

Depiction Of Society In Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*

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ABSTRACT:

The societal issues depicted in the book can be used to analyze the social realism as it is defined by the author. As with any true realist author, Seth examines in-depth the societal aberrations and injustices that are pervasive in society and illustrates fundamental human suffering. Despite the exhilaration associated with the newfound independence, millions of poor people's lives remained mostly unchanged. Indian society is still plagued by unemployment, underdevelopment, a lack of healthcare coverage, and a low level of education. Vikram Seth writes novels in the realism style of the nineteenth century, making an effort to properly and authentically depict reality in all of its expressions. The present research exhibits undertones of social realism when examined more closely. Seth has skillfully blended social reality—reality as it actually exists, not an idealised version—into his story.

Key words: poor people, social reality, human suffering

Vikram Seth's 1993 fiction, *A Suitable Boy*, is suggestive of the great writers Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens, and Dostoevsky. It features a cast of people and storylines which are deeply anchored in its societal, political and communal context. The novel, *A Suitable Boy* has a book length of 1,044. It is regarded as one of the lengthiest books ever published in a single collection in Indian writing in English. Without the constraints of shortness and employing an unpretentious elegance, Vikram Seth revived the classical art of story narration.

After Salman Rushdie, renowned Indian author, published "Midnight's Children," the book had already garnered significant praise from critics (1980). Similar themes of division and post - colonialism are also prominent in Rushdie's book, but instead of the aspects of social realism that permeates Vikram Seth's work, Rushdie employs magic realism, fusing the actual world with the fantastic. Vikram Seth represents the social and political environment in India during the early 1950s, wherein the young country was torn in between idealistic aspirations of attempting to create a fair and egalitarian society while still contending with long-standing bigotries such as casteism resulting in untouchability, the caste - based disparities, hatefulness between Hindus and Muslims, and other practises.

Vikram Seth writes novels in the realism style of the nineteenth century, making an effort to properly and authentically depict reality in all of its expressions. He skillfully paints the landscapes, markets, and winding byways of the made-up town of Brahmpur with so much minutiae that one can nearly envision being there. A vitality of their own is developed in the locations Prem Niwas, Baitar House, Misri Mandi, The Barsaat Mahal and Nabiganj.

Legitimately presenting a mirror to the culture and society making Seth a voice of social concern. Four families namely the Kapoors, the Mehrahs, Chatterjis, and Khans—three Hindu and one Muslim—are central to the story. Vikram Seth deserves recognition for the remarkable craftsmanship with which he skillfully distinguishes a wide range of characters, including Kings and nobles, the zamindars, bureaucrats, shoe manufacturers, nightclub performers, artists, and cricketers.

A literary trend known as realism promoted the accurate representation of real-world people and events. It emerged in the eighteenth century and peaked in the nineteenth. It was well-depicted in books by authors including Balzac, Flaubert, George Eliot, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and Jane Austen. The present research exhibits undertones of social realism when examined more closely. The novelist never works alone. The authors create creative pieces, they capture the daily experience. Seth has skillfully blended social reality—reality as it actually exists, not an idealised version—into his story. He depicts both the benefits and the drawbacks of the local social scene.

Vikram Seth provides us a true representation of post-partition, post-independence India that spans metropolis, countryside, and kasbahs. The book does a good job of describing the cultural, economic, and financial developments that were gradually altering India throughout the turbulent Nehruvian era. The significant disruptions in the Indian subcontinent, including the division of India, the successive hostility between Hindus and Muslims, the caste based social hierarchy, casteism, the abolishment of the Local self - government framework, the land redistribution act, and its effects, are all detailed in Vikram Seth's believable, organised narrative.

By introducing the fictitious Zamindari Abolition Bill in his novel, Vikram Seth draws attention to the pitiful situation of the poor dispossessed farmer. The Land Reforms Act of the 1950s is where Seth gets the notion. The Zamindari Abolition Bill, that would

seize territory from wealthy landowners with "vast and unproductive landholdings in the state" (18) and transfer it to the poor, landless peasants, was a result of Mahesh Kapoor's work as the Revenue Minister. Despite the fact that his companion, the Nawab of Baitar, would lose out because of this legislation.

Seth illustrates the unease that some Muslims and Hindus still experienced toward one another truthfully. India took pleasure in being a secular country that respected all beliefs and individuals of all backgrounds after gaining independence. However, it was also challenging for the millions of individuals who had been uprooted and had experienced violence and oppression to forgive themselves and forget. As he states in the novel:

“She had been willing to tolerate talking to the Nawab Sahib though he was a muslim, but when he mentioned comings and goings from Pakistan, it was too much for her imagination. She felt ill. The pleasant chatter of the garden in Brahmipur was amplified into the cries of the blood-mad mobs on the streets of Lahore, the lights into fire”(21).

The societal issues depicted in the book can be used to analyze the social realism as it is defined by the author. As with any true realist author, Seth examines in-depth the societal aberrations and injustices that are pervasive in society and illustrates fundamental human suffering. Despite the exhilaration associated with the newfound independence, millions of poor people's lives remained mostly unchanged. Indian society is still plagued by unemployment, underdevelopment, a lack of healthcare coverage, and a low level of education. Maan observes the extreme poverty and rigid caste divisions that are prevalent in Rudhia district when he travels there.

Indian culture is realistically depicted in "A Suitable Boy." The contemporary realistic fiction offers a dispassionate portrayal of all facets of life, both the good and the bad. Literature's ability to mirror the culture it stands for can be used to determine how excellent it is. However the sincerity or accuracy of this observation cannot be determined, Seth's delicacy in how he portrays the societal difficulties woven within Indian society cannot be disputed.

Work Cited:

Seth, Vikram. *A Suitable Boy*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020.