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Overcoming Hardship

Often, true character and morals are not measured by success, but how someone deals with failure. If J.K Rowling had let the disappointment of the publishers who denied her book dictate her decisions, she would not be the multi-millionaire she is today. She had the moral aptitude to keep working hard and learning from her mistakes. On the other side of the spectrum, many let failure and hardship control their struggles. The pressure of the spotlight on Johnny Manziel led him to drugs and alcohol: he let the fear of failure control him. How humans deal with the many trials and tribulations of this crazy thing called life, ultimately shows their true morals.  In the book *Q&A,* by Vikas Swarup, through recurring light motifs and symbolic dreams, the protagonist illustrates the theme that someone’s true character is revealed by how they adjust to hardship and struggles. Similar to Rowling, Ram, learns to keep his strong positive and selfless morals despite hardship and failure.

Ram is plagued with hardship right from the get go of his life; yet, symbolic dreams and light motifs portray how he starts to build his strong, caring morals despite his circumstances. Symbolic dreams are the first to portray Ram’s caring and selfless moral during hardship, “Since I was eight years old, I was sent to the Delhi Juvenile Home… then came the dreams of a woman cradling me” (74). These dreams Ram has throughout the book began when he became a young orphan. They represent his values; love and appreciation. He dreams of the mother he never had, caring for him. He begins to care for the boys in the juvenile home as he would want to be cared for despite the horrible characteristics of the home, “rats scurry through the halls and kitchen, but I tried to stay positive… I became their leader” (75). The dream portrays morals and values that Ram feels are important; thus he imprints these positive values on his peers in the horrible and cruel orphanage. Red flashing lights also first appear in Ram’s early childhood. They represent his conscience; “I visualize the crime scene officers to arrive in a jeep with flashing red lights… now Gudiya is safe and the lights are nowhere” (Swarup 69). Ram’s conscience tells him right from wrong arrives in the form of “red lights.” When he is debating to help his friend from the orphanage, Gudiya, from being abused, the lights leave when he decides to help her. With the introduction of his first real friend, the light motifs portray how the young Ram is learning to stick to his moral of selflessness despite the possibility of being “deliberately maimed and reprimanded” by the warden (60). Ram’s hard experiences as a young boy help him to build strong, caring morals and the symbolic dreams and light motifs, emphasize that moral aptitude.

The literary elements further emphasize the selfless morals Ram developed as a young boy, as he turns into a young adult and battles more serious situations. As Ram leaves the juvenile home and slums where he saved his friend Gudiya, he starts to work to support himself, “An ambassador car with flashing red lights comes screeching to the house… Mr. Taylor goes and I stay, jobless” (126). Ram has to learn to support himself now as a young adult, so losing a job is very important to him. The “red lights” of Ram’s conscience call the police on his boss for stealing money. He knows the value of earning money honestly after enduring life as an orphan. He stays true to what he believes in even though he loses a job and has to struggle to find a new one. Ram also continues to have dreams about a maternal figure. Instead of acting more of a strong friend like he was at the orphanage, he acts like a father in response to the moral obligation that arrives from his dreams. He “wakes up from his dream to hear screaming from the other room” and acts to help the neighbor children who are getting beaten by their father (130). Once Ram begins working and affords a house of his own, he feels a responsibility for the people around him like the women in his dreams comforted him on a maternal level. The literary elements display the selfless morals that Ram developed as a young boy, and how they continue to influence his actions as he becomes a young adult and learns to care for himself.

As the end of the book nears and Ram reaches adulthood, his values are finally understood and revealed; the literary element representation illustrates the kind of person he wants so be as an adult. When Ram has finally found a comfortable job and house, he learns of a young orphan boy in his complex who talks in his sleep saying “I love you, Mummy, I love you very much” similar to what ram says in his dreams (282). The dream ultimately portrays how Rams values get stronger throughout his life. He goes from leading his fellow orphans in the juvenile home, to being a father figure to the kids at is work, then creating a family with an orphan boy. Despite the hardship of all of those situations: being beaten, losing a job, or losing stability; he chooses to stick to his true morals.  Along with the dreams accompanying Ram to his adulthood, “a jeep with flashing red lights appears at the outhouse” and Shankar is comforted by Ram as the jeep leaves (268).  The flashing lights come and go as the boy, Shankar, came to Ram’s side. Not only do the flashing red lights represent Ram’s consciences, but more importantly, the protection of an orphan in his living complex: Ram has found family. Ram’s conscience of right and wrong is fully completed by taking his this orphan because he understands now that his values of helping others are validated. The flashing red light and dream symbolism represent Ram’s morals as he matures and how he develops in response to those values.

 Considering Ram’s circumstances of growing up an orphan and fending for himself in the unforgiving slums of India, he has a good chance of succumbing to immoral acts or just giving up. But Ram did something very remarkable; he let hardship fuel whom he became. He learned more about himself and his values with each stage of his life. He overcame his circumstances and made a life for himself using selfless morals, and general good will. In the book *Q&A* by Vikas Swarup, reoccurring light motifs and symbolic dreams, throughout the stages of the protagonist's life, illustrate the theme that someone’s true character is revealed through the hardship and struggles they overcome.

Works Cited

Swarup. Vikas, Q&A. New York, NY: Scribner, 2005