

## RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN MARRIAGE IN VIKRAM SETH'S A SUITABLE BOY & TWO LIVES

### Article Particulars

Received: 05.02.2018

Accepted: 27.02.2018

Published: 27.03.2018

**M. DAYANA CATHERIN**

Department of English, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women  
Oddanchatram, Tamil Nadu, India

### Abstract

*Vikramseth is an Indian novelist, poet and travel writer, best known for his epic novel 'A suitable boy'. He has been in the field of writing for more than three decades and is regarded as one of the most influential writers of the modern era. His first book, a collection of poems titled 'mappings' did not get much attention. But he came into attention with his second book 'From heavenlake' which chronicled his journey from China to India. The novel 'The Golden Gate' published in 1986 made him one of the most highly acclaimed novelists of his time and the book won him plenty of accolades from readers as well as critics. However, it was his novel 'a suitable boy' that really catapulted him into the league of the most well-known novelists of his time and remains his most famous work. The novel is one of the longest novels written in the English language and he is regarded as a modern classic due to the range of topics that it touched upon. He has received several awards including Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi Award, Pravasi Bhard Samman, WH Smith Literary Award and Crossword Book Award. Seth's collections of poetry such as 'mapping' and 'beastly tales' are notable contributions to the Indian English language poetry canon.*

### Religious intolerance

The meaning of *religious intolerance* and *religious tolerance* are closely tied together. Unfortunately, the latter has two distinct meanings. Religious and social conservatives often interpret the phrase as related to a person's beliefs about other people's different religious beliefs. It means that to be tolerant, one must accept all religions as equally valid and true. This is close to a religious concept called pluralism which states that all religions are true and valid within their own cultures. One problem is that if diverse beliefs are all true, then absolute truth does not exist. These conservatives generally find unacceptable. Also, taken to a logical extreme, this definition of tolerance would require people to accept the existence of Yahweh, Allah, the Wiccan goddess, Thor, re, Jupiter, Venus, Diana, Fergus, etc. as real gods and goddesses. Among other individuals and groups, religious tolerance is related to a person's actions in response to other people's different religious beliefs and practices. It means that one must avoid oppressing or discriminating against persons whose religious beliefs are different from ours.

It is a statement of fundamental human rights. It is like racial tolerance, gender tolerance, etc. You probably don't agree with what other people believe, but you extend them the freedom to be live and act as their religion requires.

The mere statement on the part of a religion that its own beliefs and practices are correct and any contrary beliefs are incorrect does not in itself constitute intolerance. Religious intolerance, rather, is when a group specially refuses to tolerate practices, persons or beliefs on religious grounds. An excellent definition of religious tolerance is published on apologetics index, an evangelical Christian counter-cult web site. Webmaster Anton he in defines it, "acknowledging and supporting that individuals have the right and freedom to their own beliefs and related legitimate practices, without necessarily validating those belief or practices".

The freedom of individuals to believe in, practice, and promote the religion of choice without interference, harassment, or other repercussions as long as practices based on, or resulting from, those beliefs do not break the law.

The follow of discouraging religious freedom and the freedom to express and or support all or certain religious beliefs with repercussions ranging from discrimination and harassment to avoidance and action Does not cover legitimate legal measures designed to prevent and or prosecute illegal practices such as fraud, tax, avoidance, murder, terrorism, acts designed to undermine the government or the constitution, the use of unethical persuasion tactics, etcetera.

- Refusing to acknowledge and support the right of individuals to have their own beliefs and related legitimate practices.
- Also, the unwillingness to have ones own beliefs and related practices critically evaluated.

The following do not constitute religious intolerance;

- Exercising the right to challenge religions claims. For example, regarding alleged compatibility with or superiority over, other religious beliefs.
- Condemning and disallowing illegal practices.
- Rejecting a movements claim to be a religion when there is sufficient evidence showing religion is used as a cover. For example the church of scientology.

Acknowledging and supporting that individuals have the right and freedom to their own beliefs and related legitimate practices, without necessarily validating those beliefs or practices. We divide religious intolerance into four forms, depending upon the perpetrator and the intended target.

- Inter-faith intolerance in Hindu and Christian conflict.
- Intra-faith intolerance in Muslims.
- Intolerance by from a faith group against a spiritual group.
- Intolerance by a secular group against a religious group.

The followers of most religions feel that their beliefs are true and that beliefs of other groups are at least to some degree false. By itself, this stance is not dangerous to public order. However, profound evil can result when they also oppress other religious groups, discriminate against them, or disseminate hatred against them. If they go to the next step and believe that followers of other faith groups are sub-human, then all the prerequisites are in place for mass crimes against humanity, genocide, and still another holocaust. We have seen such criminal acts in recent decades in northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Cyprus, Nigeria, Sudan, middle east, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, east timer, India, srilanka, Philippines, etc.

According to the 19<sup>th</sup> century British historian a mold Toynbee, for a religious establishment to persecute another religion for being wrong ironically puts the persecuting religion in the wrong. Undermining its own legitimacy. They modern concept of intolerance developed out of the religious controversies between Protestants and Catholics in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century England. The doctrine of *religious toleration* at this time, sought to eradicate religious sentiments and dogmas from the political demesne.

One of the love killers in marriage in marriage is religious arrogance and intolerance. Religious means devout, or concerned with religion. A person concerned more than others in religious matters is said to be religious fanatic. He or she is called a devout member of that religion. The example of this occurs in all religions and their denominations. Arrogance means overbearing pride or self importance. Intolerance means, unwilling to tolerate the opinions of others and beliefs Religious arrogance means a person who has overbearing pride or self importance more than others. This brings about religious intolerance. Many devout believers in whatever religion exhibit religious pride or arrogance. Some husbands and wives have destroyed their families as a result of religious pride and arrogance.

### **Religious Intolerance in a Suitable Boy**

A suitable boy is the story of lata mehra and her search for a husband. The novel opens with the wedding of lata's elder sistersavita to pran Kapoor and Mrs. Rupa mehra's edict to Lata, you too will marry a boy I choose, soon afterwards , Lata falls in love with a dashing young student at her university. Whose name is Kabir Lata is Hindu, and kabir is a name used by both kindus and Muslims However, it turns out that kabir is muslim. Laata's mother discovers the liaison and bans it because she cannot bear her daughter to marry a muslim. She whisks Lata off to Calcutta and institutes a search for a more suitable boy, which turns up Haresh. He is a Hindu of the right caste who works in the shoe industry. In Calcutta, Lata meets the famous poet, Amit chatterjee, who is her brother's wife's brother, and he becomes third suitor. The plot is, in part driven by the puzzle as to whom Lata will marry Will her mothers's. Anti-muslims prejudice be overcome and kabir be deemed suitable in the end, or will lata defy her mother in order to marry him? Alternatively, will she accept one of the other suitors? Many of the main concerns of the novel are present in Lata's story.

The relationship between the Hindu and Muslim communities, the importance of caste, love and marriage, and the family. These concerns are echoed and developed in the lives of four families around whom the narrative is organized. Three of them, the Mehras, Chatterjis, and Kapoors, are related by marriage. The fourth family, the Khans, are friends of the Kapoors. Large landowners and also, unlike the other three, Muslim. The stories of these families bring in other issues of the value of work, the process of change, the injustice of poverty, and the direction taken by the newly independent and democratic India. The novel is not only a love story but also a depiction of India. It portrays only a specific piece of it, the middle and upper classes of North Indian society in the early 1950s. Its depiction is broadly speaking, comic and tone varies but is most often light, and the plot finishes with a wedding. This is traditionally a happy ending.

### **Religious Intolerance in *TWO LIVES***

Vikram Seth's second non-fiction work, *TWO LIVES*, is the story of a century and of a love affair across an ethnic divide. As the name suggests, it is a story of two extraordinary lives, that of his great uncle, Shanti Behari Seth, and of his German Jewish great aunt, Henny. *TWO LIVES* is divided into five parts, beginning with the teenage author going to live with his uncle and aunt in England for higher studies at the Tonbridge School. His first year is followed by intense travel in Europe. After completing his A-levels, Seth moves on to continue his education at Oxford and Stanford, all the while remaining in contact with his guardian uncle and aunt. The story delves intricately into the ups and downs of the lives of his uncle and aunt.

*Two Lives* is an example of healing through language also with respect to the biographer. It is Seth's own script therapy. After the personalized, intensive contact with German history had made Seth literally speechless and unable even to read the German language, his resumed work on the biography made him renegotiate his relation to the language which he first learned to love, then to hate, and then after a hard internal struggle to love again.

Though Seth's intention of bringing Henny to life sacrosanct in every sense, his act of peeping through the private life of a reserved person like Henny and making it available for public display borders on the verge of voyeurism. In thirty-eight years of their marriage, Shanti never came to know about the contents of that trunk, which clearly suggests that Henny never wanted anyone to see them. It contained an extremely private aspect of her personality which she did not want to share even with her husband, not to say with the public. The epistolary narrative employed in *Two Lives* thus problematizes the dialectics of public and private.

### **Religious Intolerance in Marriage in Vikram Seth's *Suitable Boy* and *Two Lives* – A Comparative Study**

The theme of religious intolerance runs heavily throughout the novel. Religious difference prevents Lata and Kabir from fulfilling their hearts' desires for each other. The Raja of Marh becomes the arch symbol of religious militancy with his erecting the Temple of Shiva adjacent to a mosque. The phallic symbol of Shiva he intends to use as the centerpiece of the temple is an act of spite designed to insult Muslims. On both sides, riots and attacks occur in the name of religion. Saeeda Bai, the courtesan, is diademed

by the Hindu society more for her religion as a Muslim than for her lifestyle. When the holy days of both religions happen to coincide, even death results when neither side is willing to give way to the other the religious intolerance theme occurs when Maan travels to visit the family of Rasheed. He is only begrudgingly accepted by most of Rasheed's family after he demonstrates not so much his tolerance of their customs as his indifference to religion in general. That Truce, however, runs thin after Maan is accused of attempted murder of the young Muslim man, Firo Khan.

This thesis focuses on the Vikram Seth's narrative techniques, similar to Salman Rushdie who exploited the creative potential of English in *A Suitable Boy* and *Two Lives*. His assortment was greater, his locale was different, and his texture is denser. In *A Suitable Boy*, family and home are at the center of a narrative but in *Two Lives* the focus was not on the extended Indian family. In both *A Suitable Boy* and *Two Lives* Seth included his character either through fictional name as Amit Chatterjee in *A Suitable Boy* or the real presence in *Two Lives*. *Two Lives* was the source material for his earlier book *A Suitable Boy*. Reading *Two Lives* would be liable to alter the perception and understanding of *A Suitable Boy* but on the lives of two very different individuals. *Two Lives* was a conditioning factor for the reading of *A Suitable Boy* and vice versa. In *A Suitable Boy* and in *A Suitable Boy* become a major wave of Indian and Asian globalised literature Seth alternates original and translated text and thus created heterogeneity.

## Conclusion

It concludes with a writer and theme of religious intolerance in marriage in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* and *Two Lives*. These two novels had the theme of religious intolerance in marriage life but the characters overcome their intolerance and get the success of their true love in the novels. Vikram Seth has woven together their astonishing story, which recounts the arrival into this childless couple's lives of their great-nephew from India the teenage student Vikram Seth. The result is an extraordinary tapestry of India, the Third Reich and the Second World War, Auschwitz and the Holocaust, Israel and Palestine, postwar Germany and 1970s Britain.

*Two Lives* is both a history of a violent century seen through the eyes of two survivors and an intimate portrait of their friendship, marriage, and abiding yet complex love. Part biography, part memoir, part meditation on our times, this is the true tale of two remarkable lives a masterful telling from one of our greatest living writers.

## References

1. Agarwal, Shyam S. *Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy: Search for an Indian Identity*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1995.
2. Gupta, R.K. *A Suitable Boy: Saga of Four Families*. Haritham: 1994.
3. Pawn, Purabi. Rev. of *Two Lives*. *Indian Literature* 50.3-233: Posnett, 2006.
4. Seth, Vikram. *A Suitable Boy*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1993. Print.
5. Seth, Vikram. *Two Lives*. England: Penguin Books India, 2008. Print.
6. Seth, Vikram. *Two Lives*. London: Abacus, 2005-2006. Print.
7. Vinoda, T. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* *Ka Katiya Journal of English Studies* 15, 1995.
8. URL: <http://asiasociety.org/arts/literature/vikram-seth-two-lives-and-one-century>
9. URL: <http://www.thefamouspeople.com>
10. URL: <http://en.m.wikipedia.org>