



Anticipating Post-independence Indian socio politics in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to use Vikram Seth's novel *A Suitable Boy* to illustrate the sociopolitical situation in India following independence. Given that Vikram Seth has lived outside for about half of his life, particularly during the 1950s, which are depicted in the novel, it is clear that he has done extensive research to understand the political situation. Seth demonstrates his social realism by concentrating on society, its customs and behavior, and current affairs. Additionally, by discussing the Nehruvian era and other major figures from that era, he has accurately depicted the political landscape. It is also evident that "A Suitable Boy" is a work of political fiction that depicts the developing politics of recently independent India. In this novel, the social struggles and politics of a typical middle-class family are entwined. Seth concentrates on the Hindu-Muslim dispute and the necessity of religious intolerance in addition to politics.

Key words: social conflicts, religious intolerance, Hindu-Muslim conflict, Nehruvian era, independent India, and socio politics.

The novel *A Suitable Boy* depicts a totally changed India that is headed in a different direction for stability. The quest for a suitable lad is one of the novel's two facets and the other is the country's battles to establish itself. Seth depicts a blend of social and political conflict with middle-class family issues. Four families are central to the narrative: the Kapoor's, Khans, Mehra's, and Chatterjee's. The novel's protagonists are Maan and Lata. The Zamindari Abolition Act, intellectual rivalry, political rivalry, and tannery operations are just a few of the several subplots that make up the drama. Parallel to the main plot are these subplots. Seth portrays the lives of men and women from lower-class families through the Chatterjee family.

The Chatterjee's are lower class, but they have always aspired to be upper class, which compels them to emulate both British culture and upper-class individuals. Seth was born in India, but he has lived elsewhere for the majority of his life. In order to portray India in his work, he spent a lot of time researching in the library. He learned about the Zamindari Abolition Act, ornithology, several history and psychology literature, and even conducted interviews with some freedom warriors and medical journals to depict a pregnant woman. In an interview, Seth admits this:

Reading just to get a spirit of those times, meeting people, freedom fighters, people who had visited courtesans at that time... and then staying in different places like Benares, Allahabad or in the countryside or staying with the shoe making family in Agra, just a few years doing this sort of things because how can you claim to write about something unless you know it, if not from the heart of it, then somewhere from the inside.

Seth candidly depicts India's realities. He even talks about the religious dispute between Muslims and Hindus because of the Babri Masjid. Long before Babri Masjid was demolished, there were arguments at Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. In the novel, the Rajah of Marh wanted to construct a temple for Lord Shiva next to a mosque. The Muslims in the area objected, and their authority filed a complaint about it. However, the Hindus persisted and refused to leave, which sparked a communal riot that the government was unable to put an end to. Seth does not hesitate to reflect these contentious religious and political topics in his writing, especially the political climate of



post-independence India in the 1950s. The state of the scheduled castes in the early 1950s is another area of attention for Seth. In addition to Gandhi's fight against untouchability and Ambedkar's advocacy against caste discrimination, he skillfully captures society from several perspectives in his work.

There are also allusions to the contract and beliefs of Muslims and Hindus in India, parents' worries about their daughters' marriages, grooms' emphasis on a bride's beauty, the effects of dowries, and Indian wives' customs, like never mentioning their husbands' names. When Lata tells Kabir, a Muslim lad, that she loves him, her mother does not agree with her and turns down her proposal. Seth also discusses early Muslim marriages, the purdah system, and divorce procedures. When Rashid's father learns that Maan is single at the age of twenty-three, he feels sorry for Maan. He goes on to say that Muslims view late marriage as 'adharma' and that married men are held in higher regard.

Through the character Mahesh Kapoor, who views politics as a means of helping people, Seth has painstakingly depicted the political landscape. However, for politicians like as Agarwal, the Home Minister, 'politics is the coal trade'. "How can you blame them if their faces and hands turn a bit black?" The young magistrate is used by Mr. Agarwal, a communalist who abuses his position of authority, to punish the Jatavs at Misra Mandi.

Academic competition, especially in universities, is the next area of emphasis. The political struggle between Mahesh Kapoor and Agarwal was mirrored in the professional conflict between Pran Kapoor and Prof. Mishra. Because of Mishra's opposition to Pran, he constantly works to keep him out of view. When Pran tried to incorporate James Joyce in the syllabus, Mishra merely opposed him and never listened to his attempts. The Selection Committee chose to support Pran after learning about Mishra's retaliation. This is an example of their rivalry. Pran was thus chosen as a Reader, and Mishra was had to concede his loss.

Another political fairytale that depicts the rise of politics in recently independent India is the novel *A Suitable Boy*. People and politicians have experienced numerous changes in the first ten years following independence. People's emotions fluctuate from joy to despair. There are three distinct types of political personalities that Vikram Seth uses in the novel. First, actual politicians like as Rajarshi Purushottam Das Tandon, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Jawaharlal Nehru were used. The leaders in the second group have changed their identities, but readers are still able to recognize their personalities. G. B. Pant is reflected in the persona of Purva Pradesh's Chief Minister, S. S. Sharma. Next, Damodar Swarup Seth and C. B. Gupta are represented by State Ministers Mahesh and L. N. Agarwal. The last one portrays the new political forces in India. Abdur Rash Mahesh Kapoor and Waris Khan are successful subalterns, idealists, and independence warriors.

Seth examines both the good and bad aspects of people in the novel *A Suitable Boy* by looking at many individuals from his own life. Additionally, he draws attention to the fact that Indian society is largely focused on politics. The religious tension between Muslims and Hindus illustrates how tolerant Indian culture is of all religions.

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