
Contemporary Indian Realities in Prof. Vikas Sharma's Novel *Media Revolution 2030*

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Abstract:

Prof. Vikas Sharma is a leading novelist and poet who has solidified his position as a prominent figure in contemporary Indian English literature. While the world was grappling with the pandemic and facing widespread depression and uncertainty, Prof. Sharma used this time to refine his skills and nurture his creativity. He is the author of eleven English novels, including *Raah ke Patthar* (Hindi), *Love's Not Time's Fool* (Debut novel in English), *I.A.S. Today*, *498: Fears and Dreams*, *Medicine: Light in Twilight*, *Ashes and Fire*, *Hope Against Hope*, *SANA*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Ideas and Events*, *Media Revolution 2030*, *Love and Ego*. As an Indian author, Prof. Sharma deeply explores vibrant and pressing issues of contemporary India, such as love, passion, dowry, the realities of administration, the education system, complexities of family life, and aspirations and ambitions of youth. Prof. Sharma's tenth novel, *Media Revolution 2030* - a campus novel, is progressing along the same path. Set against a backdrop of real-life locations like Bulandshahr and Lucknow University, the novel explores the lives of fictional characters grappling with the socio-political and cultural complexities of post-independence India. Through the lives of protagonists Kantlyogi and Ujjawala, Prof. Sharma sheds light on corruption, favoritism, and the influence of politics within academic institutions and challenges the conventional ideals of meritocracy and ethics. The novel's narrative structure effectively combines fiction with authentic, factual detail and thus creates a "campus novel" that is both engaging and reflective of real-world academic settings. This paper explores how *Media Revolution 2030* serves not only as a piece of literary work but also as a critique of the current educational and administrative frameworks within Indian universities. By analyzing the novel's themes, characters, and settings, this paper highlights Prof. Sharma's ability to merge storytelling with social commentary and illustrates how literature can reveal the hidden realities of academic life.

Keywords: Campus novel, Contemporary realities, Corruption, Literature and Society, University System.

Introduction

Prof. Vikas Sharma is a prominent figure in today's literary world who is known for his impressive work as a writer, critic, researcher, and mentor. His journey in literature showcases his vast range and depth that have earned him respect for both the quantity and quality of his contributions. Prof. Sharma's novels go beyond simple storytelling and offer rich narratives that delve into the layers of modern Indian society. As an Indian author, Prof. Sharma deeply explores vibrant and pressing issues of contemporary India, such as love, passion, dowry, the realities of administration, the education system, complexities of family life, and aspirations and ambitions of youth. He approaches these themes with a strong sense of realism and creates stories that blend fictional elements with authentic and factual insights. The experiences he has lived, closely observed, or witnessed firsthand enrich his narratives and give them depth and relatability that stand out. Because of this, critics have noted that nearly all his novels have semi-autobiographical elements. For instance, the characters of *Sana* in his novel *Sana* and Dr. Awasthi in *Hope Against Hope* are often highlighted as examples.

By using well-crafted fictional characters, Prof. Sharma portrays a vivid reality that reflects the essence of present-day Indian society. His writing resonates deeply with young readers, who appears to be his primary audience. The tenth novel, *Media Revolution 2030*, is progressing along the same path. The novel presents a multi-layered narrative set in post-independence India, which depicts the socio-political changes, personal ambitions, and cultural conflicts experienced by individuals and families over decades. The story delves into the lives of Kantyogi and Ujjawala, particularly, and highlights their struggles to balance personal ambitions, familial responsibilities, and societal expectations. While the novel revolves around these fictional characters, it is rich with realistic elements that make the narrative feel grounded and authentic. Prof. Sharma has seamlessly blended fiction with realism and factual detail to create a vivid and relatable portrayal of life in India today.

The narrative begins in Bulandshahr where Prof. Sharma had spent 17 years of his teaching career at D.A.V. (P.G.) College. Beginning as an Assistant Professor at just 21, he later served as Associate Professor, Head of the Department and Principal at the same College in Bulandshahr, where he showcased remarkable leadership until 2018. His personal familiarity with this region brings an authentic touch to the story's setting.

The story unfolds in post-independence India, specifically in the fictional village of Gangapur in the Bulandshahr district of western Uttar Pradesh, where Shivakant lives a quiet, modest life, largely disconnected from the country's broader political and economic developments.

"He had the consolation of possessing a small piece of land of twenty bighas and a small mud house of two rooms in the village Gangapur, situated on the banks of

Ganga Canal in Bulandshahr(UP)” (Sharma 3).

In the novel, Prof. Sharma not only uses Bulandshahr as a realistic element but also incorporates fine details about the town and makes it highly relatable for readers. For instance, Chapter 4 features Bulandshahr's Panini Sugar Mill. The plot begins with Gajendra trying to harass Madhavi, but she defends herself and leaves him humiliated and injured. This incident leads Gajendra's father to expel him out of the house. With the help of his friend Shane, Gajendra finds work as a peon in the Panini Sugar Mill of Bulandshahr and adapts to a modest lifestyle.

“Shane got him appointed as a peon in the Panini Sugar Mill of Bulandshahr” (Sharma 23).

In Chapter 5, there's another realistic reference to Ansari Road in Bulandshahr. When Ujjwala plans to marry Kantiyogi, she seeks her father, Lavneesh's approval, who promises to come to India to finalize the marriage. On his immediate arrival to New Delhi, Lavneesh visits Kantiyogi's family in Bulandshahr to gain their approval, and on his way, he buys sweets and fruits from the real-life Ansari Road in Bulandshahr.

“From Ansari Road, Bulandshahr, he bought four packets of sweets and got some fruits packed in a large basket” (Sharma 33).

After receiving approval from both families, Ujjwala and Kantiyogi's marriage takes place in Gangapur. Kantiyogi's parents want a simple wedding in the village, and respecting their wishes, Lavneesh plans the ceremony at Mary Hotel and Bar, which is confirmed to be a real location in Bulandshahr.

“Lavneesh met the manager of Mary Hotel and Bar to plan snacks, dinner, flower decoration, a big tent, and, of course, sweets in Gangapur” (Sharma 38).

As everyone was traveling to Gangapur for the wedding, Nivedita, Ujjwala's sister-in-law, spotted a canal flowing in Bulandshahr District and later insisted on enjoying swimming there.

“On the way to Gangapur, Nivedita had seen the canal flowing through district Bulandshahr, and now she insisted on enjoying swimming there” (Sharma 41).

This scenic spot, which really exists in Bulandshahr District, highlights the novelist's close connection to the area and attention to small, authentic details that draw readers deeper into the story.

After the wedding, Ujjwala's brother and sister-in-law, Jagat Karamveer and Nivedita, take a short trip to Agra, where they visit the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, and stays at the Govardhan Hotel. Nivedita is captivated by the romantic symbolism of the Taj Mahal and asks Jagat Karamveer what he might leave behind in her memory. However, their visit to Fatehpur Sikri brings an unsettling feeling due to the mausoleum's dark atmosphere. Despite this, the couple enjoys their stay and blends cultural sightseeing with moments of romance.

As Kantiyogi immerses himself in university life, he flourishes in an

intellectually stimulating environment. He actively participates in seminars and discussions and often showcases his talents in academic forums. His keen intellect and charisma earned him a place in the prestigious Lucknow Billiards Club and enhanced his social standing on campus. One event that particularly stands out is Kantyogi's presentation on T.S. Eliot and Matthew Arnold, which draws significant attention. Among those impressed is Ujjawala, a fellow student who is captivated by Kantyogi's charm and intellect. Their mutual interest in literature and academic pursuits sets the stage for an evolving connection between them.

“Kantyogi participated in the seminars of the English Department of Lucknow University. Here, smart and pretty Ujjawala (19) felt attracted to him when he presented his paper entitled Moral Issues in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot” (Sharma 13).

The university setting, as depicted by Prof. Sharma, resonates with a realistic portrayal of student life and relationships. It mirrors the dynamics often seen in contemporary academics.

Environments. Just as students today find themselves drawn to one another's intellectual and personal qualities, Kantyogi and Ujjawala's bond reflects a timeless attraction. This authentic portrayal underscores the university's vibrant environment and blends historical authenticity with relatable, modern themes.

Beyond simply depicting the vibrant, modern atmosphere of university life, the novelist pays close attention to minute details of the university setting and gives readers a deeply realistic and immersive experience. One such detail is the reference to Lucknow University's iconic Tagore Library, a well-known resource where students diligently prepare their research papers for presentations. Additionally, there is mention of the Narendra Dev Hostel, a boys' hostel named after Acharya Narendra Dev, which adds an authentic layer to the narrative by highlighting real campus landmarks.

The novel also references Banaras Hindu University and Allahabad University, both well-regarded institutions that serve as academic and seminar hubs. This aligns with the novelist's interests, as Prof. Sharma himself has a deep passion for academia. Currently, he holds the esteemed title of former Head of the Department and Professor of English at Chaudhary Charan Singh University in Meerut. Prior to this, he served as Assistant Professor and Principal at D.A.V. (P.G.) College in Bulandshahr. With an impressive record of over 60 published research papers and the successful mentorship of 26 Ph.D. scholars, Prof. Sharma's commitment to academic excellence is evident. He has also graced the chair of Joint Secretary and later President within MUTA (Meerut University Teachers' Association). His role as the General Secretary of CCS University- College English Teachers' Association (CETA) and presently as the General Secretary of the Association for English Studies of India (AESI) has further allowed him to gain keen

insights into the inner workings and unique culture of university life. All these elements make the novel a testament to Prof. Sharma's dedication to academia. His experiences and observations in the university capture not only the realistic environment of the campus but also authentic scenarios and social dynamics. This attention to detail and authentic portrayal of university life, shaped by Prof. Sharma's personal experiences, renders the novel a compelling example of a "campus novel," where academic culture, relationships, and campus politics come vividly to life.

One instance illustrating this dynamic is when Kantyogi graduates with an M.A. in English and secures the top position, while Ujjawala also passes with a first division at 60%. At this time, Prof. A.S. Srivastava is the second most senior Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Humanities at Lucknow University, taking on additional responsibilities after four senior colleagues retired. Prof. D.D. Sharma, who is a senior to Prof. Srivastava, has meanwhile withdrawn from departmental affairs and has chosen a more detached role. Prof. Srivastava supports Kantyogi's academic goals and encourages him to apply for a lectureship, as four positions are open. He advises him to draft a Ph.D. proposal on the novels of Shashi Deshpande and offers to be his supervisor.

"Submit the application in the department as there are four vacancies. But then prepare a synopsis for my Ph.D. on the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The R.D.C. may meet next month."(Sharma 24).

Later, when the selected candidate for the fourth lecturer position does not join, the university registrar re-advertises the vacancy. This time, Ujjawala decides to apply, though she expects opposition from Prof. Srivastava. She shares her concerns with her mother, Ms. Alpa, who reaches out to her friend, Mrs. Sharma, for help. Mrs. Sharma assures her support and the next day, her husband, Prof. D.D. Sharma, signals to Prof. Srivastava not to make any promises about the position and subtly showing his support for Ujjawala's candidacy.

"Please don't promise anybody for this new post in the department. Actually, I'm interested in being a student at this very university. Quite a deserving case" (Sharma 31).

During the interview, Prof. Sharma maintains his decision-making authority, unlike previous times when he deferred to Prof. Srivastava. The Vice-Chancellor observed Prof. Sharma's interest in Ujjawala, which ultimately led to her successful appointment. Interestingly, Prof.

In the novel, A.S. Srivastava turns out to represent the real Prof. A.K. Srivastava from Lucknow University in the 1980s, as well as Prof. D.D. Sharma reflects a real person from that era. This scenario underscores how Professors favor their students; just as Prof. Srivastava supports Kantyogi, Prof. D. D. Sharma endorses Ujjawala and recommends her for the post. It clearly reveals that such

appointments rely heavily on recommendations rather than merit alone. The departmental politics of the 1980s still persist today—appointments are still largely based on recommendations, just as they were back then.

Since this instance focuses on university recruitment, the novel fits within the genre of campus novels- a type of story set primarily in a college or university environment, where the plot, time, and characters are closely connected to academic life. The main characters are usually Professors, students, administrators, and other faculty members, all of whom contribute to the unique dynamics of the academic setting. Numerous other realistic situations within the story further establish it as a campus novel.

Another instance occurs in chapter 8 when Shyam Mohan is caught cheating by Dr. Ujjawala in his “Principles of Literary Criticism” paper. Despite his apologies and pleas for leniency, she confiscates his answer sheet and reports him to the university's Registrar. This sparks a backlash. Shyam, a resident of Acharya Narendra Dev Hostel, rallies nearly twenty students to protest outside her residence, chants slogans, and creates chaos. The protesters vandalized the printing press, set furniture and papers on fire, and forced Dr. Ujjawala and her husband, Dr. Kantyogi, to call the police.

When questioned by the sub-inspector, Shyam deflects blame, accuses Dr. Ujjawala of pressuring him to gather readers for her newspaper, "The Sun-Rays," and claims that her accusation of cheating is retaliation for his refusal. Other students allege corruption within the university and accuse faculty of prioritizing business over academics and pointing out the influence of political connections in appointments and promotions. They argue that Dr. Ujjawala herself was appointed through favoritism, with Prof. D.D. Sharma's backing rather than on merit. The sub-inspector advises the students to submit a written complaint, and an investigation begins. It uncovers that Dr. Ujjawala and Dr. Kantyogi are involved in a steel business, while “The Sun-Rays” is a popular newspaper in Lucknow. However, it also confirms that Shyam was indeed caught cheating and had no grounds to disrupt the peace. Following this, the university's Vice Chancellor ordered disciplinary action against Shyam and suspended him from exams for two years. Meanwhile, a committee investigates Dr. Ujjawala and Dr. Kantyogi's business ventures. The university questions their dual roles in academia and business and threatens legal action. Alpa, Ujjawala's mother, attempts to intervene but fails. Ultimately, the Vice Chancellor offers a compromise and demands Dr. Ujjawala resign. Reluctantly, she agrees, thus ending her position at the university.

This scenario reveals the pervasive influence of politics, corruption, and favoritism in academic institutions. The incident also exposes the vulnerability of educators, who, despite authority, can be targeted by students. Thus, the novel

critiques the compromised values in academia, where external pressures, personal vendettas, and accusations can override merit. Additionally, with this incident, readers gain insight into a campus environment filled with conflict and moral complexity.

In addition to being a distinguished novelist, critic, researcher, mentor, and former president of MUTA—an experience that has given him deep insight into the inner workings of universities and their challenges—he is renowned for his bold, fearless, and straightforward nature. His writing carries a rare clarity and honesty that few others match. In the novel, he exposes the corrupt practices that often pervade university environments and sheds light on issues that are frequently hidden from public view.

Through the fictional character of Dr. Ujjawala, Prof. Sharma emphasizes that the Vice Chancellor is crucial to maintaining order in the university. If corrupt, they can bring about administrative chaos. Cases of corruption against the Vice Chancellors of Agra, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, and Chaudhary Charan Singh University (Meerut) are noted, with some even terminated or caught accepting bribes. The Vice Chancellors of universities in Himachal Pradesh, Ajmer, and Gwalior are similarly under investigation.

“Even the Vice Chancellor of M.D. University, Ajmer, Dr. R.P. Singh was caught red-handed in a bribery case; Dr. Ramesh Chandra and Professor S.P. Ojha are still facing trial in the courts. Even the former lady Vice Chancellor of Jiwaji University Gwalior is under investigation due to corruption charges” (Sharma 96).

Thus, the instance highlights the prevalence of corruption at the highest levels of university administration, which casts a shadow over the entire academic system.

In conclusion, Prof. Vikas Sharma's novel, *Media Revolution 2030*, serves as a compelling exploration of contemporary Indian society, particularly the academic landscape and its complexities. Through his extensive experience in the literary world and as a former president of MUTA, Prof. Sharma brings authenticity and depth to his portrayal of university life, its challenges, and the ethical dilemmas within it. His vivid narrative delves into the personal and professional struggles of his characters while drawing on realistic elements and settings, such as Bulandshahr and Lucknow University, to create a story that resonates with readers.

Prof. Sharma addresses themes of corruption, favouritism, challenges the integrity of these institutions and exposes the often-hidden realities behind university walls. His emphasis on realistic, well-researched settings and social dynamics creates an engaging and relatable depiction of contemporary university life and makes his novel a strong example of a "campus novel". Thus, *Media Revolution 2030* underscores the need for transparency, integrity, and accountability within institutions and highlights how literature can reflect and influence real-world

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