

## Themes of Hunger in Vikas Swarup's Novels

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### Abstract

This article examines in detail about the hunger problem in our developed Indian society. Laying focus on to the social, political, religious, moral, and economic situation of Indian society, Vikas Swarup always deals with the presentation of multiple types of social issues in his writings. The themes of Swarup's novels are mainly highlighted social problems of the Indian society. The paper also has attempted to find out the causes of hunger and its impact on modern Indian society and shows how hunger problem creates mal-practices and criminal activities in the society. The aim of the study is to examine the brutality of hunger problem in Indian society with special references of Swarup's Q and A, Six Suspects and The Accidental Apprentice.

Keywords: Hunger, Modern Indian Society, Social evils, Poverty, Development

Vikas Swarup, one of the most prolific writers cum diplomat and an illustrious novelist of international repute. He is an award-winning author of three novels. The fertile soil of Uttar Pradesh, Allahabad has given a shining star to the India in the form of Vikas Swarup. It has often seen that Swarup's themes are entirely related to the contemporary life. He does not describe incidents or settings because they are interesting and picturesque, but because they fit into an imaginative pattern and have a symbolic and realistic significance. His wide range of experience and his close association with human beings have enabled him to grasp the innate significance of humanity. The writing of Swarup has opened a huge literary treasure for the people by focusing social issues. His novels are also thoughtful reflections in the concerns and constraints of the poor people.

It is assumed that the distribution of resources must be equal among all people but it is not happening in our nation. Therefore, the economic disparity is rapidly widening. The widening disparity has become the serious cause of concern for the developing country like India. "Government plays vital role in development but there is no simple set of rules that tells them what to do" (Singh, 2015:1.8). We see that the benefits of government schemes

have taken by some selected people and communities whereas a vast majority of common people deprived of their basic rights due to unequal distribution of goods and services. The corruptive officers are responsible for economic disparities, as they do not implement schemes of government equally. The present paper tries to find out the reasons behind the problem of hunger in India during the post globalization era and explores the possible options to decrease the problem of starvation. Presently, money factor emerges as a ruling God. Abject poverty in the darkness and the dividing line between the poor and the rich are also sensitive issues in the present study. The poor are gradually dying whereas the rich are earning with unscrupulous ways. It is an elegy of developing India. Morality is culturally dead.

It is difficult to discuss that India has significant problem of hunger in the era of globalization. With the flow of development in every sector, we find malnutrition and starvation deaths are increasing rapidly in our nation. A recent scenario indicates that the hunger problem in all its forms is a critical challenge not only in the developing but also in the developed nations like India. The issue of hunger has been discussed differently by different people due to its physiological as well as its socio- economic aspects. According to Holben, "Hunger is usually defined as a condition that is painful or uneasy emanating from lack of food" (Web). Apart from, Hunger is "A condition, in which people lack the basic food intake to provide them with the energy and nutrients for fully productive lives" (Hunger Task Force, 2003:33).

The problem of starvation is the most challenging social stigma in Indian society, in which a number of people are not able to fulfill their basic needs as food, cloths, shelter, education, and health in their poor life. India has been facing the problem of hunger in spite of its vast and rapid development in every sphere of life. 'Q and A' reveals the multiple social issues, which have existed in developing Indian society. The novelist has portrayed the realistic picture of modern India through the life history of Ram Mohammad Thomas, the chief protagonist in 'Q and A'. Ram and Salim were travelling from Delhi to Mumbai by Paschim express. They did not have money because they

were struggling for job. By travelling without tickets, they saw the Marwari family in front of them who were enjoying meal as puri, the golden yellow potatoes, a juicy chilly pickle, the soft gulab jamuns, and the sugary syrup. Contrastingly, Ram licked his lips in silence. The hunger gnawing at his stomach disappears miraculously. He did not have money to order for dinner from pantry boy. It shows two India that is the poor India where Ram is living to struggle for one time meal on the other hand, rich India where the Marwari family is living happy life without any burden. Really, the problem of starvation is omnipresent in Indian society.

The incident of Agra was also so pathetic for Ram where he had not had a meal since the day before afternoon. He was facing hunger problem. Vikas Swarup has also given the solution for hunger problem as he says that scavenging is part of the survival gear of a street kid. The study has focused the reality that a number of children are dying due to the hunger so if they go to attend marriage procession to survive. It is not crime for them. Salim wanted ice cream but they had just one rupee through which they could not buy anything. Many children are involved in ill practices for bread and butter due to the poverty. Homeless and orphan children are becoming victim of this evil in our society. In his interview, Vikas Swarup candidly expresses his views by saying that, "My books may highlight corruption, brutality, and venality but they also show that if these things come to light, there is rectification. The voiceless do have a voice; democratic mechanisms and accountability do exist" (Brainyquote.com).

The second novel 'Six Suspects' has crime fictitious themes presenting hazardous evils in Indian Society. In describing the contemporary realistic portrait of India, Swarup explains that many people are using multiple tricks to save their family from the starvation. The study also highlights that the reader must take lesson from the life philosophy of Mohan Kumar. He involved in agitation against the vulgar movie because he thought that young children of our nation are wasting too much money for such malpractices. If they invest money by avoiding for going to such movie, they will be able to save themselves from the poverty and indirectly starvation. The study also shows that maximum tribal are facing hunger problem due to extreme poverty, ignorance and superstitions. The most important thing is many women have involved in an illegal marital relationship and prostitution to earn money for their family. As Raksana Afsar was physically engaged with Jagannath Rai for earning money. In short, malpractices are increasing in our nation due the poverty and it is the root cause of starvation problem. We also see that many people drink too much and do not save money

for family as Mr. Shataram in 'Q and A.' Therefore, their family has to suffer from starvation. 'The Accidental Apprentice' is an inspirational fiction that highlighted the struggle with multiple challenges in the life of Sapna Sinha, the chief female protagonist of the novel. She had to suffer and face economic crises due to the death of her father and her sister Alka. She also had to face family responsibilities such as to pay Neha's education, to save money for her mother's medical expenses and then to save the flat where they were living. We see that many men and women only weep and cry on the issue of unemployment, poverty, starvation, and poor education. On the contrary, Sapna took all firmly optimistic. It is very easy way to save our own family from the problem of hunger by keeping positive outlook in our mind. Starvation is really a challenging problem in the era of technology but by reading the novels of Vikas Swarup and his characters like Ram Mohammad Thomas, Munna Mobile, Eketi, and Sapna Sinha, it became little easy to save yourself from the hunger problem.

After independence, India has been progressing in every sphere of life, now a days; every facility is available in urban area as compare to rural. But, the issue of humanity is very serious in the flow of progress as, "Humanity is losing its vision and courage in such a rich developing nation" (Weiwei, 2018:6). While thinking about current scenario of our nation, it is notable that India is a rich country with poor population. In this connection, Sitaram Yenchury says, "The Modi government as part of the 'Aacche Din' slogan is making two India's.... shining for the rich people and full of miseries for the poor people" (2017: Web). The rich are becoming richer and the poor are mostly becoming poor. Referring the issue, Arvind Adiga realizes, "The biggest difference is, between being rich and being like a poor? The rich can make mistakes again and again. The poor make only one mistake, and that's it for us" (2008:186). We are moving in separate worlds and the gap between rich and poor widening with the passage of development.

Swarup has also reflected the economic condition of India through the description of the rich and the poor in shining India. As it is shown, that many rich people are taking their meal at five-star hotels every day on the contrary, the poor people have to struggle for a single meal. They cannot visit to five-star hotels in their whole painful and struggling life. People are ready to pay money for seeing their hands but they do not spend to fulfill their basic needs as Ram and Salim had only ten rupees. They were hungry but they gave ten rupees to the palmist to see their hands due to the superstitions. Swarups empathy for the marginalized, poor, orphan, and homeless children forced

him to write of their miserable situation in a country that is so biased for its people. There should be no doubt that, this issue has to dealt with all seriousness and with utmost sense of urgency. The moral message of this paper is to stop an ill-practice of an Indian society.

In our introduction, we noted that hunger is serious problem in our Indian society. This paper argues that social evils are social in nature not individual, in addition to this, Ram, Munna Mobile and Sapna Sinha is only representative of their whole community. But all problems are closely interconnected with the society. A critical analysis of the hunger problem illustrates that it not only originates from low food production but it is also affected by other factors such as inaccessibility of food, high food prices, multiple diseases and corruption in policies of government. In a nut shell, the present paper wants to focus that the solving of a problem of hunger depends upon finding out the causes of troublesome social conditions, which create the problem. In fact, elimination of starvation is not merely a question of economic upliftment but it is a social and political issue related to the level of of the politico- social awareness of people.

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