. *SANA* follows its protagonist, Sana, a complex and morally ambiguous woman who navigates both worlds with opportunism and ambition. This paper analyzes *Sana* as a social novel that reflects and warns against the consequences of unethical actions in society. Employing feminist literary criticism and social realism, the analysis delves into adultery, moral decline, materialism, ambition, exploitation, modern female autonomy, and the decadence pervasive among the corporate elite. Notably, the concept of social realism, rooted in photography and the visual arts, is adeptly adapted in Sharma's work to provide an authentic representation of contemporary realities across artistic disciplines.

The novel centers on Sana, a young and ambitious woman whose story addresses themes such as societal expectations, situationships, extramarital affairs, nymphomania, and corporate life. It is often asserted that the characters in *Sana* have real-life counterparts connected to Vikas Sharma, and that the novel is partly autobiographical. Critics frequently highlight that the protagonist, Sana, is based on a real person—Sunny—who formerly served as the author's assistant and was close to him. This connection is underscored by the novel's cover page, which features a photograph of the real-life Sana, known as Sunny. Throughout the novel, it appears that Vikas Sharma drew extensively from his interactions and observations of Sunny to shape Sana's character (Khurana and Singh 129). Additionally, the character Chandan, depicted as Sana's boyfriend, also has a real-life basis in the writer's environment, being one of Vikas Sharma's students. Professor Shivaji D. Sargar confirms these connections in his article, 'Threads of Deceit: Unravelling Infidelity and Pseudo Feminism in *Sana*'.

“The characters of Sana and Chandan are believed to be real and related to the life of Professor Vikas Sharma, and the cover page of Sana is also of the very Sana we know through Professor Vikas Sharma.”

(An Insight into the Fictional World of Vikas Sharma 192)

The writer has also directly addressed these real-life connections, confirming that Sana and Chandan are based on individuals he has known.

“Yes, the characters of Sana and Chandan are based on two of my students. They were in a relationship at that time, which intrigued me and prompted their

inclusion as characters. Sana's real counterpart exhibited a self-interest that often overshadowed her own boyfriend's needs. Through prolonged observation, I concluded that their actions consistently prioritized themselves, regarding others merely as means to their ends. My aim in the novel was to portray this dynamic. The narrative, as presented in the novel, only partially reflects the extent of behavior I witnessed from the real-life individuals." (Harsha Sharma)

Sana embodies the narrative's central themes. She has had multiple extramarital affairs while married. These actions are not simply due to passion. They are calculated steps, driven by her ambition and desire for material success. Sana appears Machiavellian. She systematically uses and seduces men—including her husband, Brij Vrat, and her lovers Pandit Revati Prasad and Mohan Akshay. Her aim is to advance her professional and financial position. She treats relationships as transactional, using them for personal gain. Her search for gratification and success erodes traditional morality. Sana keeps up the appearance of an "innocent fairy" wife. Privately, she pursues her own interests. This shows a deep crisis in cultural values, marriage, and self-control.

Sana stands out as one of Professor Vikas Sharma's significant novels. It narrates the journey of Sana, a young woman whose character is meticulously analyzed to reflect traits evident in many from the younger generation. Sana is portrayed as the beautiful wife of Pandit Brij Vrat, who demonstrates sincere care and commitment towards her, striving to fulfill her needs and ensure her happiness. The couple resides in Noida, where Brij Vrat's dedication to their relationship is apparent; however, Sana's actions contrast with his loyalty. In his absence, she initiates interactions and flirts with Pandit Revati Prasad. Brij Vrat embodies devotion to their marriage, yet Sana does not reciprocate. While her husband travels to Agra for the Maha Mrityunjay yagya, Revati Prasad visits Sana, leading to an illicit encounter. Sana disregards the bond of trust with her husband, telling Revati Prasad, "I feel myself incomplete without you" (Sana 17). Her advances toward Revati Prasad violate expectations of marital fidelity. Sana moves her right hand toward his thighs and kisses him, commenting, "Pandit Ji, there is something superior to the soul, too. How can you, young as you are, forget and ignore the god of love, Cupid, who shoots his arrows regularly? Don't you feel hit with Cupid's arrows now?" Although Pandit Revati initially resists, he eventually succumbs to her attraction. When asked why she married Brij Vrat, who is academically less accomplished, Sana reveals her past affection for Chandan during her college years and a subsequent physical relationship. Chandan ultimately proved to be a selfish partner, and Sana's father arranged her marriage to Brij Vrat for financial security after her social

reputation suffered. In Brij Vrat's absence, Sana spends time with Revati Prasad, who earnestly seeks employment opportunities for her to utilize her M.Sc. and Ph.D. qualifications. Both Revati and Brij Vrat make concerted efforts to maintain her happiness.

Now, the question before us is: ¿can we say that Sana is an unfaithful wife who uses only those who love her to fulfill her own ambitions? She is willing to cheat on her husband, who loves her so much and married her even after having the knowledge of her past illicit affair with Chandan. Sana's relationship with Pandit Revati Prasad shows her deteriorating character. When her father comes to know about her pregnancy, he advises her to take rest and not go to work. He also promises to finance her dream of having a school. But, despite the proposal to rest, she goes to Agra with Akshay Mohan to buy equipment for the lab at the school she plans to start. In Agra, she spends time with him and gets intimate with him. Since it was 12:30 p.m., she asked the driver to head to Alka Hotel, where she had stayed with her parents long ago. First, she ordered coffee and checked into the room. She entered the washroom and took a towel to change her saree. Surprisingly, she changed her saree in Mohan Akshay's presence but observed his reactions stealthily. She noted that he looked at her hips and tried to find out the beauty of her breasts. ¿After she had put on another blouse and saree, she asked him How do I look now?'

She does not think of her husband, Brij Vrat, or her lover, Revati Prasad, even once. As the Sun had set, Sana and Mohan Akshay visited the Taj Mahal area, hand in hand, and he kissed her quite often. As he rubbed her mounts, she recalled the loving meeting with Revathi Prasad, then with Brij Vrat. At the hotel, they had another cup of champagne and enjoyed playing basketball, billiards, and badminton. After dinner, they slept in each other's arms without taking the oath of eternal love. Both of them were conscious of a temporary outburst of passion. She was not the least conscious of the bare fact that she lived in the world of illusions. After school, she normally forgot to pray to God and thought of one arrangement or the other as if nothing would move without her. (Sana 78). The thought of her husband, or even her lover, whom she willingly entered into a relationship with, does not cross her mind once. She knows that Akshay Mohan would not be a lasting affair, and somehow they both are okay with this and agree to spend little time together getting intimate, then simply moving on as if it never happened. This shows how the young generations are slaves to their physical needs. This makes them unfaithful partners in marriages and other relationships, resulting in breakups and divorces.

The same can also be said about Sana's own father, Naveen. Naveen is a self-made businessman, and adultery is a daily affair for him. He has a wife, Kavya, who has supported

him throughout his struggle to stand on his own two feet and build his business empire. But what she got in return was disloyalty and unfaithfulness from her own husband. Her husband, Naveen, keeps pursuing several young women in hopes of forming a relationship with them. He goes as low as having an illicit relationship with Silky, who is the sister of his wife. He takes advantage of the situation when Silky asks him to help her get admission in B.Tech. degree. Naveen says 'Yes, really. I bear all your expenses from today onwards, on one condition: I never say no to you for any demand, and you also say no to me anytime for anything. Decide for yourself.' (Sana 48). After that, Silky, being a highly ambitious girl, submits herself to her Jiju, Naveen. Katty is a trainee at Naveen's factory, who was financially struggling and had no money to repay the education loan. Like Silky, Katty also realized the complexities of the wide world because of unemployment and poverty. She humbly follows the instruction, and Naveen hugs her, saying, 'Katty, you will be paid thirty thousand rupees per month from now onwards.' 'Thank you, Sir.' Now he took her inside the restroom and told her, " You are an earthly angel ignored by me so far. You deserve a lot. If you work hard, you will make your career. Of course, you are a raw Diamond that needs polishing. By the cosmetics and clothes that appeal to your aesthetic sense. Here is the money for that.' He gifted her 50000 in the envelope. Katty's sensual feelings had been shared with him by Silky, and he made sure shot and was welcomed. (Sana 69-70). This shows how the girls are exploited in the name of jobs. Silky, being an ambitious girl, started applying for other jobs as she wanted to seek her identity in the outside world. She wanted to fly freely through the open sky and meet other chemical magnets like Naveen. After all, he was not the only authority in the world of chemicals. She was excited to join the Beena Unit of Mobiles and submitted her resignation to Naveen. Naveen accepted the resignation without any grudges. She is going to join training in Shanghai (China). Sexual affair with FuFu in Shanghai was not so important for Silky because he was the only hope and help for her.

Naveen has no remorse or guilt at all when Kavya objects to the parties that he hosts, where sex and alcohol are both served openly, he tells her that she had no other option but to accept it. He further tells her that if she still has some problems, she is more than welcome to go back to her room and rest, but she should not expect him to stop. He keeps bringing women and having extramarital affairs with them all, while his wife is still in the picture, as if it is no big deal. The readers thus better understand Sana's character. The reason Sana has no problem being with multiple men at once is probably that she saw her father do the same in her mother's presence, and she apparently finds it normal. This is not only the condition for Sana but also for a lot of other young people who see such extramarital affairs daily. They

grow accustomed to it, and when they do the same themselves, they feel no remorse or guilt because they consider it normal, and their brains have adapted to it as ordinary. Sana, after becoming the owner of the school, keeps herself busy there. Sana was unaware that the students at her school enjoyed drinking and expensive Cokes at the hostel birthday parties. When the warden, Tiya, tried to intervene, Sahu, the ringleader, told her bluntly, "We are not living in any Gurukul of Guru Vasishtha or Guru Dronacharya." This is a 21st-century hostel. My life, my rule is to be followed. What goes from your pocket if a student enjoys his/her birthday? Are we not free students of India? Are we slaves? No way.' (Sana 115). Tiya, the hostel warden, kept mum as she, too, flirted with Principal Mohan Akshay, thinking that students might find out about her private life. This shows the moral degradation of the young boys and girls of 21st-century society.

A physical relationship is not a big deal to Sana or the other characters. Neither are they afraid of society, nor are they tied by any norms of chastity or morality. It appears that Professor Vikas Sharma wants to highlight the deviant thinking of young girls from well-off families and tell us how they have lost their belief in chastity and purity. It is true that modern life is fast-paced; however, this does not justify abandoning one's morals and ethics to do whatever one finds necessary for physical pleasure. Professor Vikas Sharma's *Sana* stands as a powerful contemporary commentary, skillfully intertwining adultery, morality, ambition, and exploitation to depict the moral vacuum of modern life. Through Sana and her contemporaries, the novel criticizes the decay of values, the commodification of relationships, and the catastrophic outcomes of prioritizing materialistic ambition over human and ethical integrity. While describing their ambition and professionalism, he explains the loss of moral compass, emotional well-being, meaningful relationships, and exploitation in their lives. He is a modern novelist. He addresses contemporary issues and problems facing by youth. He portrays a generation driven by materialism and devoid of love, loyalty, and a sense of belonging, where relationships are reduced to transactional "situationships" rather than genuine bonds. His concerns extend to the uncertain future of this generation, which is prioritizing ambition over humanity. Thus, the novel serves as a warning, emphasizing the chaos and emptiness that follow when ethical foundations are neglected. The blind rush for money and sensual pleasures worldwide speaks to the loss of essential life values, which are scarce in the Western world. However, in India, there has been a long tradition of following these values, but on account of various social and political factors, Indian society too has come under the dominant pressure of cultural invasion from the Western hemisphere. (Vandana Sharma 22). This novel raises a fundamental question:

¿has adultery, moral degradation, and ambition really become so necessary for progress in modern society?

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