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# SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE NOVELS OF VIKRAM SETH : A STUDY

Dr. Umakant S. Patil  
Vijaykumar Doddaganiger

## ABSTRACT

The current research examines Vikram Seth's novels' socio-cultural perspectives. He specializes in portraying contemporary India, California, and London's socio-economic, political, and sexual facets and gender inequality, corrupt government, and bureaucracy. He migrates to other countries and writes about India, especially her socio-political life. Thus, Vikram Seth's novels satirize and solemnly explore national politics, caste and class inequality, academic affairs, and intra-family ties.

Vikram Seth's novels are about the current socio-economic situation, social transformations, and the social-cultural transition. The novels' socio-cultural backgrounds lead readers to examine the country's real historical context.

**Key Words:** Socio-cultural, gender inequality, corrupt government, and bureaucracy. In Indian Writing in English, Vikram Seth is one of the most famous authors. By his versatility of the language and prose-verse storytelling technique, Seth has shown that he is a master of the English language with the complexity and breadth of his work and his notable achievement in prose and verse. Post-Independence India, Western Classical Music and human relationships were his subjects. He is deeply founded in the social and cultural circumstances of contemporary India.

The novels of Vikram Seth portray the Indian way of life after independence. Via his verse-prose style, he attained considerable popularity, and he was considered one of the influential authors in the history of Indian English Literature. The cultures of various countries and their roots are outlined in his three novels: *A Suitable Boy*, *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music*. It, therefore, helps the reader to acquire an awareness of the diverse cultures around the globe. His key characters are professionally connected to computers, music, education, politics, manufacturing and commerce. The three novels are set in Californian Silicon Valley, India after independence, and London and Vienna. He has written many works, including poetry and other genres too:

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The stressed marriages and the lack of trust in human values pay heed to the Seth's. Due to the electoral system, household life and social life have both shrunk naturally and functionally. Vikram Seth is well aware of the incidents and practices that have shaped the system's social cohesion. He depicts in his novels an image of the an society of the twenty-first century. He also emphasizes extensively sexual relations and the shared awareness between lovers, mates and partnerships.

The political condition in India has changed from decent to evil. While the dictum of The political condition for the state, the people and the people have been introduced in the Indian democracy for the state, political readers have barely adopted it. Furthermore, the quotation was constitution, political individuals is service to the country. Vikram Seth says that by the title: service to individuals in A Suitable Boy, the sacrifices of the freedom fighters had a revelation of Addus Salaam in A Suitable Boy, the sacrifices of the freedom fighters had gone into a vein:

Those people who broke their heads fighting for freedom are now breaking each other. Furthermore, we have new entrants to the business. FOR EXAMPLE, if I was a criminal, and I could get into politics profitably, and without much difficulty, I would not say: I can deal with murder or drugs, but politics is sacred'. It would be no more sacred to me the prostitution. (Seth)

Literature offers an introduction into the semantic and linguistic layers of culture, and this instils within the readers the values of language, dialects and slang. The main aim of literature is to uncover the existing challenges of civilization and culture, literature this particular crisis. Along with the development of civilization and culture, Vikram Seth's novels. Via the authors' narrative and the grammar and linguistic form of Vikram Seth's novels, the linguistic structure development is well known. It ornamentally projects the psyche of contemporary Indian culture. Vikram Seth's novels also support the present state of culture through consensual sex.

The social environment, social background and socio-cultural viewpoint apply to the physical and social climate in which individuals survive. Social realism is an accurate imitation of different levels of culture in depth. Literature is the appropriate means of communicating writers' observation of culture and making records, along with traditions, landscapes, community, political events, local lifestyle, and festivals. Vikram Seth rationally defines the social and political status of pre-and post-independent India. Readers can see in his representation with the novelist's sharp observation and scenario and human depiction with the enormous combination and convergence of the social scenario and human depiction with the novelist's sharp observation.

Vikram Seth skillfully highlights the topic of India's election process in A Suitable Boy. The reality is that social and economic problems do not operate the electoral system; yet, in India, the face of the election process shifts due to economic and religious issues. Seth delves into the voting process, the electoral system, and democracy in A Suitable Kid. He tries, sarcastically, to show the corruption and unethical methods that were used during the referendum. Vikram Seth illustrates how illegal has been allowed, thus describing realistic political circumstances. He reflects on linguistic problems that emerged since unification, as well as states that were linguistically separated. Seth has exposed the history, literature, faith, and community are intertwined. Vikram Seth has exposed the interplay between bureaucracy and politics, as well as between materialism and

multiculturalism.

The current research examines Vikram Seth's novels' socio-cultural perspectives. He specializes in portraying contemporary India, California, and London's socio-economic, political, and sexual facets and gender inequality, corrupt government, and bureaucracy. He migrates to other countries and writes about India, especially her socio-political life. Thus, Vikram Seth's novels satirize and solemnly explore national politics, caste and class inequality, academic affairs, and intra-family ties.

The Golden Gate, a masterpiece of Indian literature. It had a lighthearted and critical outlook on social issues and several other subjects. He had depicted contemporary life with an appropriate focus on friendship, human value, self-realization, and ethnic values. The book perfectly portrayed the atmosphere of San Francisco's west coast society. The book juxtaposed humour and passion, thus tracing the couple's trip from San Francisco. The novel depicts romanticism, fanaticism, love affairs, intimate relationships, superiority complex, various types of desires, impulses, possessive mania, and political values in these ideas. He sends a message to society that one should not waste one's time on such frivolous pursuits. Seth draws characters like Phil and Ed to reflect the topic of homosexuality and its passion.

## CONCLUSION

Vikram Seth's novels are about the current socio-economic situation, social transformations, and the social-cultural transition. The novels' socio-cultural backgrounds lead readers to examine the country's real historical context. Consequently, as Edward Said points out, the writers are submerged in their cultures' history, influencing and being influenced by it in differing degrees. Vikram Seth's novels reflect his concern for society, and he depicts the immorality and criminal acts that have arisen in it. Since he is the genuine spokesperson for the culture, he never hesitates to tell the facts.

His maiden book, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse*, was published in 1986 and chronicled the exploits of a group of Californian friends. *A Suitable Boy*, which was published in 1993 and received the W. H. Smith Literary Award, depicts the perfect and practical post-independence life of Indians.

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Literature and Culture are both **Internal and Externally Intertwined.**

A Study

**Umakant S. Patil & Vijaykumar Doddaganiger**

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**Literature and Culture are both Internal and Externally Intertwined: A Study**

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**Umakant S. Patil & Vijaykumar Doddaganiger**

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**Abstract:**

The literature explores the life of the individual, yet it illustrates the whole human approach to society. Literature moulds the mindset of society and sketches society's philosophy and psychology. In maintaining history, representing the current culture and anticipating the future world, the writer's viewpoint towards society plays an important role. In particular, Indian English literature concerned India, at the levels of social, economic, moral, history, linguistic, government and human psyche, with the socio-cultural position of pre-independence and post-independence. Literature is not a purely historical record, but it reflects on a particular period that expresses social ideals and political norms.

**Key words:** Literature, culture, language, social, economic, moral, socio-cultural etc.

Literature is a collective movement that uses language to create social production as its means. Traditional literacy instruments like

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symbolism and metre are inherently social. They are social conventions and standards that could only have developed in society. Literature is a reflection of life and, to a large extent, a social reality. The poet or novelist is a member of society in and of himself. He has a certain social standing. He is socially recognized and rewarded in every way. He does, however, discuss a conceptual crowd. As a result, it is a well-known fact that literature originated in close contact with unique social structures. If literature is separated from its social purpose, it may cease to exist. The vast majority of literature studies' issues are social, including rituals and conventions, customs and genres, symbols and myths. As a result, literature and culture are both internal and externally intertwined.

The literature explores the life of the individual, yet it illustrates the whole human approach to society. Literature moulds the mindset of society and sketches society's philosophy and psychology. In maintaining history, representing the current culture and anticipating the future world, the writer's viewpoint towards society plays an important role. In particular, Indian English literature concerned India, at the levels of social, economic, moral, history, linguistic, government and human psyche, with the socio-cultural position of pre-independence and post-independence. Literature is not a purely historical record, but it reflects on a particular period that expresses social ideals and political norms.

This definition of culture is chauvinistic and Eurocentric, which, with its persecution of the savage and primordial, offered a scientific justification for imperialism. The word community has been used to refer to 'refinement' or 'well being.' Culture has been deeply infused and rooted in human life from the dawn of human evolution. When the newborn baby enters the cultureless world, the culture affects his manners, actions, morals, thoughts and convictions, and everyday actions. While culture is a human-made world, it provides the life of a man with meaning. Therefore, it may be concluded that once society is formed, it has its control. Indian literature in English is the best source of documentation that reveals India's culture. Dorothy M. Spenser rightly affirms,

“Indo-Anglian fiction is a major source for a systematic study of cultural contact and cultural change with the Indian worldview as a focus of the Westerners to increase their knowledge of acculturation processes.”<sup>2</sup> (Dorothy10-11)

Each writer has his view of society, and in their writings, they perceive their visions of tradition, community, ethnic values and human bond. Their delineation of culture and its portrayal functions like a hologram. The socio-cultural views of the novelist spotlight race, social-political status, faith, traditions, arts, literature advancement, female status, adolescent life, education system, creation of technology and sexual relationships.

India had fifteen main languages before the English colonization and more than seven hundred and twenty dialects. The English language inspired the lucky upper-class people, and the publication of English magazines and journals significantly affected Indian nationalism and contemporary Indian literature. In Western countries, Indian people continue to seek their degrees, are eventually attracted by an alien civilization, and begin to settle in foreign lands. In India, the effects of modernization bring profound changes, and this shift in socio-cultural dimensions is mirrored in Indian English Literature. This literature corresponds to works published in India by writers who write in English, but India's various languages maybe their native language. About the development of Indian writing in English, Mukesh says:

“The beginnings of Indian writing in English have been variously identified in the eighteenth, nineteenth or the twentieth centuries, beginning with Din Muhammad (1759-1851), Cavelli Venkata Boriah (1776-1803), Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) or writers of the post-1947 period like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Khushwant Singh and others.”<sup>3</sup> (Mukesh176)

*The Travels of Dean Mahomet* is the first-ever book written by Din Muhammad. He was the first Indian English author who, in 1794, wrote his travelogue in English. Furthermore, Bankim

Chandra Chatterji is the author of the first Indian novel in English. In 1864, he released his *Rajmohan's Wife*. Inspired by the historical writer Sir Walter Scott and the social writer Charles Dickens, Bankim Chandra uses his novel as an excellent tool to realistically capture his contemporary society.

After the World Wars, the next period of literature began, and the authors focused on the current social climate and solely on the ethos of Gandhi. The book depicts the non-violent, non-cooperation protests and their implementation. K.S. Venkataramani published his *Kandan the Patriot* in 1934, and with Gandhian thought, this novel has a historical, social history of society that flourishes. Subsequently, Indian writing in English eventually flourished and was well established in India. The three great writers begin to publish their unrivalled novels that represent society as it is. *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand (1935), R.K. of Narayan's novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *Kanthapura* of Raja Rao (1938) reveal the culture, racial ideals, the essence of people, the sacrifice of freedom fighters and the evils in society. The Gandhian philosophy spread to every village in India through the novel *Kanthapura*, encouraging the poor to join in the non-violent movement.

The writers criticize the British rulers in the pre-independent period and show society's horrors. However, the Post-Independence Indian writers relocate their themes and illustrate the cause of partition and its consequences. Kushwant mentions in *Train to Pakistan* (1956) a train was standing in the station packed with Pakistani Sikh corpses and another loaded in India with Muslims massacred. The Partition is covered by Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964).

The first generation writers concentrate on the fight for independence, the sacrifice of founders, people's involvement, patriotism, Gandhian ethos, secession from independent India and refugees. Writers such as Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Manohar Malgonkar, Arun Joshi and Bhabani Bhattacharya of the second generation probe into man's inner self, his survival and his psyche

and delineate the search for self of the person. The dilemmas, and uncertainty, predicaments of human life, expectation, paradoxes, are revealed in their novels. B.M. and R. Agrawal. On the main themes of second-generation poets, P. Sinha articulates: "The problem of alienation caused by urbanization has been raised in the novels of Markandaya, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and B. Rajan. In the economic sphere, the unjust distribution of wealth, the poverty of the rural classes . . . the impact of industrialization on the life of a familiar person and the hired labourers, and the changed economic structure of the country after the decay of the feudal rule – are some essential economic problems depicted by the novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Jhabwala. . . " <sup>4</sup> (Sinha 7)

The 1980s saw the rise of third-generation Indian English authors, such as Amitav Ghosh, Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor and Vikram Seth, from St. Stephen's College, New Delhi. For their contribution to English novel writing, all these great authors have been honoured beyond India.

"These third-generation Indian writers also dealt with historical, cultural, philosophical and much more basing their themes around humankind. The third-generation writers have concentrated their themes around sociological, Diasporic elements, feminine subjects, science and technologies, explorative writings, and much more."<sup>5</sup> (Yesapogu 37)

Authors about this generation reflect society, history, and all the elements needed for the worldwide improvement of literature. After the United States of America and the United Kingdom, India is the third-largest producer of novels. Most third-generation authors reside in the West, use English as a mother tongue and methodically reveal the importance of contemporary Western cultural movements such as Post-Modernism, magical realism and social realism.

Third-generation novels were by Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Anitha Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Upamanyu Chatterjee,

Gita Mehta and Bharathi Mukherjee, which flourished with professional language in a rich cultural heritage. All these authors earn global and foreign recognition, outstanding royalties and coveted prizes. In their critical work, *Reflections on Indian English Literature*, Verma and Agarwal speak about Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth's artistic talents:

“A new landmark was created in 1981 when Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize for his novel, *Midnight Children*. This was the first well-known international award for Indian English work . . . A new interesting feature was added to the scene when in 1993, Vikram Seth was given an astonishing amount as an advance against royalty for his novel, *A Suitable Boy*. He thus became India's first millionaire novelist.”<sup>6</sup> (Agarwal and Verma 2)

Almost definitely, Amitav Ghosh was the most excellent writer in the last few decades. He has travelled to four continents and is highly active in the diaspora. The theme of post-colonialism is well-known to him. Past, youth, history and heritage are the key focal points. He has the following works to his credit: *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and *The Sea of Poppies*.

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