

A STUDY OF FICTION IN THE NOVELS OF VIKRAM SETH

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Paper Received: 10.09.2022 / **Paper Accepted:** 20.10.2022 / **Paper Published:** 21.10.2022

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Abstract

Vikram Seth is best known for his 1993 book "A Suitable Boy," which is considered to be his most well-known work. Despite not being labelled as social realism specifically, "A Suitable Boy" contains aspects of the subgenre. The goal of the 19th-century literary style known as social realism is to portray society as it really is, frequently emphasising social difficulties, class disparities, and political criticism. Vikram Seth's masterpiece "A Suitable Boy" was released in 1993. The 1,300-page book, which is set in post-independence India in the 1950s, offers a comprehensive look into Indian society, politics, and culture. It is frequently cited as being among the longest novels ever written in English. This paper deals about fiction in the novels of Vikram Seth.

Keywords: Fiction, Vikram Seth, Novel, Writing.

Introduction

The Mehra, the Kapoors, the Chatterjis, and the Khans are primarily highlighted in the plot, which centres on four interconnected families. The central theme of "A Suitable Boy" is the exploration of arranged marriage and Lata Mehra's quest to find a suitable boy (husband). The book explores the intricate web of connections, societal dynamics, and individual desires in a rapidly modernising India. It touches on a number of issues, such as politics, religion, family, and socioeconomic class. Seth offers a comprehensive glimpse of the varied components of Indian society through a number of plotlines and a sizable ensemble of characters.

Significant plot points include religious conflicts and the division of India and Pakistan. Young Maan Kapoor, who comes from a wealthy family, develops feelings for Saeeda Bai, a Muslim woman. Their relationship is a reflection of the prejudices and socioeconomic divisions that were present at the time.

The way Seth depicts the characters is one of the book's strong points. Each character is carefully crafted, with their own goals, struggles, and travels. The conflict between tradition and modernity, as well as the difficulties between individual goals and societal expectations, are all themes explored in the book. Aside from societal commentary, "A Suitable Boy" also offers a rich portrait of India's cultural scene.

Literature Review

2020: Sarvaiya [1]; Vikram Seth is unlike other Indian writers in his application of realism as well as its societal issues. The characteristics of reality in his main works of fiction have been examined using a variety of realism theories. A genuine effort is being made to show that realism predominates in each of them as a method of narration by critically studying significant pieces in the genuine Indian Fiction stream written in English. By using his own narrative technique and distinctive social concern, Seth distinguished himself from the company of different realistic writers & established his dominance over others as the primary writer in the subcontinent. We have developed an understanding of realism that is consistent with Seth's writings by carefully examining many points his perspective on the subject. It is thoroughly studied in order to identify the preferences of Indian authors writing in English for using this specific story method, which is appropriate for fictionalising Indian society and results in the development of the aforementioned narrative mode. Views from some sincere critics, including Edmond Duranty, George Lewes, Balzac, Henry James, Maupassant, Edwin H. Candy, George Lukacs, Philip Hamon, Roland Barthes, and others, were sought in an effort to create a thorough picture of the realistic movements. Vikram Seth's books exhibit outstanding realism in all of its forms. His realistic stories, qualities, the individuals at the hip of the story, its adherence to sincerity and plausibility, and its distinct social concerns are the characteristics of realism abundantly obvious in his

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works, as stated at the end of the first chapter. His debut book in poems, *The Golden Gate*, was followed by the compilation of his most famous work, *A Suitable Boy*. A brilliant examination of Western classical music, *Equal Music* takes a realistic perspective. The authenticity and recognizability of the setting, the plot, and the character all play a key role in evaluating the author's claim to realism. The author made sure to capture the everyday reality of regular people in all three of his novels. George Lukacs created a crucial feeling of history in his works with his enormous realistic investigations. The first two passages are told in the third person by an omniscient narrator who follows events and conveys to the reader the key plot points. The relatable aspect of characters and circumstances unquestionably demonstrates the believability of the story being conveyed. The lowest strata as well as the group parts of the characters in the narrative are given the appropriate importance since Seth, an authentic classical realism, can identify to them and their sensitivities. Seth's fictional English Indian writing journey is a spectacular and unrivalled accomplishment thanks to this magnificent play of realism supported by an honest & devoted social consciousness.

(2020) Milind [2]; Among the most interesting and varied writers of the modern era is undoubtedly Vikram Seth. A travelogue, a poetic novel, an epic novel, and other poetry collections were among Seth's impressive body of work. Each work takes place in a distinct cultural and socioeconomic environment. He has exhibited problems in interpersonal relationships. The characters share common issues even if they come from various socioeconomic strata. The novels frequently use inventive themes and issues. The way the characters are depicted is less through descriptions of their consciousness and self-expression, nonetheless, via their interactions with others and how they are perceived by others. One of the most well-known authors, novelists, and poets of the modern era is Vikram Seth. Vikram Seth's debut book, "*The Golden Gate*," was released in 1986. The sonnet format for narrative prose has a new level and depth in this book. Although he was born in India, he has lived and received his education in other nations. He is impacted by the traditions, cultures, and customs of these several nations where he spent a significant amount of time. He entered the field of Indo-Indian literature as a newcomer. By theme and method, he helped to establish Indian English novels. Vikram Seth is one of those authors that enables readers to peek into the consciousness and intimate relationships of the characters. Humans are social creatures by nature and continue to be so throughout life, although they suffer as a result of certain desires, attitudes, losses, and gains. These three

novels were depicted by Vikram Seth in various settings, but the urgency of the theme permeates all of them. The concerns and themes are conveyed clearly and objectively. Each work is unique and adopts an ancient literary form in a contemporary setting. Friendship and attachment, rather than a depiction of the characters' consciousness, serve to define them. The characters are expertly weaved together by Seth. The yearning of the human person is clearly addressed in the novels.

Analysis

The narrative gains depth and realism as it examines the diverse array of languages, faiths, celebrations, and customs that coexist within the nation. Seth's prose is poetic, and his attention to detail and complex storytelling define his writing style. He expertly combines many storylines and points of view to construct a rich tapestry of Indian society. The novel won praise from critics for its breadth, profundity, and cultural insights. It received numerous honours, including the 1994 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book. The narrative and its concepts gained even more notoriety in 2020 after being turned into a television series. Overall, "*A Suitable Boy*" is a massive work that examines the sociological complexity, political climate, and cultural diversity of post-independence India while capturing its spirit. It is evidence of Vikram Seth's skill as a storyteller and his capacity to construct a complex and compelling narrative that connects with readers all around the world. Seth depicts post-independence India in the 1950s in "*A Suitable Boy*," touching on a number of the social and political issues of the day. The book examines the intricacies of Indian culture, including the conflicts between the many socioeconomic groups, the tensions caused by religion, and the impact of politics on everyday life. When discussing topics like arranged marriages, family dynamics, social hierarchies, and the conflict between tradition and modernization, Seth paints a realistic and thorough portrait of India's complex social fabric.

While Seth's literary style does not precisely adhere to the standards of the genre, "*A Suitable Boy*" does integrate social realism in its portrayal of Indian society. The novel is a multi-faceted work that resists simple classification because it also has aspects of romance, family drama, and historical fiction.

Seth has written in a variety of genres and styles before "*A Suitable Boy*," including poetry and non-fiction. In contrast, his other works, such as "*An Equal Music*" and "*Two Lives*," are not often regarded as social realism in the same sense as "*A Suitable Boy*." Instead of directly addressing more

general socioeconomic issues, these pieces explore interpersonal connections, personal journeys, and musical motifs.

The representation of post-independence India in Vikram Seth's book "A Suitable Boy" has elements of social realism, yet his total body of work spans a wide range of genres and issues beyond social realism. The social realism that Vikram Seth employs in his works:

1. Meticulous Attention to Detail

One of Seth's writing traits is his attention to detail, which helps to make his stories seem more realistic. Seth's detailed and vivid descriptions give his depiction of society more depth and realism, whether they are describing the scene, the characters, or subtle cultural differences. The great attention to detail that Vikram Seth is renowned for is evident throughout his book "A Suitable Boy." Seth's dedication to collecting minute details can be seen in the following significant aspects:

- **Setting Descriptions:** Seth's evocative descriptions bring his story's locations to life. He meticulously captures the physical surroundings, whether it is the busy cities of post-independence India or the peaceful countryside. The reader is completely immersed in the beautifully detailed environment that the characters live in, from architectural characteristics to cultural monuments.
- Seth pays special attention to the ethnic nuances, traditions, and customs. Readers gain a deeper grasp of Indian culture as he goes into the intricate details of religious rites, festivals, and practises. These specifics, which Seth incorporates, give the story additional levels of authenticity, enhancing its immersion and realism.
- **Character Development via Detail:** Seth creates his characters through meticulous description. He offers details about their physical characteristics, vogue, behaviour, and quirks. He improves the reader's comprehension of each character's nature through these minor characteristics and fosters a sense of familiarity and connection.
- **Political and Historical perspective:** Seth's thorough attention to political and historical nuances gives the story depth and perspective. He grounds the novel in a particular era by using genuine events,

political movements, and historical landmarks. This focus on historical authenticity helps readers comprehend the social and political context in which the lives of the individuals take place.

- **Linguistic Texture:** Seth's portrayal of his characters relies heavily on language and discourse. He pays close attention to the textural variety of the book's vocabulary, combining local languages, dialects, and speech quirks. This enhances the dialogue's realism and depth while illuminating India's linguistic complexity and diversity.

Seth delivers a rich and deep reading experience with his great attention to detail. His meticulous observations and descriptions enable readers to picture the locales, comprehend the cultural quirks, and develop a strong emotional connection to the individuals and their setting. This attention to detail demonstrates Seth's devotion to writing a compelling and genuine story.

2. Multidimensional Characters

Seth frequently creates characters who are complicated and have multiple dimensions. Because they are complex characters with strengths, weaknesses, and contradictory goals, readers can relate to them on a deeper level. Seth captures the variety and complexity of human experiences within the social context he presents through these complex characters. Characters in "A Suitable Boy" are recognised for being complex and multifaceted. Vikram Seth vividly depicts a wide variety of people who are nuanced, fallible, and approachable. The multifaceted personalities in the book have the following salient characteristics:

- **Personal Ambitions and Challenges:** Each of the characters in "A Suitable Boy" has their own goals, difficulties, and aspirations. They are people with distinct interests and motives, not just stereotypes or bearers of social roles. Each character struggles with their own internal issues and works to traverse their unique paths, whether it be Lata Mehra's quest for love and independence, Maan Kapoor's voyage of self-discovery, or Haresh Khanna's ambitions for success.
- **Competing Emotions and Difficult Decisions:** The characters in the book go through a variety of competing emotions and have to make tough decisions. They don't behave in a one-dimensional or predictable way. Seth expertly captures

their internal struggles, conundrums, and ambiguous situations. This gives their portrayals more substance and reality and enables readers to emotionally relate to their hardships.

- **Growth and Transformation:** Throughout the course of the book, a lot of the characters experience growth and transformation. They change, gain knowledge from their mistakes, and grow as people. Seth reveals the complexity of human evolution and the capacity for change by examining their individual journeys and the effects of their decisions.
- **Characters in "A Suitable Boy"** have flaws and imperfections; they are neither idealised or flawless. They display human shortcomings, flaws, and blunders. They are more relatable and believable because of their flaws. Readers may relate to Seth's characters more deeply because he shows them as complex individuals with both strengths and flaws.
- **Relationships and Interactions:** The novel's characters interact in a rich, complex manner. Seth investigates the dynamics of interpersonal connections within families, friendships, romantic relationships, and the wider community. These connections are moulded by individual histories, social expectations, and personal decisions, resulting in a complicated web of interactions that propel the story forward.

Seth portrays the complexity of human nature and offers a nuanced view of the varied persons that populate his fictional world through his representation of multidimensional characters. As the characters travel through their personal journeys within the greater social framework, this gives the storytelling depth and authenticity and makes it possible for readers to relate deeply with the characters.

3. Exploration of Social Hierarchies

Social realism frequently examines power structures and class distinctions in society. Seth explores the nuances of the Indian caste system and how it affects the lives of the characters in "A Suitable Boy," which is a novel. He draws attention to the difficulties that people from various socioeconomic groups experience and offers a comprehensive view of the social hierarchies that are pervasive in Indian society. Vikram Seth explores the social hierarchies that were prevalent in 1950s Indian society in "A

Suitable Boy," a book. The story explores numerous facets of social divisions by illustrating the complexities and ramifications of these hierarchies. The book examines a number of important social hierarchies, including the following:

- **The caste system** is a prominent social structure in India, and the book discusses its impact on people's lives and interpersonal connections. It depicts the difficulties that characters from lower castes confront and the discrimination they encounter. In relationships and marital alliances, where caste consideration frequently takes precedence over other aspects, the interaction of caste dynamics is particularly visible.
- **Economic Inequalities:** The narrative also looks at societal economic inequalities. It emphasises the disparities between characters from various social origins in terms of wealth, privilege, and chances. The depiction of characters like the rich Mehras and the less well-off Kapoors highlights the great differences in the aspirations and way of life of various social classes.
- **Regional and Linguistic Divisions:** India is a large country with many different areas and languages, and the film "A Suitable Boy" examines the social hierarchies and divisions that result from these variations. The book illustrates the biases and prejudices that can exist between members of various ethnic or linguistic groups, emphasising how these differences can affect interpersonal relationships and social interactions.
- **Education and Intellectual Hierarchy:** The novel also examines societal hierarchies in the context of education and intellectual pursuits. Characters with greater socioeconomic status are frequently depicted as being well-educated or affiliated with famous educational institutions. The ability to pursue intellectual interests and have access to a quality education serve as indicators of social standing and power.

"A Suitable Boy" provides a comprehensive knowledge of the intricacies and difficulties faced by individuals inside the social fabric of Indian culture through its investigation of different social hierarchies. It criticises the restrictions and

injustices that these hierarchies uphold while simultaneously underlining the potential for reform and the dismantling of obstacles through individual decisions, interpersonal connections, and societal change.

Conclusion

Seth's works frequently criticise cultural norms and expectations, particularly those that have to do with gender roles, marriage, and custom. In "A Suitable Boy," he analyses the conflict between societal expectations and individual inclinations and questions the notion of arranged weddings. Seth challenges and subverts conventional norms to compel readers to consider and assess the social systems they come across. The novel "A Suitable Boy" critiques the expectations and social conventions that were prominent in 1950s Indian society. The book analyses the conflict between societal expectations and individual aspirations by using its characters' experiences to question accepted conventions. The book criticises a number of specific societal standards, including the following:

- **Arranged Marriages:** The practise of arranged marriages, which was pervasive in Indian society at the time, is one of the novel's major themes. The movie "A Suitable Boy" challenges the notion that a marriage partner can be chosen exclusively on the basis of social standing, financial security, or kinship ties. Lata Mehra, the main character, rejects the pressure put on her by her family and society to find a compatible boy and instead looks for a relationship based on love and compatibility. Traditional gender roles and the lack of autonomy granted to women in Indian society are also criticised in the book. It shows women pursuing personal interests outside of marriage and motherhood as well as independence, education, and other pursuits. Characters like Lata and her sister Savita defy social norms by going to college, voicing their thoughts, and looking for autonomy in their decisions.
- **Interreligious Relationships:** "A Suitable Boy" highlights the difficulties and complexities that characters in interreligious relationships experience, particularly in a culture that is characterised by intergroup conflict. It challenges the preconceptions and prejudices based on religion that prevent people from finding love and forming connections with others regardless of their own religion. The book opposes the limitations imposed by religious distinctions and promotes love and understanding regardless of religious

connections through characters like Maan Kapoor and Saeeda Bai.

- **Social Class and Hierarchy:** The book criticises India's rigid social class structure and the ensuing disparities. It features characters from various social backgrounds and emphasises the restrictions and challenges people from different social classes experience. The story contests the idea that a person's socioeconomic class defines their value and promotes an inclusive and egalitarian society.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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