

## Reflection of Social Realism in the Work of Vikram Seth

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### Abstract

*"Realism in writing is a style and approach to expressing reality as it is, free of idealism or romanticism," says Coles' literary lexicon. Literary realism began in the 18th century and peaked in the 19th. The terms "social" and "reality" apply to how people are portrayed in various media. A social realism artist is one that uses realistic art genres to portray real-life social and political issues, racial injustice, economic suffering, and a portrayal of life struggle. Many postcolonial writers employed literature to chronicle harsh socioeconomic realities as well as history, traditions, and customs. It was Vikram Seth who made them realistic. On the other hand, he displays both positive and negative aspects of his societal Vikram Seth are an Indian novelist who uses Realism and its social themes. His major literary works have been analysed using a number of realism principles to assess their reality. It has been demonstrated via extensive research that realism is the predominant narrative method in each of the key works of realistic Indian fiction translated into English. Apart from his unique narrative style and social concern, Seth set himself apart from other realistic writers and became the most prominent writer on the Indian subcontinent. We were able to come up with a definition of realism that is consistent with Seth's works after evaluating many viewpoints. This topic is thoroughly examined, demonstrating that Indian writers in English have a strong affinity for this particular tale form, which is well-suited to fictionalising Indian society and so helps to the expansion of this narrative mode.*

**Keywords:** Realism, social, literature, narrative work, Vikram Seth, social realities, Indian fiction

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian English novel has been around for more than half a century. Kailash Chandra Dutta wrote his first novel, *For 48 hours* in 1945, he took a trip that was published in an 1835 book called *The Calcutta Literary Gazette*. In the book, he told the story of a fictional revolution against British power that didn't work out that well. India's "Father of the Novel," Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was a master of both romantic novels and historical novels. He is often called this because he wrote both. Serialization of Chatterjee's first and only English-language novel in *The Indian field* in 1864 marked the publication of the work, which was his only novel in English. When it was written down for the first time in a book in 1935. In the 1930s and 1940s, three of the most important people in Indian English writing came into the country. They were Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and the Raja Rao. It was a time when India was going through a lot of political, social, and ideological changes. This inspired a lot of Indian English literature at the time. In *Murugan's the Tiller*, which was written by K.S.Venkataramani (1891-1951), it was the author's first book (1927). He was one of the first novelists in history. Most of his work was about rural life in southern India, where he lived. It's a movie about two south Indian friends, Kedari and Ramu, who have very different careers in the movie. *Murugan, the tiller*, is used to show off their work. His second novel, *Kandar* the portrait: a novel of a new India in the making, was written in 1932 and tells the story of an oxford-educated Indian youth who quits his job in the Indian civil service to join the fight for independence. He eventually dies from a police bullet at the hands of the British. It was Flaubert and Balzac who introduced the concept of social realism into the novel in the early nineteenth century and employed it extensively in French literature. In England, George Eliot is credited with coining the term "social realism." Also utilising realism in their work were Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Harold Pinter, and John Galsworthy.

Reality is represented artistically by an Indian writer of English literary fiction. They have a unique ability to capture the Indian psyche in all of its sad flow of life and hold it captive. The component that has an impact on Indian English fiction stems as much from the political and socioeconomic difficulties of the colonised country as it does from the literature of the colonised country. Mulk Raj Anand, Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Rabindra Nath Tagore, and

Sarojini Naidu are among the many Indian English writers who have written in the English language. It is through the works of these writers that the country's sociopolitical situation is reflected.

With *The Golden Gate*, Vikram Seth, India's best novelist and poet, was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award. When Vikram Seth was born, he lived in Calcutta. He went to school in Patna for the majority of his time. Later on, he relocated to London, where he found an opportunity to express himself through the writing of novels in his own unique and captivating way. His amazing understanding of writing weekly magazines enabled him to incorporate genuine embellishing approaches into his works. The majority of his works focused on the home and social aspects of life. With his paintings, he skillfully represented the beauty of relationships, various sexual impulses, sex, and handicrafts. Seth employed a variety of indigenous cultural practises, as well as exaggerated emotional responses.

Prem Nath Seth, his father, was a Bata shoe executive, and Leila Seth, his mother, was a skilled barrister who climbed to the rank of chief justice of a state high court in India, making her the first female chief justice in the country. He is a wonderful representative person who, via his novel, portrays a genuine figure of contemporary society in a realistic manner. He distinguished between the numerous arenas of an individual in terms of race, culture, social class, and gender, among other things.

Vikram Seth is bringing attention to social injustice and focusing light on an existent reality that is often overlooked by the general public. His compositions reveal hidden depths and frequently deliver a stinging rebuke to socially acceptable morality, standards of living, and even the government. In the works *The Golden Gate*, satire and excellent social realism may be seen in abundance. In his stories, the main character bears an uncanny resemblance to the human spirit and psyche, reflecting all of the emotions that individuals experience and fighting between them while accepting their fate. Vikram Seth's style and genre were social in nature, and could be related to everyday life; nevertheless, in hindsight, he methodically converted the tone from realism to something that was almost faultless in its execution.

Literature makes a significant role to critically determining society as well as debating developmental issues, both of which are important nowadays. Even with the assistance of criticism, it is impossible to create a perfect society. It has always been possible to address the intricacies and shortcomings of social, political, and cultural constructs through the employment of literature as a tool. People's issues are the primary emphasis of Vikram Seth's work, which includes socio-political and cultural concerns. They transpose and expand psychologically in their stories, and the majority of the characters are full of vigour and life. When they tell the storey of society and the problems that individuals encounter, they create a captivating image of silliness and dullness in life, despair and misery, and their struggle against a sense of solitude, while also having the fortitude to attain their goal.

Seth has written and published eight books of poetry as well as three novels. *Violinist's Troubled Love-Life* is the subject of the second novel, *An Equal Music*, written by Susanna Clarke. There are also other poems by him that include *The Golden Gate*, *Mappings* (1980), *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), *All you Who sleep tonight* (1990), and *Three Chinese Poets* (1990). (1992). *Beastly Tales from Here and There* is his first children's book (1992). His work *A Good Boy* (published in 1993) is a narrative of a young lady who is looking for a suitable partner for marriage. This novel depicted the true image of society as it was at the time of its publication.

#### **Realism & Social Consciousness in Vikram Seth Narration**

Vikram Seth's writings exhibit a high degree of realism in their different expressions. As noted at the close of the first chapter, his realistic stories, features, the plot's people hip, its adherence to truthfulness and believability, and its distinctive societal objectives all exemplify the elements of Realism. *The Golden Gate* was his debut novel in poetry, and it was followed by the compilation of his magnum work *A Suitable Boy*. *Equal Music* is a brilliant examination of Western classical music through a realistic lens. When evaluating an author's realism, the authenticity and familiarity of the setting, plot, and character all play a significant part. In all three works, the author emphasised his portrayal of average people's daily lives. George Lukacs produced a much-needed sense of history in his mammoth realistic studies. The first two texts are narrated in the third person by an omniscient narrator who observes and relays to the reader the plot's important aspects. The commonality of the individuals and circumstances surely demonstrates the story's credibility. Seth, a true classical realist, relates to characters from the middle class and their sensitivities, and the narrative gives due weight to the lower strata and working class portions of the population. Seth's literary adventure in English Indian literature is extraordinary and unparalleled due to this beautiful game of realism bolstered by an honest and devoted social consciousness.

Realism is different from European realism in Seth's approach. Seth must confront another, lethargic, superstitious and multicultural society. Integration into fiction of such a distinct setting is a Hercules task for the author. Seth employs his own form of realism to describe an Indian society in his greatest opus, which is both politically submissive, economically destitute and socially confined. Seth handles Indian middle class socially mobile in *A Proper Boy*. The European realistic approaches that are fit for industrialized Europe are not suitable for the rising

Indian societies' new phases. That supports the purposeful deviations of Seth from the European realism canons. Thus the realism of writers such as Vikram Seth is not in its actual sense, whether European or Victorian, but a realistic remake that appropriately carries the inconsistencies and orthodoxy of stagnant Indian society. Seth follows European classical realistic norms in regard to the Golden Gate and An Equal Music. However his ideological underpinning is Indian, as he encounters truthfulness in both the novel and his Indianans prevails over the former, when there is a conflict between his European and Indian sensitivity.

A literary force in Indian English literature, Vikram Seth was deeply influenced by the social and political climate of India at the time he wrote.

#### **A Suitable Boy:**

*A Suitable Boy*, released in 1993, was Vikram Seth's second novel and the first to achieve considerable commercial success. It was also his first novel to be translated into English. The images have an almost photographic quality and are meant to convey a sense of India to the viewer. Despite the novel's massive length of about 1500 pages, it has maintained its appeal and, as a result, its financial success. This has prompted critical attention from scholastic circles to the work. An all-encompassing concept in *A Suitable Boy*, the nation extends from the individual to their neighbourhood, to their state, and finally to the entire United States of America.

"*A Suitable Boy*" portrays the post-independence women's attitude, in which women are only concerned with family matters. The social realism of the film displays the social context, including its issues and obstacles, as well as the individual's relationship with the society.

An Indian writer, Salman Rushdie, had already gained widespread critical praise for his novel, "Midnight's Children," when "*A Suitable Boy*" was published (1980). It's worth noting that both Rushdie's novel and Vikram Seth's novel deal with the similar themes of partition and postcolonialism, but where Vikram Seth relies heavily on social realist writing style, Rushdie relies on magic realist writing style. On one hand, India was seeking to build a more fair and just nation while at same time grappling with long-standing practises like caste, untouchability, religious intolerance among others, as Seth illustrates in the early '50s. Seth was born in India in the early nineteen fifties.

Realism, according to Coles' Dictionary of Literary Terms, is "a technique and method of depicting life, as it genuinely is, free of idealism or romanticism," and "a means of depicting life, as it truly is, free of idealism or romanticism." An eighteenth-century literary movement that thrived in the nineteenth century, it advocated for the importance of accurately portraying real-life people and situations in writing. Authors like Balzac, Flaubert, George Eliot, Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollet and Jane Austen captured the essence of adolescence in their works. The study's undercurrents of Social Realism become obvious when examined in further depth. As a writer, you are not alone in creating your work. It is through their art that they are able to express the realities of their lives. Adroitly weaving social realities into his narrative, Seth depicts reality as it is, not an idealised version of it. He depicts both the negative aspects and the positive aspects of the social environment in which he lives.

We are introduced to the Mehra and the Kapoors early in Seth's epic work, two families that are crucial to the storey. Mrs. Rupa Mehra's daughter, Savita, is getting married to Pran Kapoor, whose father, Mahesh Kapoor, is a minister of revenue. The wedding takes place at the residence of Mrs. Rupa Mehra. Additionally, we meet Lata Mehra, the younger daughter of Mrs Mehra. Lata is on the hunt for a suitor, known only as the illusive "suitable boy," which serves as the central plot point of the novel. Besides the Chatterjis of Calcutta, the Khans, and Mrs Rupa Mehra's eldest son Arun, two more prominent families are mentioned in the first chapter of the storey. The Chatterjis are a Bengali family whose daughter Meenakshi is married to Mrs Rupa Mehra's eldest son Arun. Each of the four main families is linked to the others by marriage and friendship. Mahesh Kapoor's son Maan and the Nawab Sahib of Baitar's son Firoz were childhood friends while they lived in the same town as children.

This storey, which is written in the style of a Jane Austen book, is about a mother's search for a suitable boy to marry her daughter, which is reflected in the title of the work. It is established from the very beginning of the narrative with the words "You too shall marry a boy I choose" said by Mrs Rupa Mehra to her daughter Lata. A classmate, Kabir Durrani, is a promising cricketer with whom Lata meets and falls in love. When Lata's mother learned of their connection, she quickly sent her to Calcutta to be with him. Because he is Muslim, she deems him inappropriate for her daughter's marriage. Haresh and Amit, two additional suitors, add to the confusion. Haresh is an ambitious, hardworking, and successful young man who Lata eventually chooses after many twists and turns. Although marriage and love are key themes in the storey, the work's brilliance is not limited to only one theme.

Seth presents the plight of Hindus and Muslims in a realistic manner; they are both distressed for one another, despite the fact that India is a secular society that respects all religious and ethnic groups.

This storey is a collection of parallel love stories that culminate in a marriage. Although Lata and Haresh's journey towards conjugality has been planned by people other than the couple involved, or by society in general, their storey is not a traditional love storey in the traditional sense of the word. In a sense, they are falling in love at the end of the

novel; yet, because the traditional setting of a love story is missing, the love story is inverted. Mann and Firoz's relationship is a love tale in the traditional sense, but it will never be accepted by society or the individuals in their immediate vicinity because of their sexual orientation.

Both narratives have components of social approval and love that are inverted, but in both situations, one of these elements must be sacrificed in order to achieve the other.

Since then, Seth has become involved in political advocacy for queer rights in India, most notably with the restoration of Section 377 in December 2013. In an article that appeared alongside the front cover of *India Today*, he expressed his strong opposition to the motivations that led to the restoration of the law:

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Some Muslims and Hindus still harboured misgivings about one another, and Seth shows this with realism in his film. When India gained its independence from Britain, it took great pride in being a secular state that tolerated individuals of various faiths and ethnic backgrounds. Millions of people had been forced to flee their homes as a result of war and brutality, and it was difficult for them to forgive and forget. There were still a lot of open wounds. Although the Nawab Sahib was a Muslim, she was ready to put up with him talking about his religion. But when he brought up the subject of Pakistani in- and out-migration, it was too much for her to bear. She was feeling unwell. People in Lahore were yelling blood-curdling cries, while the lights in Brahmputur were changed into blazing embers of death.

The societal issues depicted in the novel can be used to analyse social realism as underlined by the novelist. Realist writers, like Seth, explore society's flaws and excesses in great depth, revealing the suffering that exists across the human race. Millions of poor people, despite their newfound freedom, were living in the same conditions they had before. India's problems with poverty, backwardness, a lack of health care, and a lack of education persist. At the Rudhia district, Maan is shocked by the poverty and caste differences that pervade it. "Rasheed's and another family were the only ones who have their own hand pump. The rest of the village's population—roughly 400 families in total—got their water from one of three wells: the Muslim well, which stood in an open space near a neem tree, the caste Hindu well, which stood in an open space near a pipal tree, and the outcaste or untouchable well, which stood among a dense cluster of mud houses, not far from a tanning pit." "The old man and his wife lived by themselves in a single thatched room which they shared at night with their cow and a great number of insects," said Kachheru, who belonged to the chamars, a caste from a hamlet in Rudhia district that was considered the lowest.

#### **Golden Gate:**

The 'Golden Gate' is a poem written entirely in rhyming tetrameter sonnets, which is the manner in which it is written. A total of 594 sonnets are included in *The Golden Gate*, all of which are written in the iambic tetrameter style popularised by Eugene Onegin. There are four rhymes in this pattern, which are as follows: aBaBccDDeFFeGG. The work is structured into thirteen chapters, with each chapter providing a well-balanced depiction of a series of characters' interactions with one another throughout the novel. An amusing romance, it depicts the story of a group of young San Francisco professionals during the time of its release. Their love, loss, personal, and family relationships with one another are all explored in this novel. In this sonnet, a narrative about San Francisco is told in rhyming verse.

Throughout the book, there are five primary characters. They each have their own identity that is defined by the constraints of his or her career, personal life and desires, as well as his or her family and social circumstances and relationships.

In this story, the main character, John Brown, is 26 years old and a recent graduate of Berkley University in California. Despite the fact that he is a successful computer executive in Silicon Valley, he feels lonely. The high-tech computer and electronics business, as well as nuclear research, are two of his areas of employment and specialisations. Ex-girlfriend Janet Hawakaya is of Japanese heritage and is the only person of Japanese descent in the story. The woman grows into his confidante and eventually into his lover once again. In addition to being artistically inclined, she is very sensitive in her personality. "Liquid sheep" is a punk rock band of which Janet is a member. She is the band's drummer and has a significant role in the plot. The former Stanford Law School attorney Liz Dorati has a good profile and is twenty seven years old. She graduated from Stanford Law School with honours.

Modernity is the setting for the novel's opening scene. New difficulties and mentalities have emerged as a result of the dispersed situations of a highly educated individual. Instead of a cheerful and endearing disposition, a dark and despairing state of mind is revealed here. The characters in *The Golden Gate* show their ability or inability to live happy or meaningful lives based on their personality traits. The landscapes of the locations, the social circumstances, the values, politics, and customs, as well as the cuisine, the mood, and the weather, all play vital parts in the lives of the persons depicted in the text.

### **Features of Realism in The Golden Gate**

The Golden Gate is a realistic fictional verse medium adventure novel, the first in the Seth series, and it adheres to all of the realistic elements outlined in depth in the first chapter. The key characteristics of realism in Seth's Golden Gate are explored in this chapter in light of these theoretical claims, as well as two other books, with a particular emphasis on a suitable child. Seth's verse novel, The Golden Gate, adheres specifically to realism canons. The novel is structured in a linear fashion, which is a great characteristic, and is enhanced by a convincing, true plot. Seth's distinctive social concerns accurately represent the anxiety of a modern American culture through prophetic insights founded on intense observation.

### **An Equal Music:**

It was published in 1999, and it is a musical novel and the narrative of a love affair between two musicians, Michael Holme (the protagonist), a music teacher, and a young woman named Julia are all infatuated with each other. When it comes to emotional intensity, Michael is the novel's most vulnerable and vulnerable. He is permanently in grief for his life and for Julia, a woman he abandoned in Vienna ten years ago and who he hasn't seen since. Throughout the course of his daily routines of teaching, solitary practise, and rehearsing, Michael's storey unfolds gradually, and at one point, he even manages to catch a glimpse of Julia. The hunt for Julia, their meeting, and the consequences of their reunion are intertwined with other major themes. -while passing by a bus-whom he had previously loved and left in Vienna and has been unable to locate since.

It is written in first person narrative. Thirty-seven year old Michael Holden is a second violinist on an English quarter called the Maggiore, where he lives with his family. In addition to performing in the quarter, Michael earns extra money by teaching the violin to a small group of music students, one of whom is the subject of a sexual relationship with Michael. Both societal and familial stability and mental and internal stability are depicted in the work, with the latter being the most prominent. It is also often emphasised that devotion to love and music can also lead to a sense of order and stability, albeit of a different variety. Every aspect of the novel An Equal Music qualifies it as a classic. The commitment of music is the theme of the entire narrative.. Their lives are dedicated to the music, as are the characters that portray them. Because Michael and Julia are both musicians, music is portrayed in the narrative as a noble addiction. In the work, a particular characteristic that stands out is the method in which the author manages to transmit music through words.

### **CONCLUSION**

Fiction is a true mirror of society, reflecting the image of society in its most accurate form. In addition, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh's works depict the lives of ordinary people and the problems they face. Generally speaking, a work by Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh is considered to be a realistic picture of life. The novelist, through the medium of a storey, presents to us a picture of the world in which we currently live.

As depicted in the film A Suitable Boy by Vikram Seth, the lives of four families are shown in the town of Brahampur, located between Banaras and Patna on the Ganges. This novel takes place during the tumultuous period of political issues surrounding the 1952 post-independent national election. In reaction to Charles Johnson's translation of Eugene Onegin's Puskin, the author of Golden Gate penned a verse novel in response to that work as an inspiration. In a second novel, An Equal Music, a romantic storey about two talented musicians in London is told. This is the storey of his unforgettable journey from Sinkiang to Tibet, which is depicted in his novel From Heaven Lake as a representation of China, Tibet, and Nepal. Two Jewish relatives, Shanti Behari Seth (his uncle and aunt), tell the storey of his two lives in His Two Lives, which is based on their own experiences.

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