

The Death of the Author—or Just a Rebirth? A Talk with Prof. Vikas Sharma on the Soul of Creativity in the Age of AI

The age-old question resurfaced with fresh urgency in a time when artificial intelligence is not only a tool but also an emerging co-creator in artistic and intellectual activities. AI, with its ability to generate text and even plotlines, is challenging the traditional understanding of authorship. What defines authorship in this context? Does imagination transcend language mechanics, or is the writer only a vehicle of linguistic expression? It has been a matter of great fuss in the current scenario, and to sort it out, Dr Dharmendra Kumar Singh (DKS), an academican from MHPG College Moradabad affiliated with Guru Jambheshwar University Moradabad, U.P. the Republic of Bharat, interacts with eminent novelist and academic Professor Vikas Sharma (PVS) in a fascinating discussion to negotiate the changing terrain of literature in an age progressively controlled by algorithms. Their conversation explores the core of narrative when human imagination meets machine intelligence at the nexus of history and technology.



Renowned for his sophisticated investigations of modern narrative, Prof. Sharma offers his rich literary insights to the discussion, challenging whether the so-called 'death of the author'—as once proposed by Roland Barthes—might indicate a rebirth, an expansion of creative limits rather than their dissolution. Does human authorship challenge or enhance as AI-generated text permeates literary venues? Do machines copy patterns free of experience, or can they capture the soul of storytelling? Examining these pressing concerns, Dr. Singh and Prof. Sharma embark on a philosophical meditation on the nature of creativity in a changing world rather than merely investigating AI's place in literature. Their conversation is a testament to the intellectual stimulation that comes from exploring the conflicts, opportunities, and futures of narrative at a time when the lines separating humans from artificial intelligence are blurring. To put it succinctly, their talk kicks off in a compelling manner:

DKS: As a novelist and scholar, how do you perceive the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and literature? Do you see AI as a creative collaborator or a disruptive force in the literary world?

PVS: I take a middle ground when it comes to using AI. While AI is useful in science and literature, it undermines individual creativity. Literature is a flow of emotions, and AI-generated writing feels mechanical and lifeless. I do not need help from AI, but literature is a reflection of the heart. It should come from within. In the literary world, AI is more of a nuisance than a help.

DKS: With AI's growing role in storytelling, from predictive text to AI-generated novels, how do you think it reshapes human authorship and originality in literature?

PVS: The feel of originality can never be surpassed by AI-generated text. Expressiveness in human beings is at another level than any other life form. Expressiveness is one of the characteristics of human beings. Every person around us has a different approach to life, and their expressiveness to it differs accordingly. AI-generated literature can never mimic that expressiveness. That expressiveness is the tool by which a writer connects with his audience. Yes, AI-generated literature can be praised, but it can never provide the originality we have seen in the literature of greats.

DKS: Your novels often explore deeply human themes. In an age where AI-generated literature is gaining traction, do you think technology can ever truly capture the soul of storytelling?

PVS: Storytelling is more than just putting words together. It comes from feelings, experiences, and personal perspectives. For instance, my novels reflect my vast experience over the years. AI can help the statements mould into the structure of stories, but it does not have real-life experiences. AI can never generate the experiences that set the tone of the plot. A writer pours his soul into his work. Emotions, struggles, and personal journeys make a story meaningful. While AI may help with writing, it can never replace the original work of literature. For me, storytelling is an art, and art needs a soul. AI can only produce statements, not a story.

DKS: Many traditional litterateurs view AI as a tool, while others see it as a threat. How do you personally perceive AI's role in contemporary fiction writing?

PVS: Again, I cannot favor the role of AI in fiction writing. However, I do not see it as a threat because, as I have already mentioned, it can never challenge the originality of a text. However, if writers become too lazy and stop putting effort into their work, AI will not replace human-created fictional literature. Writers today need to understand that they should not write just for the sake of writing but to create a real-world within the pages of their stories. The risk here is that AI could potentially lead to a decline in the quality and authenticity of literature, as it may encourage writers to rely on technology rather than their own creativity and hard work.

DKS: Writing has long been an intensely personal act. With AI assisting in drafting, editing, and even ideation, do you think the intimacy between writer and text is at risk?

PVS: A writer should struggle with words, shape ideas, and refine his voice. It is this process that makes writing meaningful. When AI does tasks like drafting and ideation, it reduces the writer's direct connection with his work. The long journey of a writer embellishing his work by editing, rewriting, and proofreading is almost reduced to a matter of days since AI has taken over

these important aspects of writing. How can any author who has not given any time to his work feel connected with it? So yes, this development has risked intimacy between the writer and the text.

DKS: In your opinion, does AI-enhanced literature democratize storytelling or dilute its authenticity?

PVS: While AI can open doors for those who struggle with writing, it also dilutes the authenticity that makes literature an art. What is the importance of giving everyone the chance to write regarding the cost of quality? Writing is not something that cannot be developed over time. If a person is adamant enough, he can refine his writing. Why should anyone opt for a lifeless portrayal of his thoughts when he can develop an authentic style with hard work? If a person is not ready to put effort into writing, he should not write at all, as it is pretty clear he is doing it on a passing whim. Moreover, for those who are serious about it, why would they rely on such petty tricks?

DKS: Historically, literature has been a mirror to society. If AI starts writing novels en masse, do you think these works will reflect or mimic human emotions?

PVS: An accurate depiction of society can only be given by those who are a part of it, not by a machine that only produces results by taking references from the already available works. No matter how advanced, a machine can never mimic human emotions. I cannot predict the future, but I do not see anyone recreating human neurotic actions artificially anytime. Furthermore, if we go by it, the texts AI creates will always be mechanical.

DKS: Can AI co-author a novel with a human in a way that adds value rather than simply expediting the process? Would you consider such a collaboration?

PVS: AI can assist in writing but cannot truly add value beyond speeding up the process. What value can it add besides that? It can never provide experiences with different perspectives. The other perspectives it may provide are a copy of the literature it has access to. It may work as a proofreader and help in formatting, but co-authoring a novel is not something it can do.

DKS: Your novels are known for their intricate character development. How does AI-generated fiction fare when crafting layered, psychologically complex characters?

PVS: There is a character in my novel, Sana. Silky is her name, and she goes through a lot before finding her own path. Through her long journey in this world that tests one at every front, her character changes significantly, and ultimately, she transforms into a traditional woman. Through this example, I want to clarify that character development needs a very intimate understanding of human thinking and emotions. Such complex characters warrant a depiction that goes beyond their physical looks. For me, fiction created by AI can never portray such characters the way they are meant to.

DKS: Do you believe AI can ever truly surprise us with storytelling, or will it always be limited by the data it has been trained on?

PVS: Well, at one time, AI was also a dream. Who knows what the future is going to uncover? However, human experiences should not be tarnished by making machines depict them. No matter how much AI develops, a story is a story when it comes from the man himself.

DKS: Many writers claim that literature is about struggle—whether the struggle of the characters or the struggle of the writer in shaping them. Can AI ever understand or replicate this struggle?

PVS: No. Just no. How will it replicate the pain of a person who commutes tens of kilometres daily to earn a living? How will it replicate the sweat of a laborer who works from dawn to sunset? How will it replicate the fear of a student who has worked his whole life for a single exam? A human can depict them because he has felt such things more than once. For AI, it is next to impossible.

DKS: If you had access to an AI tool that could instantly generate multiple versions of a plot twist, would you use it, or would it diminish your creative agency?

PVS: I have never used AI in my career as a writer. It may be hard to believe, but I still write my novels with pen and paper first. Typing comes later. So, you can understand how much I rely on technology. My stories are not formed in a day or two. When I sit to write, the whole story is developed in my mind. So, thinking of plot twists at a later stage is out of the question. Moreover, it is not only about me. Every writer should approach writing similarly. So, AI is a waste of the creative prowess a man possesses.

DKS: What are your thoughts on AI writing poetry? Do you believe true poetic sensibility can emerge from algorithmic processing?

PVS: Well, for once, I can understand AI writing prose. But poetry? It can only be termed as a joke. Poetry is the song of life. It comes in a similar way to the breath of a person. Poetry is the most natural phenomenon besides painting that ever came to man. It is the purest form of art. Logic and poetry seldom look eye to eye. Being a poet, I can never believe that the mechanical functioning of AI can produce poetry.

DKS: The literary world has traditionally been wary of technology. From printing presses to typewriters, each innovation faced resistance. Is AI just the next phase in this historical progression, or is it fundamentally different?

PVS: The previous innovations were more about how a person wrote the language physically. AI is an entirely different phenomenon. Instead of focusing more on writing the language, it impacts the psyche behind the writing. It hinders the thought process of a writer as it also possesses the ability to develop the primary thoughts into something bigger. It creates a void of humanistic tendencies in literature written only for humans.

DKS: In the traditional sense, writing is often an act of catharsis. Can AI ever write an emotionally cathartic novel for the writer and reader?

PVS: Catharsis comes from shared experiences. It comes from the taste of the actual emotion displayed in the literature. Emotions in a written text emerge from the expressions used in the narration and the dialogues. Their tone, their structure, their relation with the dialect, etc, are the factors that facilitate the emergence of emotions. Moreover, as I mentioned, a machine can never have such experiences or emotions. I think it is not possible to produce cathartic novels with the help of AI.

DKS: What is your view on AI-driven literary criticism? Can algorithms meaningfully analyze literature, or is the human touch irreplaceable in literary interpretation?

PVS: Literary criticism is about understanding, interpreting, and evaluating a work of literature that is not limited to study the words that form it. Historical contexts, themes, emotions, and what the writer intended while writing the work are the elements that need to be considered to study a work of literature accurately. Moreover, even if only the text is analyzed for criticism, the hidden meaning behind the words still holds importance, and its analysis depends on the expressions the structure of that text portrays. For that purpose, dialects and other aspects of the written language should be known by the critique to make the criticism authentic. Only an experienced person can be up to such a task. Literary criticism done by AI can only be a culmination of references taken from such works of the past. It can never be natural.

DKS: Some believe AI will eventually create its literary movements. Do you think an "AI Renaissance" in literature is possible, and what might it look like?

PVS: Seriously speaking, we do not need a renaissance that advocates for the mechanical pieces of literature. What will happen in the future? I cannot predict. Nevertheless, I hope that the humanistic nature of literature will never vanish. We will always be able to find a real world with realistic characters and dialogues in the future.

DKS: Many authors say writing helps them discover their thoughts and emotions. If AI generates content for us, do we risk losing that journey of self-discovery?

PVS: Well, of course. If we fear the process, will there be any result? The long journey of writing prompts a person to look into himself. He becomes aware of his deep-seated desires and emotions amidst that process. However, self-discovery encounters countless hindrances when there is no journey of this sort. AI diminishes the individual thought process and almost forces one to leave the task of self-discovery.

DKS: Can literature created by AI ever be considered an accurate representation of cultural narratives, or will it always be an outsider to human traditions and histories?

PVS: Culture is similar to human consciousness when it comes to complexity. One can live the culture, not study it. It is a living entity that is in the constant process of change. It is rather doubtful that AI can ever grasp the concept of culture.

DKS: If an AI-generated novel wins a prestigious literary award, should it be considered a victory for literature or a challenge to its essence?

PVS: Well, it would be considered a challenge. This means that human emotions and expressions have lost their value in the context of literature. This means that the creative shenanigans of writers are no longer needed, and the audience has become mechanical. The liveliness of the literature will vanish, transforming into a commentary instead of a piece of art.

DKS: Finally, what is your message to the world about the future of AI in humanities?

PVS: My message for the world is to not rely on AI too much. The crowd of humanities needs to understand that if they start to give in to such technological advancements, there might arise a threat to the existence of humanities. Humanities students should refine their knowledge daily and keep the spirit of holistic knowledge alive. The culmination of references taken from such works of the past. It can never be natural.

Thanks, Prof. Sharma, for giving a cherished intellect on the soul of creativity in the age of AI, convincing the "death" of the author is not an end but a transformation, an evolution where human creativity finds new expressions through intelligent machines. Your musings, convincing the soul of creativity endures, adapting and expanding, proving that authorship is not lost but reborn, will be treasured forever and ever.



About the Interviewee

Professor Vikas Sharma is a distinguished author, poet, and researcher known for his work in Hindi and English literature. He is a Professor in the Department of English at Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (UP). His debut Hindi novel *Raah Ke Patthar* (2021) explores Hindu-Muslim unity and received widespread appreciation from readers. Beyond fiction, Professor Sharma has edited four anthologies on poetry, prose, and drama under the title *Epiphanies*. His literary portfolio includes several novels, such as *Love's Not Time's Fool*, *I.A.S. Today*, *498A: Fears and Dreams*, *Medicine: Light in Twilight*, *Ashes and Fire*, *Hope Against Hope*, *Ideas and Events*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *SANA*, *Never Together Never Apart*, *Media Revolution 2030*, and *Love and Ego*. Many of his novels have been incorporated into the syllabi of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in multiple universities, and scholars are researching his novels. His novels have also been translated into various Indian languages, and ten critical books have been published on his literary contributions so far.

About the Interviewer

Dr Dharmendra Kumar Singh, an academician, holds the position of Assistant Professor in the Department of English at MHPG College, Moradabad. His scholarly allegiance, once pledged to

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, now graces Guru Jambheshwar University, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, within the illustrious Republic of India. Erudite correspondence may be directed to dksinghdharmendra@gmail.com