

Importance of Women Education In Nurturing of A Sophisticated Society As Depicted In Vikas Sharma’s Novel ‘Medicine: Light In Twilight’

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Abstract: *This paper is based on the critical study of the importance of women education acting as building blocks of a sophisticated society. In this regard the boons of education imparted to women will be discussed specifically highlighting the role it plays in paving the way for a developed society. The paper will also bring out the contrast between a woman with intellectual mind and one who lacks it. It will focus on the drawbacks of an uneducated woman and how, if the women of our society are given the right knowledge and education, can work wonders for the present as well as the future generations to come. The paper will extensively discuss the upliftment of women and the society as a whole by way of education imparted to the female counterparts and will work to establish the proverb “If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” in its true sense.*

Keywords: *Education, Intellectualism, Society, Progress, Sophisticated, Empowerment*

Vikas Sharma’s novel ‘Medicine: Light in Twilight’ revolves around the importance of medicine and medical advancements over the years aiding to the well-being of human beings. Apart from this, the novel also time and again focuses on the intra-personal relationships of its major characters and how they thrive to achieve their purpose in life while facing all the challenges life has to offer them. In doing so the novel also throws light on the importance of education specially in women that paves the path for a better and well-informed society. The novel depicts how by educating one woman the whole society benefits from it.

The beginning of the novel is set in Lahore and dates back to 1944 and gradually follows the course of life of its five main characters namely Kunj Behari Lal, Ghan Shyam, Gopal Das, Rajendra Narain and Krishna Prasad, and their families to current times. These five men are disciples of Swami Giri Maharaj who suggest that they should leave Lahore and settle near Meerut amidst the chaos of Partition of India. All the disciples except Krishna Prasad who is a Vaidya by profession immediately shift to Meerut and await the presence of Vaidya ji who is supposed to join them once he sells off his land in Lahore. Krishna Prasad is agitated by his whimsical daughter Kamal Naini who due her ignorance and lack of education does not know the right ways of life.

Vaidya Ji’s daughter Kamal Naini could recognize Hindi alphabets and had not joined any school so far. As the primary school was situated in another village, her parents didn’t send her there. As a result, her father taught her a few Hindi chapters but her personality didn’t develop due to lack of formal education. (Pg 14). Kamal Naini fell in love with Salim and refused to leave Lahore with her parents as she wished to get married to Salim and stay back with him. Salim lied to her about his fake job and his real intentions of acquiring her father’s land but due to lack of intellect and proper education, Kamal Naini fell into his trap. Her father sold his land to a farmer of a nearby village which slashed the motives of Salim, but the latter planned to sell Kamal Naini to the Red Light area of Lahore in exchange of monetary benefit of around two thousand rupees. Due to Naini’s ignorance, she refused to accompany her parents and stayed back at Lahore with Salim against her father’s will. Soon she was sold off to the Red Light Area by Salim who made a false promise to return to her after getting his salary as a teacher. The lack of formal education and intellectual ignorance made life a living hell for Naini as she could not differentiate between good and bad and had to struggle a lot in order to be reunited with her parents through the help of a stranger Balak Ram. She proves to be a perfect example of how uneducated women can act as a bane for themselves as well as the society.

On the contrary, there are several examples through which the book highlights the role of educated women acting as a driving force for the development of a well-rounded society. One such example are the daughters of Naini, Kamya and Preetilata. As Naini had suffered a lot due to her ignorance initially, she wanted her daughters to get the proper education with changing times. Both her daughters Kamya and Preetilata were sent to one of the best schools in Meerut to get formal education and both excelled in their studies as well. As these girls were aware of their surrounding socio-political issues due to their timely introduction to knowledge, they grew into aware citizens and knew what they wanted to do in life in order to sustain themselves as well as benefit the society. Kamya aimed to become a first-rate physician and cracked the medical entrance exam, getting admission in Maulana Azad Medical College subsequently. This in turn had a huge impact on her sister Preetilata intellectually as she too aspired to become a Doctor of Medicine. **Due to the success of Kamya in the Medical Entrance Test, Preetilata worked hard and consulted the books that had been left behind by Kamya. (Pg 50).**

In due course of time both the girls went on to become doctors and helped many patients with their ailments. Kamya became a famous Gynecologist and treated many women. She even gave lectures on female diseases and made the society aware of the anatomy of the female body and the taboos attached to it. As she was a knowledgeable woman, she did her best to uplift the society by making them aware of the topics which are rarely discussed openly and hence remained in dark due to the sheer ignorance of the commoners on such delicate topics. She even advocated for gender equality in the society and pressed on the importance of female education as the flagbearer for a sound and happy human environment. Preetilata on the other hand became a successful Surgeon. This incidence throws light on the fact that a single educated woman can become an inspiration for many others like her which can further lead to the intellectual and social growth of the society as a whole. Both these sisters also prove to be a boon to the society when the nation is hit by Corona virus. Both Dr Preetilata and Dr Kamya serve to the ailing patients of Corona with full zeal and devotion and therefore save many innocent lives from the horrible life-threatening virus. This again presses upon the importance of educated women that our society needs for its upliftment.

Also later in the novel, when the Rotary International Club sends its six representatives from Michigan state USA to Meerut Rotary Zone through its Group Study Exchange Program which aims to create friendship and cooperation among its member nations, Dr Kamya and Dr Preetilata plays a pivotal role in organizing and managing it. It was due to their intellectual minds and knowledge about their surroundings in addition to that in the field of medicine, that they were deemed fit to take on such a huge responsibility. During the whole program these two shared important socio-cultural and economical facts amongst the six exchange candidates making them understand India and its people better. They also shared insights on the health problems and ways to combat them due to their extensive knowledge on the same. They readily answered any queries raised by the exchange group and gave useful suggestions for the well-being of the human race. It was due to them that the exchange team learned about the ongoing social, economic, technological and intellectual developments in India and formed positive opinions about India emerging as a strong nation. **Most importantly the team members formed healthy opinion about developing India and regarded India strong as the authorities could feed their own large population. (Pg 120).**

Another example of the adversities a woman who is not educated can bring upon her and her family can be seen through Ghan Shyam's wife Madhu. When Ghan Shyam falls ill due to lung cancer and is not able to earn any bread for his family, the responsibility to do so lies in the hands of Madhu. Had she been educated, all of this would have been easier for her to do, but as she lacks education and knowledge about how things work in the society, her life becomes miserable. **Whenever, the milkmen supplied milk at home, it was no good and the customers complained of its quality. Since Madhu was uneducated as well as unskilled, she failed to earn any money for the family. (Pg 52)**

Although Madhu had to suffer due to her intellectual ignorance, as good fate would have it, her daughter Girija did not compromise with her education and went on to do her Master's in Hindi. This along with other factors alleviated their miseries and enabled them to live a decent life. As a learned individual, Girija was well aware of her economical problems and suggested her mother to sell their bungalow and settle in a smaller flat in order to solve their financial matters and live a life of content. Not only this, but as an educated woman, she also contributed to the betterment of the society apart from personal benefits. During the course of the novel the intellectual abilities of Girija are highlighted when she is invited to deliver the note of thanks for the Rotary Exchange Program. She delivers a powerful note on the Indian economy and how India has become self sufficient in every field and does not require foreign help to sustain itself. This admirable lecture enlightens the participants about how India works presently and helps them to understand the Indian democracy in a better way.

Further, Girija gets appointed as Hindi lecturer where she explores her intellectual horizons even more by publishing the translations of renowned English as well as Hindi writers which furthermore made it easy for the people to understand these literary works in whichever language they were comfortable with. Not only this, Girija as a lecturer in Ajitnath Academy, formed a Group of Excellence which included students, both boys and girls with excellent intellectual caliber in order to train them further so they can excel in their professional lives as well as become an asset to the society. She inculcated in them values of great intellectual, socio-economical and political importance, so that these students as well as the society at large could benefit from this educational group. These students were not restricted to a particular subject but were guided to explore all the fields of knowledge for their intellectual growth. Girija encouraged these students to participate in seminars, express their views on current affairs, study books on every subject and have group discussions so that they can have practical knowledge of the actual problems of life and to nurture them to become rational citizens of the country. **Of course, these girls were told in clear words to study books on Geography, History, Political Theories and International Relations, and Current Economic developments. With the help of Group Discussions, held every week, Girija could evaluate their intellectual progress.(Pg 131).** It was due to this progressive approach of Girija, that these students excelled in their fields and soon went on to become successful in different spheres of life. Some of them joined sports, some wrote columns in national newspapers hence enlightening other people on sensitive issues, some became motivational public speakers guiding people who needed help with their life's problems while others entered the fields of medicine and civil services to help other people of the society. What stands out in all this is that a single educated woman (Girija), through her education and rational mind nurtured so many other young brilliant minds in the right direction and guided them to become an asset for the human race which further became a boon for the development of the society at large.

Not only this, Girija along with her learned friend Kanti Priya, who was a professional columnist, wrote articles on diverse issues of national importance to awaken people's mind and to enable them to understand the current scenarios of their country better. They wrote articles on the lifting of Article 35 and Article 370 from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They even wrote articles on the Corona Virus and what all measures were being taken by the Government to fight with the deadly disease. Due to their vast knowledge, they painted the true picture of the current scenarios in India and helped the common people to gain acquaintance with what was happening all around them.

Conclusion: Vikas Sharma through his novel 'Medicine: Light in Twilight' not only throws light on the importance of medical advancements that are necessary in today's world for a healthy human race but subsequently brings forward the importance of women education which has been long ignored throughout centuries in India. The subtitle '*Light in Twilight*' can be aptly linked to the struggle that women had to go through in order to get equal education and also the dawn of a new era where now women can contribute to the society through their intellectual prowess and live as equal counterparts of men. The novelist through the course of his novel discusses the educational aspects of his female characters' personality and distinguishes between the fate of an educated woman as opposed to that of an uneducated one. It is through his narrative that he brings forward the necessity of women education and how it impacts the society as a whole. Be it intellectually, financially, politically or socially, the need for educated and adequately informed women has become non-negotiable for a well-rounded society.

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