

VIKRAM SETH AS A MULTI-FACETED NOVELIST

Mrs. Karuna Sharma
Research Scholar
Department of English
Himachal Pradesh University
Summer-Hill, Shimla (H.P.)

Dr. Santosh Thakur
Associate Professor in English
Govt. Degree College Rajgarh
Sirmour (H.P.)

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to describe Vikram Seth as a multi-faceted novelist. For this purpose Vikram Seth's all the three novels — *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy*, and *An Equal Music*, set in three different countries, have been taken into consideration. Vikram Seth has presented these societies with their special features that distinguish them from each other. Seth has proved his multi-faceted quality by writing all the novels in different genres — *The Golden Gate* is written in verse, *A Suitable Boy* is the bulkiest descriptive novel in English literature, and *An Equal Music* is a first person narrative novel. Through these novels Seth has proved himself a genius who has a vast knowledge of human nature and feelings, music, legislature, politics, law, administration, religion, rites, cultures, birth-pain, sexual pleasure, and homosexuality. This research paper attempts to highlight Vikram Seth as a multi-faceted novelist.

In Vikram Seth one finds a multi-faceted personality. He has written three novels set in the background of three different countries — America, India, and in a European country. Being born in India and studied abroad he had acquainted himself not only with Indian culture and tradition but Western culture also. In Indian culture he has made the readers familiar with the culture of the Hindu and the Muslim religions and in Western he has described about the American and European cultures, traditions, their way of living, and their mentality. Seth's literature is multi-dimensional, multi-layered and it does not focus on single event or character but there are many stories within the main plot and a host of characters with distinct qualities providing distinct messages.

Vikram Seth perfectly performs his duty as an Indo-Anglican writer, as assigned by Raja Rao in his preface to *Kanthapura*, "We cannot write like the English, we can only write as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us... the tempo of the Indian life

must be infused into our English expression... (Rao: 1977, 1). Seth is master of his craft. He has written poetry, travelogue, novel, memoir, and libretto. He has unique ability and skill to write all kinds of genres perfectly. He writes for children with the same ease and success as he does in writing a romantic or socio-realistic epic. Seth is a versatile writer, a store-house of knowledge, and a huge music enthusiast. Seth is also extremely versatile with languages as he has studied an array of languages, including Welsh, German, Mandarin, English, Hindi and Urdu. He writes in standard International English perfectly and his command in English is the result of his education and stay in abroad. But he does not show his Indian attitude and identity in his works that are set in abroad. He has pin-pointed all the issues of the country or community he has depicted in his novels and made the readers to visualise it with the eyes of their mind without leaving their place. His works leave a lasting imprint on reader's mind. He has ability to write on any subject and issue. "He picks up tales from here and there and everywhere life takes him" (Albert: *RSIRJLE*, May 2014) and with his artistic insight he turns it in his own literary material.

In *The Golden Gate*, Vikram Seth has depicted the life of American people, their way of living, their customs, marriage system and the concepts of romance, love, and marriage. Here he has depicted the life of an engineer, a lawyer, a sculptor, a doctor, and the countrymen in American scenario. The life of an engineer, like John, is described as dull, monotonous and lonely; the life of a lawyer, as Liz is full of aggression; a sculptor, like Janet, has to face criticism and humiliation and has to undergo through a lot of struggle to get name and fame and worldwide recognition; whereas the life of country people as Mr and Mrs Dorati is described full of contentment and satisfaction.

Seth has depicted a range of loves in *The Golden Gate* which are possible and acceptable in a modern metropolis evincing unique culture and lifestyle and the characters' attitudes to love reveal their attitudes to life, to issues though they are beyond the reach of romantic or sexual love. The Americans believe romance and love as a means of getting rid of boredom, to have a company to share ones ideas and feelings and to be happy having a companion. Seth presents the romantic love as a weapon in the battle against the loneliness and boredom of life. John feels boredom and lonely and his anguish and loneliness is universal and it symbolizes the Californian life where he has to struggle for his happiness and existence, learn about his follies, accept his pre-destined fate and is alone in a world where no one can look up to someone for guidance and for spiritual sustenance. Through his characters Seth has described his philosophy of victory of understanding and good sense over romance and passionate love. Phil and Claire fall in love and get married despite of the objections of Claire's family as they do not find Phil a suitable boy and their love marriage starts gasping very early after their marriage and they fall apart very soon. Through the marriage of Liz and Phil, Seth has described about marriage in American society and made us to differentiate between Indian and American marriage system. "It is a traditional church wedding amidst family and friends, with the bride in white, children and cats gorging on the tiered wedding cake and confetti raining down on everyone" (Punekar: 2008, 83).

Seth is a genius as he not only makes the readers familiar with the marriage rites of Indian society which he belongs to but he also describes about the marriage rites prevailing in American and European societies. In Indian marriage system he not only describes about Hindu marriage system in northern India but aspects of marriage in Muslim community also find place in *A Suitable Boy*. It is not easy to have insight and understanding of distinct traditions and rites of different nations and Seth could make himself master of these rites and traditions because of his longing for travelling and his stay in different countries. He has visited different countries and accustomed himself with distinct cultures and traditions. Describing about these different

countries, Seth has enabled himself to compare and contrast the marriage rites of these countries. In Indian marriage system, a bride is clad in red not in white like a western bride. Indian marriage is generally conducted at the home or very rarely in hotels or restaurants but American and European countries marriage is conducted in Church. In Indian marriage, vows are pronounced by the priest but in western culture these vows are pronounced by the couple.

In *The Golden Gate* Vikram Seth has given a minute description of homosexuality through the characters of Phil and Ed. The homosexual relationship of Phil and Ed is described in detail along with the activities, excitement, enjoyment, satisfaction, and urge for it in the participants. Phil enjoys his homosexual relationship with Ed and wants to have it whenever he gets a chance. On the other hand, though Ed believes in the chastity of soul and body, repents about their relationship, yet he also feels a burning desire for it. Seth has described about this relationship precisely and openly as he himself has experienced it. It seems that homosexual relationship is common in American society as Liz does not astound knowing about the relationship of Phil and Ed. On the other hand, in *A Suitable Boy*, a novel set in India; it is just hinted through the homosexual relationship of Maan and Firoz, their caressing, ruffling heads, and sleeping together.

Seth is such a formidable novelist that regarding *The Golden Gate* R.K. Narayan says, “It is a novel in verse form, three hundred and odd pages, written by a young Indian, and it seems to me no small achievement” ([file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview with Indo-Anglian Writers.html](file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview%20with%20Indo-Anglian%20Writers.html)). He further says that it is an extraordinary work. He had never come across any other modern writer who had ventured almost recklessly to narrate a story in verse and when he saw Vikram Seth on a TV interview, he realized:

Here was a genuine writer with the right values, gift and outlook, not writing in order to blow off steam or to reform society but a genuine artist who takes pleasure in writing. Here I found rhyme, reason and humor, and above all sensed a rhythm which “vibrates in the memory” even after the book is shut and put away. Vikram Seth shows absolute mastery of the English Language and has created a unique literary alchemy. ([file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview with Indo-Anglian Writers.html](file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview%20with%20Indo-Anglian%20Writers.html))

Vikram Seth’s versatility is seen in *A Suitable Boy*. He has proved himself a multi-faceted novelist as he has vast knowledge of political, social, and cultural aspects of India. Due to his political perspective, he has made us to know about India’s procedures of the legislative assembly, the procedure of handling a law case, making of a law, election, campaigning and voting system. Seth has tried to erect a true picture of India in her fifties by touching all the possible aspects. He has described religion in politics and politics in religion.

As for his socio-cultural insight, Seth has made us to look deeply into the lives of poor country people, untouchables, women — Hindu and Muslim, their critical situation in their in-laws where their freedom is curtailed, and even prostitutes — without any identity and proper place in the society. Vikram Seth has described about a society where most of the women are “completely neglected and accepted only as a provider of sexual pleasure to man and as a producer of his off spring” (Majumdar, 2004, 7). The pathetic condition of the scheduled caste also find place in the novel where Kachheru, a very old, bonded labourer works earnestly on Rashid’s father’s land throughout his life but Rasheed’s father takes pride in exploiting the helpless tenant and wants to keep him subservient to him. Indian women are presented as living “like clock-work, performing her duties at home without a question or doubt of any sort”

(Narayan: 1977, 108). Through Saeeda Bai, Seth not only refers to the deep love of Maan for the courtesan but also to the continuance of “the tradition that encourages such evils to plague especially the princes, rajas in Indian provinces thereby defaming family’s name and reputation” (Sinha: 2007, 65). Even the helplessness and discomfiture of Saeeda Bai, who silently bears the brunt of Nawab Sahib’s lust in drunken position and becomes unwedded mother of Tasneem, is depicted explicitly.

Vikram Seth’s versatility is seen in his depiction of the procedure of child birth and the unbearable birth-pain. Being a man it is not possible to feel or describe the birth-pain, but Seth has described in such a marvellous manner that one feels to put his fingers into his mouth in astonishment and begins to feel a kind of sensation. There is a description of Savita’s breaking of water-bag, coming of contractions, nurse’s advice to hold on the railing and to push and her lips’ falling apart in agony of unbearable pain. As the baby’s head comes out, Savita feels “a tearing sensation below, then a sudden warm gush. Then more stretching and such pain that she thought she would pass out” (Seth: 1993, 872). Through the character of Savita Seth has described the usual cry of a woman during the delivery that she cannot bear it and that she never wants to have another baby. Seth has given a lovely description of a newly born baby as: “the red, wrinkled, black-haired, bawling baby, covered with blood and a sort of greasy film” (Seth: 1993, 872).

Besides providing the detail of birth pain, Seth has also described about the feeling of sexual excitement and the pleasure it provides through the sexual relationship of Billy Irani and Meenakshi. After performing his sexual activity, Billy lies “panting and pleasantly exhausted, upon her, his head nuzzling her neck” (Seth: 1993, 1130) and when he begins to withdraw, Meenakshi asks him to stay where he is but he has to pull out as he has softened. He feels sorry to Meenakshi saying — “but the thing’s slipped off. It is still inside you” (Seth: 1993, 1131) and when she says that it cannot be as she cannot feel it, Billy says, “Well, it’s not on me, and I could feel it slip off” (Seth: 1993, 1131). It seems that it is not easy to understand the conversation of Billy and Meenakshi without having the sexual experience.

Vikram Seth has presented northern India as a whole before the readers to know it, to appreciate it, particularly its moral values, ages-old culture, traditions and to learn and adopt it in their lives. Seth has also described about Indians’ faiths, beliefs, superstitions, and women’s regard for their husbands — their life-long owners. As a realist fiction writer, Seth gives the reader the feel of the event, “almost as if he or she has ‘entered’ the scene in some way” (Singh: *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, August 2014). He has presented north India with the descriptions of the life of doctors, professors, ministers, house-wives, prostitutes, shoemakers, scheduled castes, businessmen, lawyers, tenants, landlords, poets, saints, and university scholars and painted every aspect of their lives explicitly on a vast canvas. Seth has presented multi-perspective issues in his novels, especially in *A Suitable Boy* and regarding this aspect of Seth Archana Verma Singh says: “Vikram Seth attempts to truthfully and accurately represent life, in all its manifestations...The author genuinely holds a mirror to society...One is reminded of R. K. Narayan and his unforgettable characters who inhabited the fictional village of Malgudi” (*Global Journal for Research Analysis*, August 2014).

The life in boarding school and bullying of the younger ones by their seniors; conflicts, competition and struggle in university professors for higher post; politics in ministers and personal hatred and jealousy is also pointed out here. People’s faith in religion is described through the references of Pul Mela, descriptions of saints, *Nagas*, Sanki Baba, adherence to rituals and a simple faith in the superior wisdom of a Guru, Dipankar’s wandering in search of knowledge, descriptions of *Ram Lila*, *Bhart Milap*, *Karva Chouth*, *shraddhs*, funeral ceremony,

as well as Muslim festivals like — *Muharram*, *Bakar-Id* and process of their celebrations. Through the character of Dipankar Seth has criticised the irrationality of the educated man who runs behind the superstitious people striving to seek knowledge or blessings from the *sadhus* or *Babas*. Seth's message is that going on a pilgrimage, having a dip in Ganges to purify their sins, or relying on *Baba's* assurance only explains people's need and desire, but not faith in God.

Seth has depicted the mentality of Indian people about romance, love and marriage thoroughly. In India, romance, love, passion, and love-marriages are discarded totally and more preference is given to arranged marriages. It has been proved through the marriage of Arun and Meenakshi that love-marriage, based on passion ends in failure as they are not satisfied with each other, do not share their feelings and ideas, and there is no mutual understanding, trust or faith between them which is the basis of successful marriage. On the other hand, the other couples enjoy the bliss of married life and there is a hope of Lata and Haresh's marriage being successful, as their marriage is based on the strong foundation of trust, mutual-understanding, and regard. By Lata's sane decision about marriage with Haresh, Seth has propound his theory about victory of certain virtues over passion. Thus Seth has explored many aspects of Indian life: "arranged marriage, independence, love, family, prostitution, politics, poverty, culture, and individualism—all under the grab of a gently-paced tale of social manners" (Gupta: 2005, 62).

In *An Equal Music* Seth has created a living, breathing world that enchants and grips the readers and as a love-epic of Michael and Julia, it depicts the concepts of romance, love, and marriage thoroughly. Seth has presented them as music students, lost deep in love but fall apart before their love could bear any fruit. They meet again after ten years' parting and they establish physical relationship despite of Julia's being married to James. But sexuality is acceptable neither to Seth nor to society. So, Seth has made her to recognise the value of marriage and to return back to her loving, caring, helpful, and understanding husband renouncing her passionate love for Michael who later goes to call girls to have solace. Seth has made the two lovers realise that they cannot resume their earlier intimacy because of the existing facts of life. In response to Jay Curry and Michele Denis's question, was it a conscious decision to make *An Equal Music* as a complete departure from *A Suitable Boy*, Vikram Seth says, "I don't try to do something new each time, it's just that I don't flee from it if it happens to be new. In this particular case the idea seized me. It was the opposite of something I would have decided for myself. I didn't want to write about music..." (*January Magazine*, June 1999).

Seth is also good in medical science as he has the knowledge and understanding of the problems of deafness and neurosis or nervous breakdown. "Throughout the novel Seth demonstrates that Julia's deafness does not remove her from wider human nature and prevent her feeling the intensities of human emotions against the stereotypes which imply that disability somehow renders a person impervious" (Rees: *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, November 1999). Vikram Seth has described about another medical problem, the periodic collapse of control which overtakes Michael at moments of crisis. Seth has deftly described these physical and mental problems and the condition of people who suffer from these affiliations. He has acquainted himself with the knowledge of medical science, some diseases, symptoms, and the sufferings a person has to undergo because of these mental and physical problems.

Seth is a musician in his own right altogether as he said in an interview that he definitely does not have the professional competency or expertise in music. He has learned Indian classical music, and plays the flute and the cello. He took lessons in Indian classical singing also. *An Equal Music*, with the musical background running right through the story, "it definitely needed an author with enormous musical inclination to be able to write it so effectively"

(<http://www.indoamerican-news.com/?p=7504>). This book discloses Vikram Seth the musician. Vikram Seth is good at music and there is some kind of music on every page providing the ethereal framework to the novel over which the fragile gossamer threads of the love story are woven. There are references of first violinist, viola player, cellist, second violinist — different musicians, as well as, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Bach — virtually all the great masters. It bewilders Indian readers who are not familiar with the works of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Hayden and Schubert and know nothing about fugues, scherzos, adagios, arpeggios and movements in this or that letter of the alphabet. A musician going deaf in a novel about music is a great idea. Seth has perfectly depicted a deaf musician in *An Equal Music* and regarding the idea of introducing a character who is a musician but is also deaf, Vikram Seth says:

This is a tricky thing. I'm not sure I want to talk too much about it, because of the shocks that a reader might get is not — well, I made sure it didn't exist on the blurb and so on. I can imagine that being a composer and being deaf is not such a deficiency, because at least you can write the notes, but to perform without actually having aural feedback... (*January Magazine*, June 1999).

Seth weaves the novel in a realistic web of musicians, critics, rehearsals, music, musical instruments, relationship between the musicians — their disputes, resolutions, living like an integrated family. Love and music are the two operating themes in the novel that run simultaneously and even sometime merge with each other in perfect equilibrium. Vikram Seth is such a versatile writer who knows very well that “whatever aspects of life the novelist may choose to write about, he should write of them with the grasp and thoroughness which can be secured only by familiarity with his material” (Hudson: 1910, 133).

Literature is the mirror of society and it reflects the particular society in its true form with its features or limitations. As all the novels of Vikram Seth are set in different countries, so it will be easy to have a comparative insight of three distinct countries — their cultures, religions, traditions, rituals, beliefs, people's attitudes, and other activities. His novels can be studied as a comparative study of Eastern, particularly Indian; and Western, particularly American and European culture and traditions. All the countries have their own distinct cultures, moral values, and other special hallmarks and Seth has made us to peep into the lives of the people of different countries and to know about the social, political, economic, religious scenario of the particular country. To glorify Indian culture, Seth has depicted Lata and Savita as two sides of the same coin of Indian womanhood. “Savita is the epitome of the duty-bound, culturally traditional girl, whereas Lata represents the changing persona of the Indian woman — her first tentative steps towards broader horizons of free India” (Gupta: 2005, 61).

Seth is a master in the delineation of characters of foreign countries also. He has depicted not only the characters of Indian society but American and European characters also with the same artistic insight and presented them breathing full life. In response to a question if it was hard to write of English characters as an Indian or to get under the skin of a character with a different cultural background, Seth replies that he couldn't have done it, if he had not lived in England. He explains: “When you write about someone, you get the information you need...I'd been in England as an undergraduate; I lived there for a number of years...altogether about seven years in a staggered way. And I love western music. So it was not a completely world” (Mohanty: 2007, 248).

Vikram Seth has propounded his philosophy of the victory of family, good judgement and understanding over passion and love in all the three novels where all the three main female

characters reject their passionate, over-demanding lovers and choose mature, practical, understanding persons who settle their feet firmly on the land of reality. Liz rejecting John marries Phil; Lata rejecting Kabir marries Haresh; and Julia rejecting Michael returns back to her husband, James. There is a victory of practical, mature, understanding persons over passionate lovers in the long run of life. Phil finds passion prelude to disaster, Julia feels that she has to learn peace again, Lata feels her feelings for Kabir confused, jealous and obsessive and their choice is for family over passion. Love is regarded as a fleeting, transient, uncontrollable feeling and a person cannot rely totally on love or passion but he must have to face the realities of the world to lead a happy life. Love and passion lead a man to the world of short-lived dreams, away from the world of realities where one cannot reside for a long time and the world of dreams is totally different from the real world, it is a kind of escape from the realities of the world but after enjoying the world of dreams one must have to return back to face the realities of life. All the three female characters return back to the world of reality in time and save themselves from drowning totally in the world of romance, love, passion, and dreams. Seth has emphasized that “the true meaning of life is to be found in arranged marriages, the renunciation of sexual domination and tolerant participation in the family matters” (Sinha: 2007, 60).

Seth has deep insight of marriage, the circumstances after marriage, and he also feels that marriage is such a relationship “where accepting each other with their imperfections is the key” (*Daily Excelsior*, 17 February, 2013). Through the marriage theme Seth has depicted three different societies — American, Indian, European — their values, and traditions. The family as a social unit is dying in the West, particularly in the UK and US, but it still have value in Indian society and makes a wonderful subject for novels. In American society, “...there is loneliness so intense that people build walls around themselves to convince themselves that they are islands, there is self doubt, unrelenting professional pressure, no set of values to live by, confused moral codes, and ever increasing alienation from the human touch (Gupta: 2005, 44). In Indian society, marriage is considered a sacrosanct custom and a basis for society. There are different types of systems of marriage but Vikram Seth is in favour of arranged marriage and considers it a source of happiness and bliss in life.

Vikram Seth has emphasized that the family is a source of inevitable warmth, happiness, tranquillity, and bliss but it must be made of suitable life-partners sharing mutual understanding and respect. Marriage with a suitable life-partner provides basis to the stable and happy family. Such emphasis on familial relations may be termed as a traditional outlook of life. But in the fast changing societies where values, relationships are at a stake, where separated families, divorce cases are on rise, Vikram Seth has provided a soothing balm to the weary minds by emphasising the value of family. Seth compels his characters to search for true meaning of life, to assume responsibility for their actions instead of blaming the world for everything that goes awry.

In the delineation of the theme of love, there are eternal triangles in all the three novels of Vikram Seth and the third situation is the usual or normal triangle of two men and a woman. In *The Golden Gate*, there is a triangle between Liz, John and Phil where Liz marries Phil and rejects passionate John; in *A Suitable Boy*, the triangle is between Lata, Kabir and Haresh where Lata marries Haresh rejecting her love for Kabir: In *An Equal Music*, the triangle is between Julia, Michael and James where Julia returns back to her caring husband, James, despite of her love for Michael. Seth has proved himself the best craftsman in dealing with these triangles as prevailed in most of the Hindi films.

Seth has reiterated that marriage is not mere physical gratification but it is “a commitment of inter-personal trust, faith, concern, love, caring and sharing in life” (Sinha: 2007,

134). Physical love seems enchanting only at the early stage, but it dissipates later resulting in unnecessary and purposeless continuous rifts. Mutual understanding, love, trust, respect, and caring is the basis of a successful marriage and a successful marriage is the basis of happiness, prosperity, and peace in life.

Seth's novels are written in a globalized age — an age when the whole world has limited to one family because of means of transportation and communications. Seth has acquainted himself with different cultures of the world. His works reflect his global nature and one can find dumb-struck at his depth study in all the novels as well as other works. He has used traditional subject and form in his novels as he accepts: “Although my books are set in different countries, I don't feel it makes me one of those stereotypical cosmopolitans who have a sort of mixed cultures” (Velamani: *The Criterion*, December 2013). Seth is the master of different literary styles and genres and he has used different styles and genres while depicting different countries. As Jayashree Hazarika says:

His poetry, novels, a novel in verse, a travelogue, a libretto, a memoir, all these reflect his inclination to travel on uncharted territories and very few people can claim to have achieved fame by experimenting with such different genres. Even his works reflect a global nature in the variety with which Seth provides his readers. One can only marvel at the length he went to so as to give such an in-depth study in all his works. (*The Criterion*, December 2013)

Generally a writer's own views and nationality appears in the works he creates, but it is not true with Vikram Seth. Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land*, where he writes about other countries, writes from an Indian point of view. But Seth is totally different from all such types of Indian writers as: “He gets inside a culture and writes from the point of view of a person who belongs to that culture and hence he skilfully hides his Indianness...He gives an authentic representation of those settings which he achieves after a rigorous research and this makes him an international writer” (Hazarika: *The Criterion*, December 2013).

Seth seems to prefer a synthesis of the individual freedom of western culture to the values of traditional Indian society. Seth portrays the universal culture, distilled out of his eclectic reading, moulded with his experience, his hobby for travelling, and personality. “World-wide travel has given Seth the tremendous advantage of a wider exposure of life and communication across cultural barriers and cultural background — Indian, English, Chinese and American” (Velamani: *The Criterion*, December 2013). Though Seth is born in India, educated in abroad yet he conceals his Indian identity while writing about foreign countries and does not write in the favour or disfavour of that particular country. The novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* are set in American and European countries but no one can find any clue of cultural afflictions of the writer. He does justice with all the novels and the depiction of culture and society of that particular country or place. When Vikram Seth is blamed to set his novels in different countries and he kept just moving, he says:

But I know that I would be bored unless I wrote a book that in some sense was a challenge. And this might mean I vary the form by writing a poem or a play or a novel. Or set the stories in different countries. Or write in the first person as opposed to the third. Or in the present tense as opposed to the past. Or a very long novel as opposed to a short one. ([file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview with Indo-Engl Writers.html](file:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview%20with%20Indo-Engl%20Writers.html)).

Vikram Seth is “undeniably a writer among writers, someone who can be called the master craftsman of his generation” (Albert: *RSIRJLE*, May 2014). All the novels are different from each other in relation to genre. *The Golden Gate* is written in verse and it is one of its features. It needed a special craftsmanship to write a novel in verse. *A Suitable Boy* is set in India and it is the bulkiest novel ever written in English literature. It focuses on multi-perspective issues of Indian society. *An Equal Music* is a novel about minute details of music and it is not easy for an average reader to understand it who has no knowledge of music. This novel is written after much research by Seth and this is evident from the minute details of the music, tunings, arrangements and performances of concerts, and of the heated arguments amongst the characters regarding the nuances of their performances. Seth has focused on different cultures. Though Seth could have let the Indian culture of classical music creep in *An Equal Music* but he does not do so. Nor does he let the British culture interfere with his characters in *A Suitable Boy*. He is a “global writer and reading him has been a great pleasure” (Hazarika: *The Criterion*, December 2013). Seth is termed the first international writer in terms of locations of his works and genres. During an interview with Ameena Meer, Seth tells that the main responsibility of a writer is “to make sure your work is interesting and substantial. Variety is my way of doing it” (<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1377/vikram-seth>) and Seth has proved this quality in all the three novels. Vikram Seth has proved himself a versatile, multi-faceted, effusive, dedicated, and obsessive novelist ready to write down something new and mind-boggling, whose mind always wanders to germinate new ideas to be produced in his writings.

Works Cited:

- ‘Vikram Seth by Ameena Meer.’ <http://bombmagazine.org/article/1377/vikram-seth>. Retrieved 19 October 2015.
- Albert, Rajula. ‘Vikram Seth: Writer of Multivalent Identity.’ *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations*. May 2014. ISSN 2320 – 6101.
- Currie Jay, Denis Michele. ‘Hearing a Different Music.’ *January Magazine*, June 1999.
[File:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview with Indo-Anglian Writers.html](File:///C:/Users/hp/Documents/Interview%20with%20Indo-Anglian%20Writers.html). Retrieved 19 October 2015.
- Gupta, Karanvir. “The Love Journey.” *Daily Excelsior*, 17 February 2013.
- Gupta, Roopali. *Vikram Seth’s Art: An Appraisal*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2005.
- Hazarika, Jayshree. ‘Globalization in the Works of Vikram Seth.’ *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, December 2013. Vol.4 Issue-VI.
- Hudson, William H. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. Great Britain: George Harrap and Co., 1910.
- Majumdar, Maya. *Social Status of Women in India*. New Delhi: Dominant, 2004.
- Mohanty, Seemita. *A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth’s Poetry and Fiction*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2007.
- Nandkumar, Sowmya. ‘Vikram Seth — A Multi-Faceted Writer, Polyglot and Perhaps Even a Musician.’ <http://www.indoamerican-news.com/?p=7504>. Retrieved 19 October 2015.
- Narayan, R.K. *The Painter of Signs*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1977.
- Punekar, Rohini Mokshi. *Contemporary Indian Writers in English Vikram Seth: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., 2008.
- Rao, Raja. *Kanthpura*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971 (1938).

- Rees, Jessica. “An Equal Music.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Vol. 92, November 1999.
- Seth, Vikram. *A Suitable Boy*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1993.
- Singh, Archana Verma. ‘Social Realism In Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy.’ *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, August 2014. ISSN No 2277-8160.
- Sinha, Prerana. *Vikram Seth The Suitable Writer: A Critical Response*. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2007.
- Velamani, N. ‘Ethnicity in the Novels of Vikram Seth.’ *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, December 2013 Vol. 4 Issue-VI.