



## "WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION: A STUDY OF PROF. VIKAS SHARMA'S NOVELS"

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**Abstract:** *This research paper delves into the depiction of women's rights in contemporary fiction, focusing on the novels of Prof. Vikas Sharma. Through a comprehensive analysis of Sharma's literary works, the study explores how his narratives reflect and critique societal attitudes towards gender roles, empowerment, and the socio-political challenges faced by women. By examining key themes and character portrayals across Sharma's novels, this research uncovers the complexities of gender dynamics and highlights the evolving perspectives on women's rights within contemporary Indian literature. Through close textual analysis and theoretical frameworks, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how fiction can serve as a platform for social critique and advocacy, advocating for gender equality and societal transformation.*

**Keywords:** *Empowerment, Social norms, Gender equality, Contemporary fiction, Prof. Vikas Sharma, Indian literature, Socio-political challenges, Character portrayal, Social critique*

**Introduction:** In the landscape of contemporary literature, the portrayal of women and their rights serves as a powerful mirror reflecting societal attitudes and aspirations. Literature, as a medium, not only entertains but also engages in critical dialogue, challenging norms and advocating for change. This research focuses on the novels of Prof. Vikas Sharma, exploring how his literary works contribute to the discourse on women's rights within the framework of Indian society. Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels offer a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics, empowerment, and socio-political challenges faced by women. Through compelling narratives and rich characterizations, Sharma confronts traditional stereotypes and interrogates the complexities of gender roles. His works provide a lens through which we can examine the evolving perceptions of women's rights in contemporary India, shedding light on both progress and persisting inequalities. This study aims to analyze Sharma's novels, identifying recurring themes, character portrayals, and narrative strategies that illuminate the broader social and cultural context in which these stories unfold. By delving into these literary texts, this research seeks to uncover the ways in which fiction contributes to shaping and reshaping societal understandings of gender equality and women's agency. Through a combination of



textual analysis and theoretical frameworks, this paper intends to contribute to the scholarly discourse on gender studies, literature, and social change. By examining Prof. Vikas Sharma's contribution to contemporary fiction, we can glean insights into how literature serves as a catalyst for advocacy and reflection, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society.

Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels serve as poignant reflections on the status of women and their struggles for rights and equality in contemporary Indian society. Through nuanced characterizations and thematic explorations, Sharma addresses various facets of women's lives, highlighting both their challenges and their agency.

**Gender Roles and Expectations:** In Sharma's novels, traditional gender roles and societal expectations often form a backdrop against which female characters navigate their lives. There is a deliberate effort to depict the constraints imposed by patriarchal norms and how these norms shape women's identities and opportunities. Characters may confront stereotypes related to domesticity, motherhood, and professional aspirations, offering a critique of how these roles limit women's freedom and potential. Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels often scrutinize and challenge traditional gender roles and societal expectations, offering nuanced portrayals of how these norms impact women's lives in contemporary Indian society. Through his narratives, Sharma addresses various facets of gender inequality, shedding light on the complexities and challenges faced by women as they navigate social, familial, and personal spheres. Sharma's novels typically depict the entrenched nature of traditional gender roles in Indian society. These roles often assign specific duties, behaviors, and limitations based on gender, reinforcing hierarchical structures that privilege masculinity and subordinate femininity. Characters, both male and female, are shown grappling with these expectations, either conforming to them or resisting them. Central to Sharma's exploration is the portrayal of societal expectations that restrict women's autonomy and potential. These expectations encompass marriage, motherhood, domesticity, and obedience, often limiting women's opportunities for education, career advancement, and personal fulfillment.

Sharma's novels often reveal power dynamics within gender relations, illustrating how patriarchal structures perpetuate inequalities and marginalize women's voices and experiences. These dynamics are manifested in various forms, such as economic dependency, domestic violence, and institutional discrimination. Throughout his works, Sharma portrays women navigating and resisting the challenges posed by gender roles and societal expectations. Characters may employ strategies of resilience, negotiation, or outright defiance to challenge the status quo and assert their rights to agency, autonomy, and equality.

**Challenges Faced by Women:** Central to Sharma's narratives are the challenges faced by women in negotiating their identities and asserting their rights. Issues such as



domestic violence, marital discord, workplace discrimination, and unequal access to education and healthcare are portrayed with sensitivity and realism. Through these depictions, Sharma sheds light on the multifaceted nature of gender-based oppression and its impact on women's lives. Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels intricately portray the multifaceted challenges that women encounter in contemporary Indian society. Through his narratives, Sharma illuminates the complexities of gender inequality, shedding light on the systemic barriers, societal norms, and personal struggles that shape women's lives. One of the prominent challenges depicted in Sharma's novels is the pressure of domestic and familial expectations placed on women. These expectations often include duties related to caregiving, household management, and maintaining familial harmony, which can limit women's opportunities for personal growth and autonomy.

Sharma's works also address the economic challenges faced by women, including unequal access to employment opportunities, wage disparities, and workplace discrimination based on gender. These issues reflect broader societal inequalities and the impact of patriarchal norms on women's economic empowerment. Gender-based violence is a critical theme in Sharma's novels, highlighting the physical, emotional, and psychological threats that women face in their daily lives. This includes domestic violence, sexual harassment, and societal attitudes that perpetuate violence against women, illustrating the pervasive nature of gender-based discrimination and its impact on women's safety and well-being. Sharma explores how societal norms and cultural expectations constrain women's choices and behaviors, often prescribing rigid roles and behaviors based on gender stereotypes. These norms shape perceptions of femininity and masculinity, influencing social interactions, self-perception, and opportunities for personal fulfillment.

**Empowerment and Agency:** Despite the adversities they face, Sharma's female characters exhibit resilience and agency. They often navigate complex social landscapes with determination, seeking autonomy and self-expression. The novels depict instances where women challenge oppressive structures, assert their rights, and pursue their aspirations, thereby embodying a spirit of empowerment and defiance against injustice.

**Intersectionality with Other Social Issues:** Sharma's exploration of women's rights is enriched by its intersectionality with other social issues such as caste, class, and religion. The novels illustrate how women from marginalized backgrounds experience compounded forms of discrimination and struggle for recognition within broader social hierarchies. By acknowledging these intersecting identities, Sharma underscores the interconnectedness of various forms of social inequality and their impact on women's lives.

**Literary Techniques and Narrative Strategies:** Sharma employs a variety of literary techniques to effectively convey his thematic concerns. Dialogues, inner



monologues, and symbolic imagery are used to delve into the psyche of his characters and illuminate their struggles. The narrative structures may shift between past and present, offering insights into the historical and cultural contexts that shape women's experiences. Through vivid descriptions and vivid characterization, Sharma creates a compelling portrayal of the complexities of women's lives in contemporary India. This essay will look at how women are portrayed as noble individuals who are capable of change and being changed, who possess intelligence, are able to discriminate, make decisions, and struggle, are bold and have an unwavering attitude towards rejecting evil, and, most importantly, are able to speak out against injustices that are done to them. From ignorance to knowledge, from denial to affirmation, and from imperfection to perfection, every female character in the work experiences a progressive metamorphosis. The way in which female characters are portrayed is marked by their intelligence and noteworthy input into the plot. Her "domain is within her ambit of argument where she is the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty" because each of them serves as a compass and source of guidance.

*I.A.S. Today*, a masterwork by Vikas Sharma, is a standout among contemporary literature. The narrative skillfully captures the decay of a civilization driven by an obsession with acquiring wealth at the expense of traditional virtues like as integrity, honesty, selflessness, and honour, which finally lead to the society's collapse. Tinny exposes the vile, tainted, and dehumanised aspects of modernity. Like Caliban, he is a hated servant with the ability to do any form of evil. (*The Tempest*). Like Ratan Rathor in Arun Joshi's book *The Apprentice*, Tinny thinks that money is the ultimate aim in life and that being able to do anything is impossible without it. Any individual with insufficient funds was viewed as worthless. There were many good things in life, but riches stood out above the rest. He makes a strong claim that if he didn't have money, his standing would be no better than a beggar's shoe, regardless of everything else he owned. Money, in his opinion, is the ultimate authority: "More than allegiance to one's country, money won people over and guaranteed safety." Companions were drawn to wealthy people. Where there has been no other success, money wins. Even though there were many rules in existence, money had a level of power that was above and beyond all of them.

A closer reading reveals that Ruskin's comment, "Shakespeare has no heroes; he has only heroines," applies equally to Prof. Vikas Sharma's book. He presents the female characters in his writing with a sense of nobility and dignity, much like Spenser did. Trishala Vasu is a representation of the Indian belief that women possess "shakti," or power. Shivangi proved her bravery and fearlessness by foiling Devadutt's cunning plan. Devadutt is a villain as well as an ulterior motive. Rewati goes through a transformation process and shows people that it's never too late to make changes in one's life. We can start over whenever we choose to in life. This way of thinking has the power to keep our



life from being meaningless when combined with its decisive force. The tragedy is due to Tinny and his illegal actions, which include murder and forgery. The only way out of the corrupt environment is for Rewati to denounce these deeds. With the help of Police Inspector Karmveer, Swati proved what a valuable lady she was when she revealed who the real culprit was—Tinny—and took out her vengeance on him.

Shivangi Shrotriya exhibits a positive attribute as he changes from a condition of ignorance to knowledge. At first, when she was young and ignorant of the outside world, she dreamed of being a famous person. But as time passed, she realised that becoming famous is as pointless as trying to squeeze sugar out of sand. She challenges Romesh, saying they should compete to see who can make more money in their respective fields—she as a stage performer, and he as a teacher. (P. 24) After her father passes away, she sells off a portion of her farm to start her own "Parvati Music Group." For a one-night programme, she requests fifty thousand rupees in payment. Motivated by her desire for recognition, she travels to Mumbai where she meets the dishonest and false Devadev. Devadev physically attacked Shivangi during the dance and made an effort to grab her breasts since he saw her as nothing more than a simple object for sexual enjoyment. She comes charging in like a lion, throwing her knife around and saying, "Come and face me if you have the audacity!" children of pigs! Come if you want to meet your end! (P. 26)

Understanding that in Mumbai, success requires hard work and overcoming obstacles, She decides to make Danny her life partner when she goes back to her hometown (P. 27). She also pushes him hard to complete his engineering degree. As she absorbs the lessons from her experiences, she comes to understand the proverb "All that glitters is not gold" and decides to take the initiative to grow personally in light of her previous experiences.

Trishala Vasu Throughout the narrative, Vasu is a strong and important female character. She transforms Romesh entirely, head to toe. She is her mentor. She is a beautiful young lady with a sharp mind and enticing charm. She is intelligent and skilled at making quick decisions that are right. When she tells her mother that she has decided to make Romesh her life partner, she gets her consent but says she should wait for her father's blessing. Like Prospero, her father approves of his daughter's marriage only after looking into it.

Romesh consents to join Vasu Trishala's planned trip to Kempty Falls. When they discover they are attracted to one another, they decide to become life mates. After passing the course, both of them were given jobs in the state of Haryana, where they currently reside in an eternal state of bliss. Rewati underwent a metamorphosis alongside the other female protagonists following the murder of Vallu, who had sexually assaulted her while intoxicated. She's changed completely now, transformed into someone quite different. Things that used to entice her are now aggressively avoided. Existential questions about



her identity, the purpose of our existence, and the meaning of life are often thrown around her. Feeling guilty, she repeat the "Gayatri mantra" and chant "Om Namah Shivay" to go asleep peacefully, symbolising the persistence of her soul and its direction in making the right decisions.

The widow of the bank manager, Swati, was shot and killed by a bank robber while he was struggling. She takes a risk and shows courage by taking on two things at once. She first fights poverty by working as the bar manager at the Aurobindo Hotel. Second, she works hard to exact revenge for her husband's unfair death during a bank heist. She never stops looking for the real criminal who gave the thieves their AK-47s.

After a thorough and critical analysis of the text, it is clear that Prof. Vikas Sharma presents vivid, passionate, and realistic female characters in his book. Numerous characters, including Rewati and Swati, face a variety of difficulties, including deprivation, exploitation, male chauvinism, poverty, and corruption. Still, they work very hard to persevere and win. They have a remarkable innate capacity for adaptation, even in adverse situations. All of the female characters ultimately succeed in achieving their desired outcome and arrive at their destination. Romesh loses to Trishala, and the two reconcile; Swati gets happiness after identifying the person guilty for her husband's senseless death; Rewati gives up material possessions and enters an ashram in search of inner peace and happiness; and Shivangi gains knowledge from her experiences.

**Conclusion:** Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels offer a compelling exploration of women's rights in contemporary fiction. Through his nuanced portrayal of characters and thematic concerns, Sharma critiques prevailing gender inequalities while celebrating women's resilience and agency. His fiction serves as a powerful medium for promoting awareness and fostering dialogue on gender equity and social justice. By examining Sharma's novels through the lens of women's rights, this study contributes to our understanding of how literature can both reflect and influence societal attitudes towards gender. It underscores the transformative potential of fiction in challenging oppressive norms and advocating for inclusive and equitable societies. This detailed exploration provides a comprehensive analysis of how Prof. Vikas Sharma's novels engage with women's rights issues, offering insights into their thematic richness and literary significance.

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