

## Depictions of Contemporary Indian Society and Culture in the Novels of Vi-kas Swarup and Aravind Adiga

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### Abstract

*The writings of Vikas Swarup and Aravind Adiga are compared and contrasted in this study, with a focus on how both authors tackle a range of contemporary societal issues in India. It examines how, via their distinct narrative voices, both authors represent the universality of the human experience while producing nuanced portrayals of modern Indian culture. The study highlights the authors' different but complimentary perspectives on societal reality while examining how people respond to today's concerns. Their books, which eloquently depict societal struggles, interpersonal conflicts, and pressing sociocultural challenges, provide significant in-sight into India's rapidly shifting social scene. Adiga and Swarup have received literary acclaim and international acclaim for their socially realistic portrayal of the complexities of Indian life. Their works, which comprise both novels and short stories, are powerful indictments of India's shifting socioeconomic order.*

**Keywords:** *Changing Indian civilization, customs, traditions, advancements, and difficulties*

*This essay offers a comprehensive examination of Indian English literature, tracing the evolution of English-language fiction writing and highlighting prominent Indian novelists and their notable works. Important fictional works are compared and contrasted in order to analyze both well-known and lesser-known works by certain authors. In particular, the study looks at how Aravind Adiga and Vikas Swarup's stories tackle contemporary socioeconomic issues. It draws attention to how their portrayals of modern Indian culture capture both the similarities and divergences in perspectives.*

*This essay aims to identify and contrast recurrent and opposing themes in Aravind Adiga's "The White Tiger" and "Last Man in Tower," as well as Vikas Swarup's "Q & A" and "Six Suspects." India is portrayed in these novels as a country dealing with a number of important issues, such as overpopulation, poverty, crime, illiteracy, identity disputes, inequality, and corruption. Both authors explore comparable topics in their works that offer insight into contemporary Indian society.*

*At the heart of the story is a fierce competition for a promising plot of Mumbai real estate. The protagonist, Masterji, a retired schoolteacher named Yogesh A. Murthy, is the sole one preventing a lucrative buyout deal. The offer of a prominent developer to buy the entire apartment complex is accepted by all tenants except Masterji. Because of his rejection, there is tension and*

friction between him and his other residents. The narrative brilliantly illustrates the sharp disparities present in modern-day India by concentrating on the varied inhabitants of Vishram Society, which comprise both elderly and remarkably young people.

Vikas Swarup's first book, *Q & A*, incorporates themes of friendship, love, and fate while delving into topics like exploitation, poverty, and slum life. In addition to highlighting issues like murder, corruption, and greed, the novel offers a gripping depiction of India's deeply rooted social evils and quickly evolving society. Through the eyes of Ram, the protagonist, Swarup provides an objective viewpoint on the growing economic disparity in the country.

The novel tells the tale of an orphan living in a slum who, despite never having attended school, wins a sizable sum on a reality quiz show. With this distinctive story structure, Swarup offers a powerful portrayal of India in the twenty-first century, emphasizing the stark contrast between wealth and poverty. Each chapter focuses on a different occurrence in the protagonist's life in order to examine significant socioeconomic themes such as resource scarcity, bribery, elite privilege, urban poverty, and the exploitation of women and children.

*Q&A* sends a powerful message that intelligence and logic are not just for the educated elite and that even the impoverished can transcend their circumstances. The book highlights the importance of perseverance, hard work, and resilience in achieving success. Through its compelling narrative, Swarup captures the spirit of Indian society and demonstrates how people can overcome adversity by having confidence in fate and willpower.

Vikas Swarup's second novel, *Six Suspects* (2008), examines issues like identity issues, political influence, murder, corruption, and the more sinister sides of power. This compelling crime thriller, which has been translated into more than 30 languages, is an immediate hit and provides a realistic depiction of modern, multiethnic India. A murder inquiry into the life of Vicky Rai, a wealthy young man with a well-known criminal past, is at the center of the story. Six suspects are introduced in the plot: a civil servant, a young criminal, a dishonest MLA, a Bollywood celebrity, an American tourist, and an indigenous man from the Andaman Islands. Through its intricate yet well-organized plot, the book exposes the inherent conflicts and socio-political complexities of modern Indian culture. It critiques the widespread corruption in the political system while looking at the likelihood of dissension among the disenfranchised and suggesting a possible threat to the nation's constitutional framework.

Every nation possesses its own unique cultural identity, and India, in particular, has preserved multiple cultural traditions since ancient times. The country represents a rich tapestry of diversity across religion, language, geography, and customs. Cultural interactions often challenge the idea of cultural uniformity and dispel the myth that traditions and societies are un-changing. These encounters naturally give rise to deep and complex questions about identity.

The *White Tiger*'s author portrays an Indian society that is undergoing fast change as a result of Western ideas. In contrast, rural communities struggle to adjust to these changes, which often leads to acts of resistance and makes many people feel isolated, stifled, and disregarded. Balram, the book's ostracized protagonist, not only survives this cultural transformation but also

*defies India's long-standing social and economic systems by starting his own business. The intricate cross-cultural exchanges depicted in The White Tiger are critically as-sessed in this essay.*

*Adiga's Last Man in Tower offers a nuanced and multi-layered depiction of contempo-rary urban India, challenging readers to acknowledge the harsh realities that are usually ignored in the quest for an idealized vision of national wealth. The novel is applicable to everyone. In Indian tradition, the banyan tree is a potent symbol of resilience, freedom, growth, compassion, and the wisdom that comes from selfless giving. Adiga reflects on this and concludes, "Nothing can stop a live thing that wants to be free,"*

*Although there are countless living things on Earth that were created by nature or a higher power, prejudice is something that only humans have incorporated into their daily lives. As opposed to other animals that live in harmony with the rules of nature, humans have divided themselves along caste, color, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. While socioeconomic disparity is a global issue, racism is still a major concern in many European nations. Literature has long been a mirror of society, shedding light on its stratification, divisions, and the intrica-cies of social relationships.*

*Aravind Adiga is a well-known writer in contemporary Indian literature who is especial-ly renowned for his contributions to postmodern fiction. He solidified his literary status with The White Tiger, the 2008 Man Booker Prize winner for Fiction. Adiga's works address a mul-titude of urgent issues, such as urbanization, globalization, the widening economic divide, so-cial injustice, corruption, technological advancement, and the deterioration of morals and in-terpersonal relationships.*

*Adiga skillfully employs postmodern literary devices such as meta fiction, black humor, paro-dy, pastiche, and several narrative perspectives to engage readers with themes of materialism, commercialization, and ethical decay. His keen awareness of shifting socioeconomic realities enables him to write in a way that is in tune with the global zeitgeist. As the author explains in the lines that follow, The White Tiger offers a striking portrayal of existential and class con-flicts, demonstrating how India's pro-capitalist, neoliberal policies increase economic inequali-ty by favoring a small elite and marginalizing the majority:*

*Go to Old Delhi, and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundred of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they are next, yet they cannot rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with humans in this country. (TWT 147)*

*Indian literature, with its rich legacy across numerous regional languages, has also seen significant growth in the English language. The 19th and 20th centuries marked a dynamic pe-riod of development in Indian English literature, with contributions from literary giants like Rabindranath Tagore to contemporary voices such as Mahesh Dattani and Vikas Swarup. These authors have consistently sought to reflect India's complex socio-cultural landscape through their works. Among them, Vikas Swarup stands out for his focus on socio-economic inequality. His novel Q & A*

*offers a compelling portrayal of such disparities. This study seeks to examine Q & A in depth, particularly its representation of socio-economic discrimination in modern India.*

*Last Man in Tower (2011) captures the relentless struggle of an individual caught in the tide of changing times. Set in the dynamic city of Mumbai where powerful real estate developers shape the future and progress is symbolized by ever-rising skyscrapers the novel revolves around Yogesh A. Murthy, affectionately called "Masterji." A retired schoolteacher guided by unwavering idealism, Masterji finds himself increasingly alienated in a society dominated by materialism and pragmatic ambition. The novel also delves into the survival tactics of ordinary men and women as they navigate the emotional voids, contradictions, and complexities of contemporary Indian life, making this tension a central theme of the narrative.*

*In Q & A, Vikas Swarup examines the enduring theme of an orphan's resilience in the face of adversity. The story follows Ram, a young boy raised in the slums of Mumbai, who experiences profound hardship and powerlessness. The city is depicted as a grim, overcrowded space where over a million people live in unsanitary, impoverished conditions, struggling daily for the most basic necessities of life,*

*I wonder what it feels like to have no desires left because you have satisfied them all, smothered them with money even before they are born. Is an existence without desire very desirable? And is the poverty of desire better than rank poverty itself.? (Q & A 258)*

*The above lines reveal Ram's mindset and his unwavering determination to rise above his circumstances, as he sets ambitious goals and envisions a better future. Swarup skillfully develops Ram's psychological depth through his interactions with the world around him, illustrating how he navigates life with keen intelligence despite lacking formal education. His sharp instincts and resilience ultimately enable him to escape the clutches of Sethiji alongside his friend Salim. A true optimist, Ram refuses to be confined by religious identity, instead choosing to help others and remain loyal to his moral values. His compassion and perseverance play a crucial role in shaping his destiny, culminating in an unexpected and uplifting turn of events.*

*In Six Suspects, Vikas Swarup presents yet another compelling, high-concept narrative, using a murder investigation as a framework to examine the complexities and contradictions of modern India. The novel explores the internal conflicts of its main characters, revealing how they adjust their survival strategies in response to shifting circumstances and moral challenges.*

*At the heart of the narrative is Vikas (Vicky) Rai, the infamous son of Uttar Pradesh's Home Minister, Jagannath Rai. Following Vicky's murder, the Delhi police identify six compelling suspects: Mohan Kumar, a corrupt and promiscuous former bureaucrat; Shabnam Saxena, a glamorous Bollywood actress; Rick Myers, a Hollywood adult film producer; Munna Mobile, a small-time pickpocket known for stealing cell phones; Eketi Onge, a tribal man from a vanishing community in the Bay of Bengal; and Jagannath Rai himself. By intertwining the lives of these characters, Swarup crafts a compelling story of crime, authority, and the struggle for survival. Both Aravind Adiga and Vikas Swarup portray the individual's moral and existential dilemmas within*

the framework of contemporary Indian society, offering sharp insights into its social, political, and economic complexities.

Novelists Aravind Adiga and Vikas Swarup have skillfully illuminated critical issues within Indian society, examining the universal dimensions of human behavior and how individuals navigate their personal and social realities. Although India has made remarkable progress in various sectors over time, it still faces persistent socio-cultural challenges that require urgent attention. Among these, the safety and protection of vulnerable groups especially women, children, and the elderly remain some of the most pressing concerns in contemporary India.

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