

ROMANCE AND LOVE IN THE NOVELS OF VIKRAM SETH

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Abstract

The objective of the present paper is to analyze the significance of romance and love in human life and particularly the American, Indian, and European societies. For this purpose Vikram Seth's all the three novels — *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy*, and *An Equal Music* have been taken into consideration. All the three novels have been written in different countries — America, India, and Europe but one common aspect lies in the victory of family over romance, love, and passion. All the heroines of these three novels favour family over romantic and passionate love. They do not find peace, satisfaction, and security with their passionate lovers and choose to live with mature and sensible husband. This research paper attempts to analyze the concept of romance and love in relation to these three countries. Besides it, it will study the concept of romance and love not only in social or cultural perspectives but in psychological perspective also.

Fiction or novel writing is one of the genres of English literature. Though India is the fountain source of story-telling, yet novel was imported from the West and is a notable gift of English education in India. "The appearance of fiction as a literary form following Western models is in itself a cross-cultural phenomenon. It is the emergence of a new genre of writing resulting from the meeting of two cultures" (Dhawan: 1998, 4). The tradition of Indian novel writing began with Bankim Chander Chatterji's novel *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). A multitude of novels are deposited in the store-house of Indo-English literature on social, political, historical, feministic, and East-West confrontation themes. A sudden flowering of Indian English fiction came during the Gandhian era (1920-1947) and the three major novelists of this era — Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao invented some of the most significant and distinct themes as the ordeal of the freedom struggle, the communal problem, the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the economically and socially exploited people. With the passage of time, many changes came in the theme, style, content, tone and tenor of the novel. The 1980s witnessed efflorescent emergence and maturity of new Indian English fiction heralding a new era of change

in its content. The new novelists as Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghose, Vikram Seth, born and brought up in the post-colonial world, handle the English language in perfect and excellent manner. If Salman Rushdie incorporated 'Magic Realism' in Indian English fiction, the role of Vikram Seth is also praiseworthy for flourishing social realism in Indian English literature. Many women writers as R.P. Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Nina Sibal, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Namita Gokhle, Shobha de also contributed in the flowering and peaking of Indian English fiction with their invaluable novels. Though fiction has been imported from the West, but it is no alien now as Indian novelists have made it their own by handling it deftly and taken it to the summit of popularity.

Vikram Seth, a formidable poet, novelist, travel writer, librettist, children's writer, biographer, and memoirist was born on June 20, 1952 at Kolkatta in the house of Prem and Leila Seth. He is the eldest child of his parents. Vikram Seth got his early education in reputed Public School in Dehradun, graduation from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, post-graduation in Economics from Stanford University in California, U.S.A., and enrolled himself for Ph.D. in the same University but could not complete his thesis because he was so much inspired by Pushkin that he started writing *The Golden Gate* in a hotel where he was staying with his family to celebrate the occasion of the publication of *From Heaven Lake* in London. When he returned to Stanford he devoted himself to *The Golden Gate* and his dissertation work went out of the window. He confessed in *Two Lives* that "my dissertation work fell by the wayside, and I devoted myself to *The Golden Gate*" (Seth: 2005, 35). Seth's decision to relegate his thesis to the backburner alarmed his parents, Shanti Uncle, Auntie Henny, Vikram Seth himself but he determined to keep his creativity alive and made up his mind to return to India with a purpose to write a novel set in India without caring for his dissertation work to be completed. Seth had to understand the varied worlds of law, politics, administration, medicine, farming, manufacture, commerce, education, music, religion and almost every aspect of Indian life and society to write a novel set in India so it took him seven years to come out with this massive novel, *A Suitable Boy*. With his mind set to write a novel about London he writes *An Equal Music* which is a rich tribute to Western classical music. Inspired by his mother Seth writes *Two Lives* about the life of Shanti Uncle and this book is a "memoir, biography, and represents the Seth family anew" (Punekar: 2008, 8).

Seth is a versatile writer and his prodigious literary career has encompassed several books of poetry, travelogue, verse novel, memoir and his each book is set in different cultural background and written in a distinct form and genre. Seth has written three novels and all the novels are set in three different countries and through his novels Vikram Seth has made the readers to be acquainted with the culture of different nations. He portrays the world culture, distilled out of his eclectic reading and world-wide travel and moulded by his own personality. Seth has proved himself as a multi-faceted writer because of his deep and amazing artistic insight and bagged many prizes and awards as: *Thomas Cook Travel Book Award*, *Commonwealth Poetry Prize*, *Ingram Merrill Fellowship*, *Guggenheim Fellowship*, *Sahitya Akademi Award*, *Irish Times International Fiction Prize*, *Commonwealth Writers Prize*, *Emma*, *Order of The British Empire*, *Pravasi Bhartiya Samman*, *Padam Shri Award*, *The 25 Greatest Global Living Legends In India*.

In all the novels of Vikram Seth, the theme of romance and love occupies an important place in the development of the plot. In the surface both romance and love seem to be same thing but they are quite different from each other as romance is "an exciting, usually short, relationship between two people who are in love with each other" (Hornby: 2005, 1319). It is a short-lived

attachment, fascination or enthusiasm for someone. It can also be described as the expressive and pleasurable feeling and an emotional attachment towards another person associated with sexual attraction. “During the initial stage of a romantic relationship, there is more often more emphasis on emotions — especially those of love, intimacy, compassion, appreciation, and affinity — rather than physical intimacy” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))). True romance means to do something special or unexpected for the person you like. It is a natural feeling for someone as it is neither manufactured nor imposed but it is completely individual. It can be shown by a hand written note, by going out for a walk or doing something special for the lover. It is used to establish and maintain intimacy and emotional closeness in a sexual relationship when both the partners become able to understand each other completely without saying a word. The passionate affection and intimate sexual relationship or desire felt by lovers for each other is called romance. It can develop before or after marriage. It is the beginning of falling in love deeply.

Love is “a strong feeling of affection for somebody that you are sexually attracted to” (Hornby: 2005, 913). Love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. The word ‘love’ refers to a variety of different feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from genetic pleasure to intense interpersonal attraction. It may also refer to the passionate desire and intimacy of romantic love, to the sexual love of *eros*, to the emotional closeness of familial love, or to the platonic love that defines friendship, to the profound oneness or devotion of religious love. Love is less sexual and more emotionally intimate form of romantic attachment. Psychologist Robert Sternberg formulated a triangular theory of love and argued that love has three different components: intimacy (psychological feelings of closeness), commitment (the sustaining of a relationship), and passion (physical arousal). Intimacy is shown in friendships and romantic love affairs, commitment is the expectation that the relationship is permanent, and passion is related to sexual attraction. The traditional psychology views love as being a combination of companionate and passionate love. Passionate love is intense longing, and is often accompanied by physiological arousal as shortness of breath, rapid heart rate but companionate love is affection and is not accompanied by physiological arousal. Helen Fisher, a leading expert in the topic of love, divides the experience of love into three overlapping stages: lust, attraction, and attachment. Lust is initial feeling of sexual desire, attraction is a romantic desire for a special person for mating and these stages are considered temporary but third stage called attachment is long-term relationship lasting for many years and even decades. Fisher concludes that “Love is a natural drive as hunger” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))). C.S. Lewis treats love under four categories based on four Greek words as: affection (*storge*), friendship (*philia*), eros (*eros*), and charity (*agape*). *Storge* is affection of parents for their children, *philia* is love between friends, *eros* means being in love and it is based on erotic bond, *agape* is love for God and it is unconditional love that serves regardless of changing circumstances. Love is a kind of immeasurable or fathomless ocean in which a person drowns or merges fully. It is selfless give and take and a beautiful gift of God to human beings on this earth.

Vikram Seth is world famous for his social realism and in his novels he has presented three distinct societies — American, Indian, and European. The theme of a novel is woven around the members of the society and the description of any society or its family is incomplete without the description of romance and love. The theme of romance and love is prevalent in all the three novels of Vikram Seth. The pervading theme of *The Golden Gate* is romantic relationship and it is presented as “a possible weapon in the battle against the loneliness of life” (Jayabharathi: *Language in India*, December 2013). In this novel there is the depiction of

romance of John and Janet during their college time as well as their later romance when John feels isolated being deserted by Liz. John in his carefree youth has not given his love and romantic affair with Janet the attention it deserves and by mutual consent they feel “their union would constrict / Their separate lives” (Seth: 1986, 1.11) so they agree upon an interdict to part and go about their singular ways and shelter their friendship from all passion. Being deserted by Liz, John feels aloof and goes to call girls to have peace of mind and it is Janet who supports and soothes him with her love and care and brings him out of the clutches of cute chicks. Their old love and romance rekindles and they enjoy each other’s company, going for walking, and spending time together in love-making. But God had planed otherwise and their love and romance ends in nothing as Janet meets an accident and dies without expressing her liking for John.

Vikram Seth has satirizes romance and romantic relationships in *The Golden Gate* and most of his sonnets are associated with the feeling of romantic passion and love. The romance of John and Liz is the result of an advertisement, or a weapon to kill his boredom, sadness, and loneliness. “Their immediate and violent attraction for each other is physical...and their minds seem to have little room for rational thought” (Punekar: 2008, 87). Romance is short-lived and transient and a research by Pavia University also suggests that romantic love lasts for about a year, before being replaced by a more stable form of love called companionate love. John and Liz meet on a winter Sunday, are in bed by Thursday, but part before the summer is out. The marriage of Phil and Claire is the outcome of their physical attraction and passionate romance but their romance also falters very soon after being married and they get divorced within six years of their marriage. Their romantic relationship failed because “it was not based on the foundation of a strong familial network” (Punekar: 2008, 87). Opposite to the views of Pavia University, Stony Brook University suggests that “some couples keep romantic feelings alive for much longer” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))) and the relationship of Phil and Liz proves this statement as they try their best to continue their relationship even after being married. They marry in haste and romance develops between them after marriage. Phil calls passion as a prelude to disaster and feels there is something special in their relationship that makes him sure that their bond can last five decades more.

The theme of *The Golden Gate* is man’s search for love and the various mishaps that befall him in the course of that search. John has a love-affair with Janet during their college days but they both find it a restriction on the freedom of their life so they decide to live in separate and independent ways. Later he finds himself unaccountably sad, lonely, and gloomy and seeks Janet’s advice to kill his boredom. Janet prescribes him to have a lover who can care for him and make fun with him. As a result of an advertisement John finds Liz as a lover and they find diving in the ocean of passionate love very soon after their meeting. Vikram Seth has satirized love in *The Golden Gate* and said that love is the friction of two skins. Expressing her views about love, Jayabharathi says, “Love is not merely the friction of two skins and any lasting relationship cannot be predicted on a sexual or chemical affinity but must be based on respect, trust and understanding” (*Language in India*, December 2013). The trust or belief is the basis and foundation of true love and if disbelief enters love, the building of love shakes badly and collapse without any hope of reconstruction. A destructing disbelief enters in the relationship of John and Liz when John gets a letter for Liz from Phil and their relationship collapses totally without any hope of reconstruction and Liz marries with Phil in haste, leaving John to pine alone. Seth propagates his theory of love that love means sacrifices if it is true, otherwise it leads to break-up. If it is only limited to physical love, charm, or attraction then it is short-lived. Liz

represents Seth's notion of love as her relationship with John dies as it was based on physical attraction whereas her relationship with Phil is hoped to be sustained longer as it was based on mutual understanding, trust, and regard.

“Love is the medium by means of which man can redeem his life” (Gupta: 2005, 49). There is a great power in love and it can lead a person from wrong to right path, to the peak of success, happiness and satisfaction. This is the outcome of Janet's love for John. Seth, the patient moral teacher, gives John another chance to revive his love relation with Janet which had ignited six years ago in Janet's heart. In Janet's love John forgets the betrayal of Liz and enjoys loving and soothing company of Janet. Love is not a feeling at all, “but rather is commitment to, and adherence to, loving actions towards another, oneself, or many others, over a sustain duration” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love>). When the love between John and Janet was advancing to the pinnacle, God wished otherwise and John loses Janet in an accident without expressing their love to each other. After her death John becomes insane and feels Janet's presence around him all the time and sees her in his dreams. There is no one to console him except the imaginary voice of died Janet. Seth seems to suggest that it is balanced friendship and affection which can prove to be more long-lasting and John's later relationship with Janet proves this.

Karen Horney indicates that “the overestimation of love leads to disillusionment; the desire to possess the partner results in the partner wanting to escape, and the taboos against sex result in non-fulfilment” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))). The marriage of Phil and Claire is the result of love and in the beginning of their married life there was love between them but they live apart because they do not try to understand, accept, appreciate each other and Claire feels that Phil dominates her. It was Phil's desire to possess Claire that led her to escape from Phil and to go to another man leaving Phil and Paul, their son. Their relationship did not work because it was not based on the foundation of a strong familial network. Phil could not understand what has happened to their love, what has crept into their happiness and consoles himself that the rings encircling their fingers, like love encircling their life, were not made of steel, but of soft gold. According to Lewis's categorization of love, the love of John and Liz, John and Janet, Phil and Claire is *eros* type of love as they come closer by erotic bond and there is passionate and sexual desire and longing for each other. According to Helen Fisher's stages of love into lust, attraction, and attachment, the earlier relationship of John and Janet, John and Liz, Phil and Claire can be termed as merely lust and attraction but the later relationship of John and Janet and Phil and Liz is based on attachment as it involves feeling of security and safety and it is not based on merely shallow physical attraction and infatuation.

Inter-community or inter-racial love and romance is one of the much used themes of the European novels and Vikram Seth has also used this theme in his novel *A Suitable Boy*. The novel recounts the inter-religious or Hindu-Muslim romance and love of Lata and Kabir and their relationship lies in the centre of the novel and it weaves the whole fabric of the plot that is set against a backdrop of communal conflict in post-independence Brahmipur. This novel is chiefly the depiction of ill-fated romance and love of Lata and Kabir, Maan and Saeeda Bai though to some extent the romance and love of Haresh and Simran and unexpressed romance of Tasneem with Firoz, Ishaq Khan, and Rasheed is also discussed here.

Romance usually implies “an expression of one's strong romantic love, or one's deep and strong emotional desire to connect with another person intimately or romantically” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))). The ill-fated romance of Lata, a Hindu girl, and Kabir, a Muslim boy, starts without any deliberations. They are university students and meet in a book shop accidentally but with the passage of time their romance blossoms to deep love. Lata

enjoys Kabir's company, goes for boating in the Ganges to the Barsaat Mahal, walks hand-in-hand along the edge of the river, and even they kiss each other. "The joyous escapade, the youthful exuberance, the sparkling love, the shy intimacy, the comfortable camaraderie, all combine together, with the majestic Barsaat Mahal, standing as a mute witness to their romance" (Mohanty: 2007, 218). The romantic, impulsive Kabir kindles Lata's passion, without thinking what he would do with her aroused sexuality, his lack of financial stability, and the result of inter-religious marriage in the rigid Indian society in 1952. Lata is so much entranced by Kabir that she becomes ready to elope with him and asks him to take her away but Seth, as a sensible moralist, does not allow this elopement because it would be a blot on Indian society and culture. When her mother comes to know about their romantic affair and takes her to Calcutta, Lata could not forget Kabir, her heart pines for him; she dances with him in her imagination, dreams about him in her sleep and remains lost in his thoughts. Seth has glorified family over passion and love in *A Suitable Boy* like his other novels and made Lata to understand the value of family and to decide to marry practical Haresh deserting passionate, dashing, and romantic Kabir. He has made Lata to confess, "When I am with Kabir, or even away from him but thinking about him, I became utterly useless for anything. I feel I am out of control like a boat leading for the rocks — and I don't want to become a wreck" (Seth: 1993, 1298). The romance of Lata and Kabir could not sustain itself much longer because of the social, religious, and familial restrictions imposed in an Indian society.

Romance is a strong, sometime short-lived attachment, fascination or enthusiasm for someone. It is the expressive and pleasurable feeling and an emotional attraction towards another person associated with sexual attraction. Some philosophers describe romance as "merely a mean combining liking and sexual desire" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))). The relationship of Maan and Saeeda Bai, a prostitute, is another remarkable romantic relationship of this novel. It is a young man's infatuation for a thirty-five years old courtesan. He notices her at his home on the occasion of Holi and gets so much fascinated with her sensuality, charm and beauty that he could not get her out of his mind. Maan becomes a regular visitor of Saeeda Bai and their romance deepens with the passage of time. Being a prostitute, Saeeda Bai has many admirers but Maan is the only one whom she both likes and feels she can have almost complete control over. She feels satisfaction in the loving arms of Maan. "He who is not jealous cannot love" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))) and it is proved true in relation to Maan and Saeeda Bai. Once Maan becomes jealous seeing another pedestrian approaching her house, his blood runs cold with shock and suspects that it could only be Saeeda Bai whom the other man was going to meet and goes back to her house to make it definite though there follows a kind of misunderstanding between Maan and Saeeda Bai over this man, Firoz. In this trifle Firoz gets bounded by the knife in Maan's hand and Maan is sentenced to jail for stabbing Firoz. During his stay in jail, Maan keeps on thinking about Saeeda Bai but returning back from the jail, a sudden change comes in the relationship of Saeeda Bai and Maan. After his mother's sudden death, Maan loses interest in Saeeda Bai, does not respond to her letters, and even does not go to meet her. "He rejects the very physicality that had attracted him in the first place, and feels only a deep loathing in her presence" (Prasad: 2005, 127). Their romantic relationship comes to a melodramatic end with a similar rejection of sexual passion. The romance of Saeeda Bai and Maan is also inter-religious and inter-faith relationship which is doomed from the beginning like the romance of Lata and Kabir. In Seth's theory romantic passion must necessarily end in some loss, since life is too frail to endure ecstasy. Their romance starts gasping very soon and after

lumbering for some time, it ends hopelessly. Through the romance of Maan and Saeeda Bai, Vikram Seth has proved the victory of reason and good judgement over passion.

Haresh has a romantic relationship with Simran, a Sikh girl, during their college days but her family was against their love affair and proved an obstacle in their romance. Haresh waits for Simran for a long time but all his waiting bears no fruit and he accepts his defeat before religious and social bindings. Seth has not made Haresh to do something amoral that goes against the traditional Indian culture. In the same way, Firoz has romantic passion for Tasneem but unlike Maan, Firoz is neither impulsive nor hot-headed and does nothing to pursue his love like Maan by throwing all cautions to the winds, but acts in much more sensible and level-headed manner. In Seth's theory passion is always synonymous with disaster and Firoz's uncontrollable passion for Tasneem suffers a similar kind of fate as Maan's passion for Saeeda Bai, though in a different way as Tasneem later turns out to be his own half-sister born to Saeeda Bai and his father Nawab Sahib. Rasheed, a self-sacrificing and righteous person, who is already married, is driven by subconscious guilty passion for his student Tasneem, suffers frustration in his passion for Tasneem and commits suicide on the bank of the Ganges. He gets nothing for harbouring secret passion for Tasneem and it seems that by introducing these scenes of despair, Seth wants to tell the readers about the consequences of the sinister evil of sexual passion. Another person Ishaq Khan enters in Tasneem's life. He has deep liking for her and becomes irritated when he calls him Ishaq Bhai. Though the romance of Tasneem occupies a small portion of the novel, yet it enables Vikram Seth to propagate his theory of victory of good judgement and sense over passion. All the three lovers of Tasneem belong to Muslim religion and there might not be any religious restriction in the flowering of their romance but Seth does not make them to do something asocial and immoral that goes against Indian culture though Rasheed loses his life in frustration.

A Suitable Boy is a novel about heartache, love and passion of Lata and Kabir, Maan and Saeeda Bai and some other minor characters as Haresh, Simran, Tasneem, Rasheed. In this novel Lata falls in love with Kabir, flirts with Amit, and chooses to marry Haresh. Lata develops a love affair with Kabir, a Muslim boy who is the first boy to enter her life. Their initial kindling of interest and curiosity leads to love and passion over a few discreet meetings. This novel is set against Indian social, political, and cultural background soon after Independence where inter-religious romantic relationship or love is not permissible. Caste, religion, especially Hindu-Muslim relationship, stands as a hurdle in the path of flowering of passionate love. Lata is also aware that "her relationship with him is impossible knowing the taboos against Hindu-Muslim unions in the cultural and religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent" (Jayabharathi: *Language in India*, December 2013). Though her mother takes every step to keep Lata away from Kabir but she could not erase the memories of Kabir from her mind and heart. Lata feels turmoil in her heart and even before two weeks before her marriage with Haresh she thinks about Kabir and their love for each other. Since there is no escape from the complications that life poses before her, she becomes a bit fanciful and develops a childish longing to run away from Haresh, Kabir, Hindus and Muslim, and everything passionate. It seems that Kabir has possessed Lata completely and put up a complete hold on her heart, mind, and even on her life so she rejects passionate Kabir and holds the hand of practical Haresh forever. Lata has turmoil in her mind about Kabir and thinking over this issue deeply, she comes to a conclusion that although she loves Kabir beyond any limits and is unable to get him out of her mind, yet she cannot be in love with him as she loses all her feelings when she is with him. "I am not myself when I am with him. I ask myself who is this—this jealous obsessed woman who can't get a man out of her

head—why should I suffer like this” (Seth: 1993, 1296). In respect to Helen Fisher’s division of experience of love into three overlapping stages: lust, attraction, and attachment the love of Kabir and Lata falls in the second stage of love, attraction as they are not driven towards each other because of merely sexual desires or lust, they do not pine for sexual fulfilment but their love goes much further though it could not cross the limits of the third stage, attachment which is based on commitment for marriage and children. Their love is romantic attraction, nothing less no more of it.

Maan feels attracted by Saeeda Bai’s charm and beauty and falls in love with her passionately without thinking about her religion, age, and social standard. He feels unable to bear the separation from his beloved. He pines for her living in Rudhia where he has gone to learn Urdu to understand her art, and even in prison and feels a burning desire to see her. Though Saeeda Bai is a prostitute and it is her profession to entertain people in their distress but she does not feel liking for anyone than Maan. She becomes jealous when she sees Maan kissing Bibbo, her maid. She experiences the pangs of separation from Maan and realizes that she is in love with him. A sudden change comes in Maan after returning from the prison as he does not think or want to see Saeeda Bai and acts as a sensible and mature person. He realises that he has to lose his mother because of his immoral passion for Saeeda Bai. Love is a medium of renunciation and redemption of a character. Maan is transformed by remorse; “he renounces his passion for Saeeda Bai and bears the guilt of his mother’s premature death with a sorrow but profound maturity” (Sinha: 2007, 68). It seems that Maan learns a lesson through the hard way and unbearable suffering and from a frivolous character he becomes a sober, mature, and understanding person. According to Helen Fisher’s theory of love, the love of Maan and Saeeda Bai is just lust as they pine for each other to establish physical relationship and sexual relationship remains in the centre of their love and whenever they meet, their main motive remains sexual intercourse. Their love could not develop to the second and third stage of love — attraction and attachment and it dies hopelessly. According to C.S. Lewis’s categorization of love, the love of Lata and Kabir, Maan and Saeeda Bai, and the love of other minor characters is *eros* type of love that is based on erotic bond. This novel describes the tension between romance, love, and reality of life and it seems that Seth has made all the characters to put their feet firmly on the land of reality otherwise they would have to find themselves surrounded with problems.

An Equal Music is chiefly related to the romantic relationship of Michael and Julia but there is also a reference of the romantic relationship of Michael and Virginie. “Romance is the expressive and pleasurable feeling from an emotional attraction towards another person associated with sexual attraction” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))) and this type of sexual relationship is established between Michael and his music student Virginie who is sixteen years younger than Michael. The romance of Michael and Virginie is the outcome of their sexual attraction and aims to fulfil their sexual desire and it lacks the emotional attachment and feeling of passionate love. Their romance is short-lived and ends very soon after a year of their meeting and they could not form a lasting bond of companionate love as it was based on physical attraction and bond to be died soon.

The main romantic couple of the novel is Michael and Julia who are music students, meet in a music concert at Vienna and within a week of their meeting they become lovers. They spend time in each other’s company, go out for a walk in the woods in full moon night, and kiss each other. But their romance could not develop much further and because of a row with his teacher Karl Call Michael has to leave Vienna as well as Julia. After realizing his mistake, Michael tries to contact with Julia through letters and phones but it bears no fruit as her father tells him that he

had hurt her enough and he remains empty handed. Michael spends ten years away from Julia without any contact between them but he could not forget her. A miracle takes place in Michael's life and he gets a sight of Julia for some moments in a bus opposite to his, tries to get her but could not succeed in his mission and again remains empty-handed. Julia re-enters Michael's life when she sees him in Wigmore Hall and goes to congratulate him for his brilliant performance. After this meeting their romance and love rekindles despite of her being married to James, an American banker and having a son, Luke. They develop physical relationship, enjoy making music together, and her absence seems unbearable to Michael. Seth has provided a reference of their passionate sexual relationship as; "The sun falls on our bodies. She does not want the blinds drawn. I ran my hands through her hair...We make love not with tenderness but with ecstasy born of starvation" (Seth: 1999, 137). Michael and Julia do not lose any possible opportunity to meet and enjoy sexual relationship. Julia gets a chance to go to Vienna to take part in a concert as a pianist with Michael and other fellow musicians and they spend a gala time in each other's company in Vienna and Venice. They enjoy sexual relationship, dance together, get a shower together, enjoy drink in a bar, and at night fall asleep in each other's arms.

Seth glorifies family over passion in all his novels. In *An Equal Music* he has made Julia to realise her guilt of establishing sexual relationship with a person other than her husband and made her to return back to her loving and caring husband. Julia finds it impossible to reside in two worlds and enjoying Michael's love for some time, her conscious pricks her for her treacherous activity against her loyal and faithful husband and decides to return back to her husband. Romance and love is "a natural drive as powerful as hunger" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))) and Michael feels such a drive for Julia as returning back to London, he could not control himself and goes to meet Julia despite of her refusal to meet her and kisses her though she asks him not to do that. Now a time has come in Julia's life when she has to choose between her family and her lover and she chooses her family and husband over her lover that is the main purpose of Seth's theory to propagate the victory of family over passion. The romance of Michael and Julia comes to an end because of his over-demanding nature as he wants to possess Julia completely and Julia is not ready for it. The research of Pavia University about romantic relationship to be ended within a year seems true to the romance of Julia and Michael in Vienna as they fall in love within seven days of their meeting and get separated within a year. When they get a chance to renew their romance for the second time they are fed up with their sexual relationship very soon and besides it, Julia favours the stable and lasting bond of family over transient and impermanent romance. The research by Stony Brook University proves true to the relationship of Julia and James as they understand each other, help and co-operate in the best possible way, and try to continue their relationship throughout their life.

An Equal Music is "a serious and poignant love story" (Mohanty: 2007, 228) of Michael's intense love for Julia whom he loses twice. Love is an internal feeling that resides in innermost part of our heart which can only be felt but not expressed. This novel addresses difficult issues of love and life. Julia and Michael, the lovers of the novel, meet in a concert and their initial interest in each other very soon kindles into love. But because of a row with Karl Call Michael leaves Vienna and Julia, flees to London, and the loving couple falls apart. Julia shakes badly because of Michael's sudden departure from Vienna as well as her life; she tries to pick up the pieces of her life and marries James, a Londoner. Michael feels sad at the loss of his beloved and accepts that "I was her first love, as she was mine. Nor have I ever been in love

since...” (Seth: 1999, 83). Michael has to live for the next ten years with the burden of loss and foolishness which was the result of his anger and a violent decision made in hurry.

Love is a feeling of heart that never dies despite of living away from the lover. Michael and Julia could not forget each other despite of their painful separation and their love rekindles at meeting after ten years of painful separation and they establish physical relationship despite of her being married and even having a son. The flame of love rekindles in the heart of Michael, which was never extinguished altogether, at the chance sighting of Julia on a bus and tries his best to get her. They again meet in Wigmore Hall by chance and since then their meetings and love making continue. Love means to be delighted by the happiness of another. Julia meets Michael despite of her being married to James, accompany him to Vienna and Venice, plays for his happiness, and makes a promise to play the Art of Fugue for him. But very soon Julia understands the value of family over love and returns back to her husband. It is Michael’s tendency to possess Julia that made her to escape from passionate Michael to her loving, caring, and mature husband. Julia tells Michael, “I have become restless with you, and uncertain, and afraid, and guilty, and unsustainably, stupidly full of joy and pain – none of which is anyone’s fault but my own.” (Seth: 1999, 324).

Love is “a less sexual and more emotional intimate form of romantic attachment” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_\(love\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love))) and the love of James for Julia is not based on just sexual passion but it is an emotional bond. James helps and supports Julia in her state of being deaf without any selfish motif, and his love is higher than just sexual attraction. According to Helen Fisher’s stages of love, the love of Julia and Michael is based on lust as it is sex-oriented but the love of James and Julia is based on attachment as there is feeling of security and safety, and sharing a home, parental duties, and mutual defence.

Love proves a means of redemption for Michael as enjoying Julia’s music at Wigmore Hall, he feels satisfaction, it brings him maturity, a better sense of understanding, and he decides not to think or pine for what has lost and cannot be regained and enables himself to struggle in the world without Julia. He has learnt acceptance and it has brought him serenity. Like all the other novels, Seth has presented romance and love as a weapon in the battle against the loneliness of life. The sexual and passionate love of Michael and Julia is described as short-lived and transitory as compared to strong and selfless bond of Julia and James. At last true and companionate love becomes victorious over passionate and sexual love. In all the novels Vikram Seth has glorified family over love and the heroines prefer family over romance, passion, and love. Liz prefers Phil over passionate John, Lata finds Haresh suitable than romantic and dashing Kabir, and Julia returns back to mature James deserting passionate and demanding Michael. They all feel satisfaction and security living in family than in passionate love.

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