



Socio - Cultural Context in Vikram Seth Novel: A Suitable Boy

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Abstract: A Suitable Boy is full of the ideology of the family and this connects completely with its realistic and conservative. It is the family that assumes centre Stage in Seth's narrative. Anita Desai writes it, "Although, in their rash youth, Lata and Maan would be tempted by the possibilities of change, defiance and unknown, they learn lesson and return, chastened, to the safety and security of the familiar and the traditional represented here, in the Indian fashion, by the great God family."

Key words: God family, twentieth century society, independent India

Narration

A Suitable Boy is written the background of social, economic, political and cultural upheaval of newly independent India. The novel deals with the most eventful period of Indian history. Seth sets out to bring the entire post-independent India into his fictional vision. As a novelist, Seth is conversant with life at various social levels. Well known with both the high and the lower strata society in India, he portrays the mid-twentieth century society in all its diversity. He uses the technique of contrasting characters and their lifestyles with remarkable aesthetic effect. Seth attempts to represent life in all its manifestations accurately and truthfully. He describes the market places, the landscapes, and the small by-lanes of Brahmapur. The places like Misri Mandi, Nabiganj, Barsaat Mahal, Prem Nivas and Baitar House acquired a life of their own. Vikram Seth starts his epic novel by introducing us to the Mehra's and the Kapoor's family. The occasion is the marriage of Mrs. Rupa Mehra's daughter Savita, to Pran Kapoor, whose father Mahesh Kapoor is the minister of Revenue. We are also introduced to Lata Mehra for whom the search for the elusive 'Suitable boy' forms the epicenter of the novel. We also find two other families- The Chatterjis of Calcutta,

whose daughter Meenakshi is married to Arun Mehra, the son of Mrs. Mehra and another family the Khans also come in the picture through friendship between Maan Kapoor and Firoz the son of the Nawab Sahib of Baitar.

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Marriage is a big social responsibility taken by the elders of a family where a choice is made between a girl and a boy. It is to be fulfilled by the pair and one has to think upon so many qualities for selecting a suitable boy, Vikram Seth takes marriage and love as the central idea of the novel. He considers both as the fundamental mode of human life. The heroine of the novel, Lata is the youngest daughter of the Mehra family. She is under strict scrutiny of her mother Mrs.



Rupa Mehra is a widow who lost her husband when her children were young. Whenever there is a crucial time, she takes advantage of her strength to keep her position in the family. To select A Suitable Boy for Lata. Mrs Praveen Kumar. B. Research Scholar. Dept. of English, Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi.

Rupa Mehra has a sense of judgment and tolerates no compromise in this respect. Lata is faced with three contenders. Of these three suitors the first sight, the second is the Poet Amit Chatterji, who is the brother of Meenakshi and the third is the shoemaker Hareesh Khanna. Lata is cool in both private and public life. She adopts a rational perspective of her suitor's virtues and weaknesses. She writes a letter to Kabir in a rational tone: "I have got your note. I got your letter too when I was in Calcutta. It made me think over and remember everything. I am not annoyed with you in any way; please do not think so. But I feel that there is no purpose at all in our writing or meeting. There would be a lot of pain and very little point."

It was fashionable during those times to entertain courtesans in the mansions by those who loved to flaunt their wealth and tastes to the world and to say how rich they are. We can see in this novel when Mahesh Kapoor who is the revenue minister in the Congress. Government of Purva Pradesh hosts Saeeda Bai Firozabadi, the famous singer and courtesan in his house during Holi to entertain people. Whenever she sings, all the men praise her but because of her reputation she is disliked by women who feel that she is enticing their husbands and sons:

"Upstairs on the balcony two of the women looked down through the slits in a cane screen and discussed Saeeda Bai's dress, ornament, face, manner, antecedents and voice. Nice Sari, but nothing special. She always wears Banarasi silk. Red tonight. Last year it was green, Stop and go. Look at that Zari work in the sari. Very flashy, very flashy-but I suppose all that is necessary in her profession, poor thing. I wouldn't say "poor thing." Look at her jewels. The heavy gold necklace with the enamel work. It comes down a bit too low for my taste-well anyway; they say it was given to her by the Sitagrah people! Oh. And many of those rings^ too, I should think. She's quiet greeting Mahesji and his son Maan. He looks very pleased with himself. Is that the governor he's-yes, yes, all these congress wallahs are the same. They talk about simplicity and plain living, and then they invite this kind of person to the dancer or anything like that. No, but you can't deny that she is! But your husband has come as well."

Though a courtesan should be talented in the arts & singing and dancing. She is never given a place of honor in our society. Now brothels have taken the place of cultured houses and the courtesans are now treated as the objects of minting money in the society. They are treated in a Cruel manner. Previously they were cultured and well-manners as compared to the illiterate girls who have taken their places. The need of the time is to educate and give them suitable job so they do not have to come back in these hellish places.

The novel does not only deal with sexual passion, but with passion for religion, politics, domestic and public power for careers. Vikram Seth has perhaps shaped



A Suitable Boy with this manifest to against the passion of sexual love as well as politics and religion. Similarly on the religious scene, Seth shows his distaste for the fanatical ascetics and Swamiji's at the Pul Mela festival he emphasizes this distaste by viewing the scene through the eyes of the religious Seeker Dipankar, Chatterji and showing. Dipankar's alienation when he realizes the Charade of Saintliness masks vanity and power-seeking I egoism.

"Dipankar had been among the spectators on the other side of the main route. He watched with horror the carnage that was taking place less than fifty feet away but - with the nagas between him and the ramp there was nothing he could do. It was a hellish scene, like humanity gone mad, each element indistinguishable from the other, all bent on a kind of collective suicide."

Religion for some people is Like soothing medicine when they are sad but if religion gets entangled in superstition it becomes poison and brings death and sadness to all. It is seen that in religion and superstition.

The novel is set during the period after the partition of India which resulted in the emergence of Pakistan and India as two independent nations. A Suitable Boy was published at the time of the Babri Masjid destruction in 1993. The partition of the country was accompanied by Hindu-Muslim riots, when the old and long Cherished human values suffered and lost all relevance. In this loss, the notion of tolerance and faith were completely shattered. The human instinct was taken over by a new law of the jungle, where blood and death has no consideration. The migration was on an

unprecedented scale and those who attempted to seek shelter were tortured and humiliated before and after crossing the borders. People were developed a fear complex in the hearts of all those who migrated or stayed in majority or minority. This sense of insecurity is sustained and remains in the background of the novel.

"At the word Pakistan, Veena's mother-in-law, withered old Mrs.Tandon, flinched. Three years ago, her whole family had to flee the blood and flames and unforgettable terror of Lahore. They had been wealthy 'Propertied' people, but almost everything they had owned was lost, and they had been lucky to escape with their lives. He son Kedarnath, Veen's husband, still had scars on his hands from an attack by butchered." Rioters on his refugee convoy. Several of their friends had befallen communal riots are common now then in India whether in Gujarat or in Muzaffarnagar. People are made to believe that their religion is in danger. In order to remain peace. We should be calm and not come under Sway of selfish people whether Netas or Orthodox people by listening to their fiery speeches full of Venom one should love our people and if we give love we receive love.

Thus, it is evident that A Suitable Boy is a novel of Social-Cultural context as it is showing a clear mirror to the society of post-independent India in various shades right from family values across the spectrum rituals of marriage, the position of the fairer sex in the society. The impact of the courtesans on the family structure, the necessity of religious harmony, breakdown of which caused communal disturbance which is detrimental to the development of the society.



Vikram Seth has gone a long way in successfully depicting the society which was still emerging from the shadows of slavery and partition.

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realistic picture of the hidden as well revealed facts of Brahmin community. It is a nice description of follies and foibles of orthodox Hindu societies. It is a nice description of follies and foibles of orthodox Hindu societies (Sharma 194). Ananthamurthy's first novel itself

decided his identity as a progressive writer. The novel is one of the major progressive novels of Indian literature. It can be concluded that Samskara expresses progressive motifs in the best possible manner

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