

AN EDIFYING STATEMENT ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

P C K PREM

Human relations are complex and multipart and at times, it is difficult to understand how people react in certain situations, for sincerity and honesty suffer despite genuine efforts to sustain. When **Nalini Sharma** talks of human relations in *The Strange Equations* (An Authorspress Publication, Delhi 2015), a novel that runs into 495 pages, she excites and captivates. Its massiveness startles and demands patience. One notices that she maintains the interest and the excitement integral without unwanted interruptions. Men live in protracted but choking human bonds and environment, and undergo silent anguish. It is also a secret wish to look self-sacrificing so that relations live warmly notwithstanding self-interests and ego. The novel depicts the vision of Sharma on human life, existence and human bonds. It is about the ethical quality of life a man ought to nurture and about the intrinsic flaws, every individual carries inside. It is about failures many and victories on fingertips. The Intimate and good friends Anu and Priya lived a life of challenges, sufferings inexpressible, and confronted life determinedly but maintained warmth and grace in relations.

To understand what precisely the novelist wishes to convey it is better to give a brief and hurried look at the storyline.

Anu, a teacher in a college, lived a happy married life but very soon, cheers vanished. On a pleasure trip, Anu's husband Akshay died in an accident everyone believed but she refused to accept the truth of death. She faced predictable hardships, reared up son Rohit and daughter Ruchir independently. Priya was a great support to Anu. Rohit grew up, after completing education, joined a college as a lecturer, and was of great help to the family as a father figure. Ruchir loved Rohit immensely but was possessive and the obsession appeared lethal. After careful thought, Rohit married Gita, daughter of Mrs Arora, Anu's colleague.

Marriage was not a success and even consummation appeared a distant dream, for Gita put up the demand for the Anu's house. Rohit was bewildered and no rational and affectionate approach helped. Gita did not appreciate the presence of Anu in the house. In the meantime, Ruchir in haste and anger decided to marry an elderly man Prashant Sinha and ignored violently

all opposition. The differences between Anu, Rohit and Ruchir surfaced when doubts arose. Rohit and Ruchir nursed misgivings that Anu and Prashant had illicit relations. Anu wanted Rohit to live a happy marital life. Gita gave birth to a baby boy but hardly ever took pain to look after the child. After a careful thought, Anu left the house and began to live in the hostel with Priya for the happiness of Rohit and Gita.

One day, Akshay with a disfigured face not easily recognizable and with one leg appeared suddenly with an old student Ranjan. Gita refused to reveal identity and told that the house-owner had sold it and she was unaware of Anu's whereabouts. Mother Arora also played the mischief and therefore, Akshay returned as a disillusioned man to an uncertain future. Ranjan wanted Akshay to undergo plastic surgery and go in for an artificial leg. Scenario changed and they faced a violent encounter with youngsters the drug-addicts, who also enjoyed indulging in unnatural sex. After the brutal struggle, the young men landed up in jail.

Ranjan's father offered a job to Akshay but Sheila, an arrogant woman and an old student of Akshay appeared unmanageable and so without revealing the identity he disappeared. Ranjan's father did not know the truth. Akshay met a minor accident when the car of Prashant hit. Prashant immediately carried him to the hospital. Akshay did not disclose identity and took shelter in amnesia. Prashant's wife Ruchir had doubts but was uncertain and failed to recognize father Akshay. As Akshay had no place to go, Prashant offered him the job of an accountant. An embezzlement case in the hospital embarrassed Prashant but somehow he was free from all allegations after enquiry report. Ruchir was responsible for the mischief for she doubted that husband Prashant had relations with a nurse Bhuvana. However, the incident of embezzlement hurt Prashant's prestige. He wished to leave the hospital and join his father in Mumbai.

Prashant shifted to Mumbai. Akshay underwent minor operation and regained his old handsome figure after plastic surgery and Jaipur leg. Ruchir still harboured suspicions about Akshay, whom she believed was her lost father but she did not want to tell Anu. However, in a certain party, Sheila appeared and the identity of Akshay again turned into a huge problem. Sequence of events of immense rapidity hold unique coherence is apparent despite certain irritants. Akshay, for obvious reasons ran away and vanished again. Prashant made an earnest and frenetic search. However, a look out notice worked favorably. Gita on reading the news was nervous for fears of the revelation of the dangerous game she had played. Rohit came to know

about Akshay and told mother of the truth. They after enquiries also came to know about the wicked role Gita played.

Priya's past was also quite disturbing. Much against her wishes, she married Rajat, who was already married and lived abroad of which she was uninformed. When she went to him, she, to her shock and surprise found Rajat's English wife Rose at home and immediately, in anger returned to India. Rose realized the deceitfulness and unfaithfulness of Rajat and so, left Rajat's home and abandoned daughter Tulip. She married another man John and lived happily whereas Rajat faced criticism and experienced the worst time of his life. However, old parents went to help and so, rescued him and he came back to India, asked for forgiveness but Priya knew he loved Rose and Tulip. However, she began to live with him but relations did not mature. Time rolled on smoothly. Tulip grew up and nursed gentle feelings for Harsh, her boy friend. It was a marriageable age. Priya thought and decided to invite Tulip mother and step father, perhaps in the hope of giving a huge surprise to everyone. Priya invited Rose and John on the marriage of Tulip. Harsh, her fiancé was hurt and was admitted in the hospital. Arora played the game and wanted his kidney for her husband. Rajat was a party to the sinister motif of trafficking in human organs. Harsh died and it was a tragedy for the young girl. Tulip came to know what her father Rajat did to her boy friend and fiancé, and therefore, she was distraught and annoyed, and threatened to disclose the vicious act of father Rajat. When Tulip in difficult moments was hysterical and upset, Rohit looked after her lovingly. Gita was again cynical and doubtful of his relations with young Tulip.

Tulip was furious, her outbursts proved disastrous for the reputation of Rajat, who later on, landed up in jail, and Priya was left alone to look after the affairs of the hospital. Rohit proximity to Tulip was fatal to the marital relations of Gita and Rohit. Gita left the house and sought mother's protection without caring for her son Tinu. On the other hand, Priya began to look after the affairs of the hospital. John and Rose came to know about the tragedy and were extremely shocked. Tulip's future worried everyone. Rose and John, Harsh's parents and Priya wanted to look after Tulip. Tulip knew their love and anxieties and therefore, she kept a reasonable equilibrium and decided to live with them alternately. On the other hand, Rohit tried to harm Tulip but was unsuccessful. Under compelling circumstances, Tulip stayed with Priya. When Rohit learnt about Tulip, he went to Amritsar but was disillusioned. On return, while in the train, police arrested unwary Rohit as a drug peddler.

Gita returned to Anu when mother Arora did not want an arrogant daughter to stay with her. Anu accepted her but Rohit was unenthusiastic and avoided her but for the sake of the child, he did not object even if she stayed at home but his love and sympathies for Tulip grew, and the feelings further strengthened relations. Anu understood that Gita lived a life of ennui and monotony and therefore, wanted solution. Gita on Anu's encouragement worked in the parlour and finally, landed up in modeling where lecherous men like Mansukh wanted to exploit her. Those were difficult times for Gita. Arrogance and ambitions did not allow her to listen to the wise counsel of Mita, her mentor.

In the meantime, Priya proceeded to Bangalore after she was disappointed with Rajat's reprehensible and fraudulent acts and sought shelter at the house of Pradhan's couple. Priya impressed Pradhans immensely, who offered her an authoritative status in business concern – fashion and designing. Awantika Pradhan was a very calculative woman, whom Krish, an orphan, who was reared up by Pradhans, assisted in business. Here, Priya met another handsome man Sudheer, a divorcee. Sudheer was a victim of Sheila, who demonstrated intimacy with him and caused heartburning and suspicions in the mind of Sneha, Sudheer's wife, who consequently, divorced him and went to Paris. After sometime, Sudheer revealed that Priya was his old classmate who played Juliet opposite to him long back. They went to Romany Fashions with the objective to learn the art of designing and fashion, made some purchases and the ensuing dialogue proved rewarding, for they wanted to expand business. Here, Sheila was the sole authority. In an unexpected turn, Sudheer and Priya met and were surprised, got time to talk pleasantly and naturally, old passions revived old memories of warmth and unexpressed love.

Incidentally, they met Prashant and Ruchir, and Priya came to know about Anu, who wanted some help from Priya for the release of son Rohit. Priya after knowing about the role of Ruchir, was angry and saddened, and expressed displeasure without mincing words. Immediately, she wanted to go to Anu in hour of crisis. She asked Krish to look after business and just on a simple note, Sudheer readily agreed to accompany her to Delhi, for he was in the look out of a showroom in some good locality nearby and Gurgaon and so, he got an opportunity to come near Priya, who to him, appeared an ideal woman of his choice.

Before, Priya knew about the problems Anu had confronted, Anu had handled the situation independently and got her son released. When Rohit and Anu reached home, they found Tinu unconscious because he had consumed some drink Gita had left on the table before she

went to the school to pick up Tinu. Gita's recklessness and flippant conduct was responsible they concluded. They took Tinu to the hospital and after sometime, he regained consciousness. Realizing the fall out of a grave blunder, Gita preferred to stay away as she found it difficult to confront Rohit and Anu. While Gita wished to run away, men of Bob appeared on the scene and at this moment, Gita recalled the murder and death of Mansukh, a dubious man and exploiter, who wanted to violate her. She ran away, wanted to commit suicide, and so, pushed herself before a speeding taxi. Fortunately, the driver applied the break and luckily, Priya and Sudheer came out of the taxi, and so many revelations made things understandable. Priya intervened to resolve the question of problematic relations. Rohit and Anu forgave her after they thought seriously of life, happiness and relations, and the virtue of conciliation.

Sudheer was able to strike a profitable bargain at Gurgaon, even as Priya agreed to become a business partner. The brief alliance between Sudheer and Priya culminated in marriage and here, Anu was instrumental in bringing them together, for she wanted Priya to settle down after a harrowing experience of earlier marriage, which was no marriage at all. Sudheer offered her the plot of Gurgaon as a gift. Before they could enjoy married life, a call from ex-wife Sneha from Paris created problems. Son Naveen and daughter Noopur had become a huge headache for Sneha, who requested Sudheer to help her. On Priya insistence, Sudheer agreed to go to Paris. They sorted out some serious problems at Paris. Sneha was repentant, asked for forgiveness, and wanted Sudheer to give her a chance. Priya again faced tough time. She did not want to become an obstruction, for Sneha appeared genuinely remorseful. Children also wanted their space in the married life of Sudheer and Sneha, the estranged parents. Priya was quite worried about future. It was again a moment of crisis and inevitable resolution she confronted.

One day, Sudheer, Naveen and Noopur went on a pleasure drive around the city. A minor argument between Naveen and Noopur became the cause of death of Noopur. Now, the situation again changed. They talked about relations and finally, Priya considered deep and thought that it would be disastrous for the relations if she, an outsider now, stayed as wife with Sudheer. She wanted Sneha, Sudheer and Naveen to live together. After a careful thought, Priya decided to move to Gurgaon and told Sudheer to send divorce papers. It was a heart-rending scenario. Priya again confronted another personal tragedy.

She was alone and yet kept the spirit intact and met Krish, who had left Exclusive, a fabulous showroom of stylish outfits after the death of Awantika as Kiran an overbearing woman

was difficult for him. In a surprising turn in circumstances, Priya and Krish discussed relations and suddenly, on Priya's request he decided to become a business partner. She did not meet Anu but straightway requested Krish that she would like to lighten up and so they went on a pleasure trip. They went to Kullu and Manali, famous hill stations as she was under pressure and feeling emotionally upset. They spent a week or so at the hill stations and naturally, came close to each other. In extremely, private and exclusive moments, Krish poured out his feelings and talked of his love for a woman, who was none other than Priya. Priya regretted that it was too late. Krish was deeply hurt but recouped the lost ground and kept up a brave face after burying deep his emotional attachments. He did not want to hurt Priya or to intrude upon her privacy in relations she wanted to protect.

Return to Delhi approached. Priya expressed the desire to go by a car or bus so that they could enjoy the natural beauty of hills of Himachal. Krish agreed. Unfortunately, on the way, a few anti-social elements tried to harass girls travelling in the bus. Some good young men intervened and in the ensuing violent brawl, Krish could not stay aloof and was hurt.

In the meantime, police intervened and the injured were taken to the hospital. Priya regretted her decision of undertaking a long journey by bus. However, Krish was cool and courageous and told not to blame herself. At Delhi, when they got down, a ruffian snatched the handbag of Priya and ran away. Krish chased him but it was a difficult chase. The petty bag-snatcher stumbled and fell, and in the meantime, a man caught hold of him and waited for the chasing man (Krish). He was none other than Akshay.

After usual expression of gratitude and exchange of words, there was calm and they hand over the petty bag-snatcher to the police. Priya was stunned when she looked at the man. It was a great exciting meeting. She was happy and after customary introduction, she clarified everything and revealed that Anu still waited for him and it was wrong to believe that she had married another man and sold the house.

They came back and the re-union was a lifetime experience for the family.

When Gita confronted Askshay she was shocked and looked beseechingly at Priya. Priya acted as a saviour again. However, the shock and the inner guilt were heavy on the heart of Gita, who collapsed and was unconscious. They rushed to hospital with the unconscious Gita. Mrs Arora arrived in the hospital when Anu informed. When Gita regained coconsciousness, she was visibly angry with her mother, who she thought was responsible for everything and had

instigated her to keep Akshay's appearance at the house a secret and the blatant lies they had told about Anu.

The angry outburst between the two raised doubts in the mind of Rohit, who wanted to know the truth as Mrs Arora in fury left the hospital to avenge the humiliation, for Gita's treachery was unbearable for her. After prolonged deliberations Priya, Anu and Akshay came to an understanding and they told Rohit the entire incident and Gita's unpardonable crime to hurt relations. Ultimately, they persuaded Rohit to forget and forgive.

Now, it was a moment of reconciliation and celebration. It was also a moment of renunciation and charity when Priya decided to bequeath the entire wealth and property at Amritsar to a state-run home for the destitute and thus, a total delinking of 'the self' and then, embarked upon a path of truth and righteousness. It was not only an act to purify oneself but was also an endeavour to uplift and dignify 'the self' and the spirit, 'that comes only after attaining the impossible. Peace and contentment radiated from her eyes –she had never experienced such a feeling of deep happiness before' 494 and so, she started a new journey to explore horizons of glory and fulfillment.

Nobody is perfect and a man lives with a few strengths and flaws innumerable but continues to live nearly a gratifying life even if inadequacy gives occasional pain. In Anu and Priya, one finds individuals, who cherish nobility in human life and value the growth and development of each one irrespective of shortcomings. They are conciliatory and warm in management of human affairs and bonds despite shocks of deception but are capable of sacrificing interests for the happiness of relations and friends, and love to cherish warmth and continuity in human ties. Even in sufferings, they live with hope and courage, and demonstrate the capacity to live independently. They are compassionate and understanding and feel life's objective fulfilled if they can make others happy despite the hurt-feelings they carry within without remorse. Life is worth it they know and so notwithstanding obstacles, they continue the journey and these noble characteristics look endearing.

They love and celebrate values of life and are conscious of Indian culture and heritage but are not averse to modern thought where old and outdated moral standards do not choke life. If family is important for them, it is in fact, a thought of happiness and well-being of society and humankind they nurse in mind. Perhaps, many women think alike she wishes to convey. Emotional weakness they do not exhibit, but the flaw chases them. Rose is honest but does not

like infidelity but values relations, for she cares for Tulip. If they try to put up a brave face of ideal women, Mrs Arora and Gita appear cunning, dangerous and impulsive. To attain ulterior motives, they do not mind hurting intimate relations. Even if they look impetuous, irritating, conceited, irascible and stupid they do not care.

To add excitement and variety to the story she expresses disquiet regarding increasing drug-addiction among youngsters - its main victims, the curse of homosexuality, police lethargy, embezzlement, conspiracies in love and passion, the trafficking in human organs and lethal flaws in law.

Sheila is dominating, careerist, ambitious but considers relations like a businessperson and can prove dangerous when evil-intents with sadistic undertones overcome and in viciousness, she creates a wedge between Sneha and Sudheer just for nothing. She hates middle-class mindset as if she is a perfect human being and thus, quite obviously, a few contradictions govern the psyche of characters. If a few men and women exploit others, they realize later on, appear penitent and thus, the author demonstrates that each one wields the ability to reform and improve. Selfishness is naked in Raman and Rajat whereas Ranjan is idealistic and altruistic. Interestingly, Mita, Ranjan's mother and Priya display marvellous charitable disposition in taxing times, very humane they are. If she concentrates on women, relations, little problems, she appears worried about the care and upkeep of adolescents, who if ignored can create problems and so, future generation needs compassion, understanding, care and love. Parents ought to be careful in what they do and say, and how do they act in private and public. Fortunately, characters in spite of the shortcomings in human nature are not violent. If some are guilty, they also express regrets and that keeps hopes in future alive.

In portrayal of characters and unfolding of incidents in relations to human nature particularly women, she takes us back to the writings of Meredith, George Eliot and Jane Austen, and nearer home to Anita Desai. In *The Vultures* and *Minor Gods*, T V Reddy delineation of women characters appeals as he unveils women's hearts sensitively. *Rainbows at Midnight*, *The Handsome Man* and *Not Their Lives* of this author speak of women, who assert authoritatively, dominate the world of men, who they encounter and work hard to create identity in contemporary times of changing moral codes. *The Strange Equations* reminds of Victorian tradition in complexities of narration and meticulous weaving of plots and subplots. She is simple in idiom and phrase and does not irritate. However, certain incidents not essential to the

thematic needs could have been eliminated and that would have made it more effective and compact. Nevertheless, an author's range of thoughts and perception of life have certain areas of anxiety and therefore, such aberrations become unavoidable. It invites a sympathetic man to give a fresh look to human relations so that life is lively and beautiful.

Bio Note

P C K Prem (p c katoch of garh-malkher, palampur, himachal, a former academician, civil servant and member psc hp, shimla) an author of more than fifty books, is a poet, novelist, short story writer and a critic in english and hindi from himachal, india.