



The Demonstration of Indian Virtues in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*

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T. R. Deepak

Head and Assistant Professor, Department of English
Government First Grade College, K. R. Nagar, Mysore, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Indian literature has provided a platform for the writers to highlight the virtues of human civilization. The diversified attitude of people is emanated with the purpose of reviewing social, political and historical characteristics. Vikram Seth is one of the protuberant novelists of Indian literary consequence. He has exerted on the ideals of human virtues and principles in his colossal expression *A Suitable Boy* (1993). The novel deals with the post-independent groundswell of cultural India. He has interlaced the epitomes of society, politics and history bearing in mind the rootedness of common folk. The insight of the novel generates a kind of impulse among the bibliophiles with a sequence of queries and assumptions about the animation of social order. It also shed light on the identity, religious and national predicaments which are treated as inherent in India. The novel is an embodiment of satires perceived in the history of Indian humanity. It also embarks on the subjects of Indian National Politics till the period of first post-independent elections. The antagonism between Hindus and Muslims, workers and landlords, liberation of women and academic activities are interwoven in the literary output. Lata, the protagonist has been able to sustain the Indian aesthetics and illustrates the motivation in ascertaining her discrete aspiration. Love is the most important aspiration of human endurance, but it should not be the final optimal. An individual must be prepared to reform his choice and brand life as a meaningful one. Hence, the research paper makes an effort to demonstrate the Indian virtues in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* within the modern context.

Keywords: Demonstration, Diversity, Virtue, India, Sensibility, Vikram Seth, Lata

India is considered as an essence of intellectual disposals at distinguished divisions of human exuberance. Such an exuberance of diversified virtues is truly emanated in the literary transcripts of Vikram Seth. Being a novelist and cartographer, he has been able to perceive great success with the remarkable novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993). Soon after the publication of the novel he enjoyed greater recognition and emerged as proficient to win the Booker Prize in 1993. The colossal communication has not only impressed the lovers of literature and reviewers, but also critics athwart the world. It is also known for its length that ever published in a solitary volume in English language. Significantly the novel is deliberated on the manifestation of diversified virtues like society, politics and historical reminiscences. Even it has introduced bibliophiles to variety of sensations with lucid depiction of India and its landscapes. Namita Gokhale opines:

Vikram Seth is an international writer about human beings, not as a peddler of Indian exotica... His genius should be evaluated in his control over his material, and in creating a credible world-in-itself which he can cohabit and explore. (Qtd. in G. J. V. Prasad, 2011)

The subject of partition and independence has countersigned vigorous transformations in the history of India. But the novel is set and concentrates more on the issues of post-independent India. The narrative technique employed by the novelist has made readers to compare the novel with eminent personalities like Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand.

The novel exposes an unusual credence in the prospect of truthfulness and exemplification. It also strives to pass through a comprehensive situation with the intention of refurbishing Indian sophistication. The refurbishment is witnessed when the first general elections is held for the parliament of India. The novel possesses a tone of secularism and displays the principles associated with secular mode of human conduit. Primarily, it is a psychological manifestation where the legitimacy stays in its vibrant associations with culture and civilization.

The nature and prophecy of Indian society is very much exposed in the first segment of the novel. Conversely, the subsequent part of the novel deals with questions which endorse the diversity and the prophecy that is already exposed. The different layers of human problems like identity, religiosity and nationality are apparent within the sphere of society, politics and history. Here, it is sensible to state that the secular nostalgia of novelist is verbalized within the margins of sovereign state. The novelist has confined himself to the accepted notion of nation and contracts with particular matters. The subject of communal harmony has always been important considering the multi-faceted structure of human existence in the country. Thus, the specific issues are made to function with the purpose of foreseeing communal coordination and monetary development.

A Suitable Boy is not only observed as a social satire, but also professed as a universal antiquity. Many of the subjects delineated in the novel contract with the ideals of national politics of India. It is witnessed in the time where the nation has led to the first post-independent general elections held in 1952. The issues like nationality, religion, status of workers, landlords, women empowerment, land reforms and academic concerns were of greater significance. The originality is maintained in typifying the prospects of sovereign India reflects the intellect of novelist. The familiarity of Indian society is a recurring stratagem of author and is personified through proper knowledge. The reader is placed in a position to feel as if he is sitting at home in imagining the narration of novelist. With his brilliant usage of vocabulary, he pushes the readers to perceive the act in some manner and become part of the scene. In "Secularism in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*",

Neelam Srivastava states:

The novel addresses India's part as a way of responding to contemporaneous historic-political configurations and in the sense... He goes on to add that a characteristics of a historical novel is that its version of the national past implicitly projects an ideal present and future for the nation. (2003)

The juxtapositions like society, politics and history are implanted in *A Suitable Boy* and assist to recall the days of post-independent period. In order to justify his literary insights, the novelist has discovered vivid characters in the novel. The everlasting theme of love has been able to ascertain its veracity in few fragments of the novel. But the ambiguity between love and marriage occupies the core of narration. The concept of marriage raises questions whether it is meant only for love or family or tradition or security. The female protagonist Lata is known for displaying the old fashioned edifice of life. All the collective elements of society and human existence are typified in characters like Maans, Sharmas and Kapoors. Here, the characters are assigned certain roles to express the diversified virtues of India. The readers can foresee Maan as 'the playboy', Varun as 'the rebel' and Arun as 'the social climber'.

Nevertheless, the novel integrates information in a chronological order with the intention of demonstrating truthfulness and verifiability. Much debated issues in the parliament like the 'Zamindari Scheme' has its origin in authentic proceedings before the independence. This issue has advocated the readers about the intuition of narration. The description made by the novelist benefits to validate the character and legitimacy of history. The actual narration once again goes on to corroborate truthfulness observed in the imaginative world. Conversely, the pictorial novel overlaps the situation of family with the issues of society, history and particularly politics. The collective principle in respective of these dominions is the humiliation of family in society. These virtues have physically leaked into the ethics of melody, nuptial and legislation which has chronically flown into principles, moralities and governments.

On the contrary, the novel never makes an

exertion in anticipating the curves, metaphysical knowledge and perpetual facts of human nature which emphasize the epic descriptions in the antiquity. The novelist also employs the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial literature to initiate the situations prevailed in India. The apprehensions of style, method, semantics and presentation are inattentive as the literary demeanor deliberately outdoes the inordinate practice found in the conventional novels of English. The novel tolerates the metaphors of a temperate India convincing everyday through the forms of a tedious mundane. But the foremost picture that emerges in the world contains the qualities of Edenic story. In relation to the Edenic story, the results have insufficient significances beyond the choice made in the concerns of love, marriage, family, success and happiness.

The novelist has bequeathed the image of India as a stranger and one understands his dearth of seriousness. The Indians have developed two vitalities for their overall development. English has found a place for achieving academic excellence, whereas the aesthetic values of India provide them a kind of solace in life. In this colossal exertion, the novelist has setup a positive background of society and history. This setup helps to mark a straight orientation to various rudiments and fashions a hybrid society. The protagonist Lata appears hesitant to walk in the road of definite customs and ceremonials of India. Love is the epicenter of every virtuous act displayed by the novelist. Even in the scenario of politics also the notion of love acts as the domineering factor. But the female lead Lata observes the theme of love at the initial stage and affirmatively censures love as an unexciting theme.

Amit is a budding poet and spends most of his time in composing poems of different stature. On the contrary, Haresh Khanna is known for concrete ethics in his admired exertion. The obsessive Dr. Kabir Durrani is the perfect suitor for Lata. He is gifted with a firm and intense attitude of positive mindset. In the novel, the character of Kabir is conflated for superior qualities not found in Amit and Haresh. With his virtuousness, he is considered as a lucky mate for Lata. Unfortunately, he is not accepted by Lata keeping in mind her identity based on religion. It clearly typifies the impact of religion and spiritual

values on women in India. The ‘playboy’ Mann endeavours to have political influences for asserting his identity. But he was stabbed by his close associate Firoz. Lata does not tie knot with either Kabir or Amit. Hence, the novelist displays his characters known for passion and reformation in their own ways.

The female lead Lata is quite vibrant and courageous in making her pronouncement. She never advocates the concept of union between Hindus and Muslims. While analyzing the character of Lata, the dual attitude of novelist can be observed. He presents his ignorance against the communal coordination through eccentricity of Lata. In addition, he campaigns for the affiliation of Maan and Firoz in an ironical way. It was noticed that the condition of Lata to marry Kabir is an act of foolishness. As the female lead is accustomed to Hindu identity, it is better not to force her to accept the hierarchy of society. Instead, it is quite correct to underscore the harmony between Hindus and Muslims. But, it is not an easy task to proceed with the desires of the society. Yet, the warm relationship is very much probable between Hindus and Muslims. But novelist never makes a sincere attempt to precede the marital knot between them.

Lata, the protagonist is also completely adhered to the identity constructed on the principles of Hinduism. As an individual she adores Kabir very much, but her commitment to the codes of Hinduism forces to reject him. She has promised to tie knot with Haresh, but at times her inner voice moves towards Kabir. One can observe the real admiration of Lata that swift towards Kabir forever. On the contrary, she is very clever and intelligent to permit her sentiments unrestricted. She understands the need and responsibility for her conventional family. She has developed an intellect to decide on the acts of illusion and reality in life. Though she never loves Haresh, still she decides to marry him in a condition of ascertaining the identity. This act is critiqued by Malati and Lata merely tells her that desire had basically fragmented their family. It was uttered with a special reference to the man called, Kabir.

These instances provide us a clear picture of two different marriages in the traditional society of India. The first instance of marriage throws light on the

need of marriage for the sake of ascertaining love. But the other instance sheds light on the importance of upholding culture and tradition through marriage. It also acts as a cultural puzzle on the issues of family consent and safety for the future. Here, the attitude displayed by the protagonist Lata smashes not only her love, but also breaks the hopes of readers. Ultimately, the protagonist nurtures the culture of India and highlights the familial responsibility in society. The novelist has advocated on the sensibilities of India and through his literary personality nurtures the different virtues of society, politics and history. Even he never tries to project the morals of inter-caste and inter-religion nuptials in his colossal countenance. In “A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth’s Poetry and Fiction”, Seemita Mohanty writes:

The experiences and entanglements of four moderately rich Indian families connected through marriage or friendship, at a period of time when India was experiencing her post-Independence turbulences. (2007)

The novel has dealt with the models of Indian society emanated during the post-independent period. The performance of the lead protagonist puts us before the idea and mindset of women folk who traverse emotionally. The protagonist develops an intellect where she needs to visualize both the internal aspirations and responsibilities in the family. To certain extent, it proves her intellect of national identity and refuses to put herself in the world of colonial virtues. The novelist has dispensed more moralities and shades confining him to the Indian nostalgia. The literary insight of an outsider understands the intellectual sphere of the novelist who is deeply rooted to nationality. Yet the descriptions presented in the novel provide the discernment of both an insider and outsider. Being the observant followers of literary mechanisms, the readers are able to connote both the strengths and weaknesses exploded in the traditional society.

Conclusion

Most of the times literature invites the readers to feel the fragrance and redolence of gardens in the human ambit. A profound perusal of the novel manifests the diversified virtues, desires

and principles of Indian ethos. Vikram Seth has seriously pronounced social, political and historical apprehensions in *A Suitable Boy*. The novel institutes him as an Indian emigrant and praises highly for his profound knowledge on truth, philosophy and human nature. This underscores his colossal description that embarks on the history of post-independent India. It is successful in delineating both the certainties and uncertainties of delightful folks and realm. Moreover, the novel keeps the readers away from mutinies, famines, droughts, anarchies and civil wars. But the rudiments of culture, tradition, heritage, society, politics and history have bestowed the readers with Indian sensibilities.

To put in canister, the inner voice of human life cherishes to sway away from the conventions. The elements of love, desire, passion and sensual vigour becomes the choice of individual animation. In the world of opportunities, people are not able to make proper choice as they are born with certain limitations and restrictions. If they abide with these drawbacks, they will be able to withstand greater admiration and safety. But the individual who surpass these borders is definite to counter the obstacles. Amidst all the fortunes of life, the inordinate people are not endowed with delicacies of internal happiness and contentment. These delicacies are artistically expressed in the mechanisms of literature. Thus, Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* has undertaken an initiation to demonstrate the Indian virtues as discussed for the furtherance of human life in the terrain of creation shaped by Supernatural Spirits.

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Author Details

Dr. T. R. Deepak, *Head and Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government First Grade College, Mysore, Karnataka, India, Email ID: abcdpqrs789@gmail.com.*