

The Motif of Love in Vikas Sharma's Love's Not Time's Fool

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Abstract - Love is an emotion born with a living organism in this cosmos. A few philosophers, writers, and psychologists have tried their best to bind this unbounded emotion through some words of definition but failed or succeeded little. Love is not a negative thing or romantic thing related to husband-wife or lover-beloved rather it has different colors like passionate love, spiritual love, parental love, sibling love, universal love, etc. It is an emotional attachment between the two or more. It is an individual's transaction of heart, will, desires, and faith unconditionally with complete submission of one's will and service to the loved one/ones. In this modern and industrialized world, the concept of love is changing rapidly in different directions resulting in new and modern relationships with a tinge of boldness and open-mindedness. Vikas Sharma, an emerging novelist writing in both Hindi and English, has focused on this changing concept or motif of love in his writings. His love novel *Love's Not Time's Fool* (2021) presents a glimpse of different shades of love in human life in the 21st century. Richa Pandit alias Richa Vaidik, the protagonist of the novel, is a lady with a feministic ideology and is completely aware of her desires in this mortal world during the pandemic crises. She is broadminded enough to fulfill her desires and to develop physical relationships with more than one male partners in India or abroad.

Keywords: Love, Conjugal affair, Extra-marital affair, Emotion, Lust, Marriage.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of the novel *Love's Not Time's Fool* (2021), has been derived from the ninth line of 'Sonnet No.116' titled 'Let Me Not To The Marriage of True Minds' composed by William Shakespeare, who did not agree to recognize any obstacle in the unity of true lovers, stating, "Love's not Time's Fool, though rosy lips and cheeks/Within his bending sickle's compass come/ Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks" (The Sonnets, 289). This is one of the best 154 sonnets by W. Shakespeare and the poet makes a comparison of true love with the unshakable 'Pole Star' to guide true lovers and declares that true love is not bound to time, situation, or physical beauty rather it is the union of true souls. Vikas Sharma is a sincere student as well as a professor of English language and literature in general with a specific infatuation with the works of William Shakespeare, the greatest painter of human emotions and feelings. This novel is quite true to its title as it deals with the traditional motif of love and succeeds in presenting different aspects of human love in different situations leading to the free flow of expression of feelings without any obstacles. Most of the characters in this novel – be they male or female – dip into the sea of love and present their own view regarding its different shades in the 21st century.

MAIN TEXT

Love with its different shades is the main motif of this novel from the beginning to the end. The conjugal love between Richa Pandit, a voracious reader, and Vijay Malya, has no passion and adventure in their personal life rather she stays in the marriage relation with him because of his property and wealth as she is a hard-core realist, having up-to-date knowledge on worldly affairs. Her husband was impotent because his private part was injured badly by a leather ball in a cricket match and he was unable to fulfill the need in a conjugal relationship. The character of Richa is quite opposite to the character of Kiranmoy in Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja* (1994). The private part of her husband, Sudhamoy was mutilated by the hooligans in a religious riot and he was unable to make a sexual union with his wife who loves him spiritually. She strongly denies the urge of her husband to allow her to fulfill her sexual desires with someone else and asks herself, "Was sex the only significant aspect of a relationship between a man and a woman? Was everything else insignificant?" (*Lajja*, 114) Obviously, in place of sex, emotional and spiritual attachment, mutual care, and unconditional support are the essential components of true love, lacking in Richa who falsifies William

Shakespeare's assumption of true love, "Love is not love/ which alters when it alteration finds." (The Sonnets, 289) She is a modern lady of different vision of having sex and sexual satisfaction on her priority. She can live without food but cannot survive without sex, as Samantha, the heroine in South Indian cinema states publicly.

Richa is very aware of women's rights, her physical beauty, and her magnetic power to draw the attention of the lustful eyes of some people. Though she is the real mother of a child with her paramour in America and married Mr. Malya in India, she maintains her physical fitness and beauty charm. She maintains herself as a young lady with fancy clothes, branded make-up, and cosmetic products like Victoria's Secret perfumes, ponds cream, Laura's lipstick, etc. and she watches her sexy body in the mirror and says, "I admired my figure. My boobs appeared bulging out in this tight pullover and my hips appeared out of my tight trousers." (Love's Not Time's Fool, 05). Her physical beauty easily hunts Abhilash, a student of Post Graduation in St. John's College, Agra, in the very first meeting at a bookstall. She is humble enough to help him with money to purchase the books for I.A.S. examinations and initiates to be a friend of him. She trickily uses her sixth sense to understand his desires for her. She is very much infatuated with him and adores his handsome body and she is craving for her sexual gratification in an extra-marital relationship. She suggests him leave the paying guest house and shift to her luxurious house. She is determined to fill the space of a male in her bedroom life which is vacant in the absence of her husband, a rich businessman on a business tour in the UK and caught there in lockdown due to the COVID pandemic crisis which affected the lives of people all over the world by diminishing some relations and by developing some new relations. Dr Kanwar Pal Singh, in his research paper titled 'Vikas Sharma's Love's Not Time's Fool: A Representative Novel of The 21st Century' published in 'Critiquing The Novels of Vikas Sharma (2022), rightly observes:

The spread of COVID-19 is the most important event in the novel as it suddenly disrupted the personal, professional, social, and economic life of man...Examinations of Abhilash, Rinki, Nikki, and Ishqi were postponed for three months. Richa could not attend the funeral of her husband in the UK. (391-392)

Richa is a good human being and spends a good amount of her income for the welfare of orphans, widows, and old homeless people. But the lack of sexual gratification in her life, makes her selfish and she comes to know the man-hunting moves and strategically traps Abhilash in the jurisdiction of her lustrous beauty and obligation. She has investigated the deep desires in his heart to have carnal pleasure with such a beautiful and adorable but dissatisfied lady. Initially, Richa and Abhilash have no sign of true love rather their physical attraction for the opposite sex, availability, and mutual acceptance instigate their desire for an intimate relationship. Subdued Abhilash's praising nature with bold movement towards her

makes an indelible impression on her and she offers him a back seat in her car with her to show him her wealthy status. At her luxurious Banglow, Abhilash is stunned to see the tennis court and accepts her challenge for a match following a fantastic treat if he wins the match. Richa admits,

I invited him to play tennis with me. Abhi played nice and his serving method was pretty remarkable. He made me run on both sides of the court - left and right. My breathing became fast with all the running and he noticed the rise and fall of my breast. I found him observing my smooth and beautiful thighs but could not take advantage of his weakness. (08)

She is smart enough to understand the lusty desires of Abhilash for her and her beautiful body so she urges him to have a bath in the washroom of her husband and starts bathing naked in the adjoining bathroom having a separation of glass through which she can see his body properly but he can have a blurred image of her body. She, forgetting everything about her husband and conjugal love, slides the glass aside and comes to his bathroom, applying soap to his body. He also becomes passionate, kisses her boobs, and hugs her tightly to have a hard erotic union that happens in the bedroom at night after drinking champagne. The author explains this fast-paced, extramarital sexual union in detail through the tongue of Richa who is excited enough to state,

I took him to bed. We removed our gowns... he had never enjoyed sex with any girl before. He was ignorant hence I directed his penis to enter me... after fifteen minutes I observed that he was ready again... This time he entered me in one go...we both enjoyed sex for nearly fifteen minutes. (11-12)

This sexual union between Richa and Abhilash throws light on the casual extra-marital relationship without any love sign rather it can be called a lustful event which leads to the repetition whenever and wherever they like. It was not the true or spiritual love, William Shakespeare is talking about in his sonnet, rather it was the merging of two sexually hungry bodies into one for selfishness. Abhilash, son of a postmaster, belongs to a middle-class family in Sikandrabad, a town in Bulandshahar District of Uttar Pradesh, and gets only 2500 rupees per month to survive in Agra so he happily agrees to shift from his PG to Richa's house and a part-time job in her shoe factory on a handsome salary; and for Richa, it was nothing but a means of carnal satisfaction without any care of cultural concerns, morality, and conjugal bond with her husband. Her husband's business tour for ten days continues increasing from 10 days to three months which never happens as he died of Corona in the UK and his funeral was not attended by Richa due to lockdown though she "wept so as to gain sympathy from friends and the relations of Malya." (133) Some of the relatives including her sister Mrs. Neelam Kaul came to Agra to console her and "a few staff members paid tribute to late Malya after the pandit offered prayer for the peace of Malya's soul." (134) It was not a matter of

sorrow for here rather it was a golden chance for her to be the sole owner of his property and marrying Abhilash, a young man of great sexual vigor and stamina. She got one crore dollars from U.S. Insurance Co. where "Malya got himself insured for one crore dollars as a tourist ...as well as L.I.C of India as Malya was insured here for two crores rupees." (133)

The unnatural death of Malya makes the readers aware that Richa is also a religious lady and believes in Hindu God, Krishna whom she worships to seek his blessings in distress and adverse circumstances. She thinks that God creates an option of marriage for Richa and Abhilash who germinates the seeds of love for her, she does give him the information of her lover Robert Lee, and their illegitimate physically handicapped son, Amitabh who stays in America with a caretaker, Nora. Richa manages to sell out his village land at a high price and gifts him a new Maruti car. She introspects her situation as a widow who is not supposed to be a good thing in Indian culture and so many people want to have voluptuous eyes on her. She contemplates her thoughts about being married to Abhilash to get rid of the curse of widowhood. She asserts, "If the wife of Bath could have five husbands in the church, I, being the daughter of an I.A.S. officer, and highly educated abroad, had the right to choose another husband who promised to love me for the sake of love." (147) Abhilash, who defines love as "Love means to love a person despite his faults" accepted her proposal by putting his economic condition before her,

Making love is different in comparison to lead a thoughtful and pleasant married life. Your Abhi has no money to buy costly things for pomp and show. Just think whatever money I have, has been given to me by you only. Whatever reputation I have earned is also on account of only you. Why check my hand playing with you? Come sweetheart and accept me as your husband the way you like and when you like. The only thing important for me is your love and I can repay the same with my love only. (145)

The next day, she and Abhilash performed marriage in a traditional way with the help of Pandit Ji and became husband and wife to have a happy conjugal relationship forever. They celebrated their first ethical and traditional honeymoon-Richa covering her head with the pallu of her saree and Abhilash removing the pallu and presenting her a mangalsutra.

Richa, a lady from upper-class society, has been in a pre-marital romantic love relationship with Robert Lee in the USA where her father was the representative of the Indian government. She did not hesitate even to make a physical relationship with him without any protection and consequently, she was pregnant before marriage. She reminds us of the character Ila in *The Shadow Lines* (1998) by Amitav Ghosh (1956...) She is with her father on an official tour in the UK Where she falls in love with Nick Price, a handsome guy who leaves her alone in an unknown country for her. Richa

wanted to get love and care from her lover but he left her alone when she gave birth to a handicapped son. Richa was cheated badly and broke down for a while but being a modern and bold lady, having the soul of Ulysses, she left the child under the mother's care of Nora with a handsome salary. She came back to India and married a successful businessman, Malya for a happy married life but what she got out of marriage – money, luxury, a bungalow, a car, etc. lacking the real happiness of married life i.e., full-length sexual pleasure – Malya was unable to fulfill her carnal desires due to her impotency. She craves, "How long to feel dissatisfied like this? Will worldly pleasures never quench my thirst?" (66) The desires for gratification seem to have driven her into the arms of Abhilash.

The death of her husband Malya, though was a matter of grief for Richa but somehow, she was happy to continue her relationship with Amitabh without any hindrance forever. She, initially, does care for society but later she feels compelled to be in a sexual union with her own Jiju, Mr. Nirupam Kaul who called her in the morning and with an engineer reached her home within no time with a proposal of a new textile unit of a thousand crores. He hugged and kissed her with a clear intention of momentary love. She tries to oppose but Nirupam manages to send Varup Deep and Abhilash to Sikandrabad so that he may enjoy her beauty in bed. Since she has no option, she agrees with the condition that he should not cheat her sister for Richa who will meet him once a year in a hotel for complete to quench his erotic desires. She asserts,

While lying in the bed he repeatedly kissed my cheeks and continued playing with my breast. He didn't allow me to wear a bra... he felt drowsy and slept for an hour and a half and then got up for another round of love-making. Jiju was prepared to spend more than a thousand crores for the new textile units and I failed to reject him and his loving advances. (141)

Though Richa is a bold and courageous lady, she is unable to reject the sexual proposal of her sister's husband for the sake of money or a new project of a thousand crores. She does not care for her integrity and chastity in comparison to wealth and satisfies her own lust with more than one man. It is not only Richa but also Abhilash who has a heterosexual relationship. He willingly agrees to be a friend of Richa and for the sake of money, he drinks wine and ultimately penetrates Richa into her own house without love. He does not care for her age, social taboos, morality, and cultural concerns. He even has a one-night sexual relationship with his college friend Nikki who willingly sleeps with him and in a sleepy condition misunderstands Rikki, her roommate. The author deliberately shows the real picture of same-sex roommates as Nikki and Rikki who are a little lesbian and enjoys each other in bed by kissing, embracing, and caressing boobs of each other. Tara, Rikki, and Richa also enjoy one another company in

bed and during massage. Nikki hugs and embraces Abhilash tightly, he "kissed her on her bosom and cheeks... he felt excited and failed to control himself. He applied coconut oil to his penis and entered her. She thought Rikki was taking their play to the next level and inserting toys in her.... (He) gave strokes continuously." (45) Abhilash is also not a true lover of Richa rather he is an opportunist who slips to Nikki for his sexual satisfaction and convinces Nikki by saying "Nikki, a dead body cannot enjoy pleasure. Even Gods aspire to love earthly paragons of beauty." (97)

Richa, the mother of an illegitimate child, is a little bit true to the contemporary situation and manages her motherly love for her son through her wealth. She hires lady Naura to take care of her child in the USA and after the death of Malya calls for them in India in her own house to take care and give motherly love to Amitabh who suffers from eye disease. Richa weeps a lot for him and tries to love him as a mother but he treats Nora as his real mother and calls Richa 'Auntie' He objects to Richa's hugging and calling him 'son'. He is irritated at the frequent kisses, "Everybody in India wishes to kiss my cheeks. No nonsense of this kind here" (123). Richa is infatuated with Abhilash and wants to marry him on the condition that he will give fatherly love to Amitabh. Nora is quite careful of Amitabh and thinks him unsafe in Richa's house, she admits Amitabh is an orphan from Michigan, USA. She gave a written will to the main trustee of St. Joseph S. S. School, to sell her home at Grand Heavens and the new apartment in New York for Amitabh's care. She had a real affection for him and died in his absence due to a heart attack.

CONCLUSION

A deep study of the novel indicates different shades and motifs of love – physical love between Robert Lee and Richa, Abhilash and Richa, Nigam Kaul and Richa, conjugal love between Richa and Malya only for a short period of three months, Richa, and Abhilash; Extra marital affair between Richa and Abhilash, parental love between Nora and Amitabh, Richa, and her father; sibling love between Richa and Neelam, Abhilash and her sister, lesbian love between Rikki and Nikki, Tara and Richa. It is the author who seems to make an advocacy of 'free love' without any boundaries of age, caste, economic status, social status, or sex. Love in union is the core motif of the novel, though it falsifies the traditional concept of love in ancient India. It deals with the romantic color of love which has been proven to be a boon in human life to face the harsh reality of the mechanized world as also shown by John Osborne in his famous novel 'Look Back in Anger' (1956). The narrative proves that free love makes Richa and Abhilash happy in a real sense and diminishes their worries and frustration resulting in a happy marriage of the two with the good news of Richa's pregnancy.

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