

Imitation of Reality and Social Realism in Seth's

A Suitable Boy

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Abstract

Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* beautifully employs imitation of reality and social realism. He portrays Post-Independent India in the year 1950s. 'Social' is an omnibus word covering all aspects of human activity that displays an awareness to others. Simply speaking "Social Realism" is an extraordinary reach of understanding of social life. Social realism involves individual social and cultural changes in all the spheres of life. It deals with social readjustments and the social maladjustments such as unemployment, youth unrest, industrial indiscipline, crime, war and their causes and consequences. The novel *A Suitable Boy* clearly explains social realism through depictions of the Post-Independence India's societal tensions, customs and hierarchies. Seth portrays rigid caste hierarchies shaping marriages and social interactions.

Keywords: Imitation of Reality, Social Realism, Social Readjustments, Social Maladjustments, Industrial Indiscipline

The realism of Seth differs from European Realism in practise. He must confront a different society, one that is stagnant, superstitious, and diverse. The writer faces a Herculean task in incorporating such a diverse environment into fiction. In his greatest masterpiece, *A Suitable Boy*, he uses his unique brand of realism to depict the politically submissive,

economically poor, and socially constrained post-independent Indian society. In the work, he deals with the socially mobile Indian middle class. He has deftly blended social realities as it is observed from the society into his story and not an idealised representation of it. He depicts both the negative as well as the positive aspects of social.

Seth's goal is not to make the novel a political statement. Political happenings and such personalities do come to cast as casual as that. They do, however, contribute to the novel's realistic atmosphere and authenticity. Readers tend to accept that the characters and tale as real just as that of the political events. The similarities between some of the post-independent India's individuals and political figures are of remarkably noticeable.

At the same time in the cases of others, one could find only indistinct similarities. His men and women seek ideal balance and harmony in both their household and social lives. They feel that a stable society is set on the rock basis of pleasant and healthy family relationship. The novel's central theme is about the much-needed shift in Indian tradition's intransigent principles. The novel paints a realistic picture of society in post-independent periods, which can be reasoned out from a closer examination of the text. It acts as a mirror of post-independence Indian society to the western world.

The societal issues depicted in the novel can be used to analyse social realism as underlined by the novelist. Seth, like any true realist writer, delves deeply into society's social faults and excesses, demonstrating universal human misery. The title of the novel, *A Suitable Boy*, reveals the main theme. "A Suitable" title suits the Indian way of calling the bride or bridegroom according to terms and conditions of both sides' parents. They call it as matching of horoscopes, a befitting match for either party. It is an appropriate title. When the match makers succeed in their venture, then other things are decided. The horoscopes of boy and girl should match, and both should be from the same caste and sub-caste. The matching of the horoscopes of boy and girl and agreement on the dowry are the two pre-requisites of an

“arranged marriage.”

In every regard, *A Suitable Boy* resembles a social realist novel, since Seth goes to great lengths to accurately capture the social facts in order to accurately portray India in the 1950s. In getting the feel of the real India of the fifties, the author has a long preparation of nine years to write this novel. He went to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library to gain a sense of the era also he watched movies from the late 1940s and 1950s to understand the intricacies of the language; he met people from various walks of life; he read land reform cases in the law reports; and he lived with a Jatav family in Agra. Above all, he lived with a Muslim family, took part in the Kumba Mela, and learned how to pay a prostitute. No wonder the novel was an outright success in depicting the real society of India.

The novel portrays India in all its myriad colours, splendour and squalor from the Nawabs, Land Lords and the business men to the tanners and rickshaw pullers from middle class urban families to poor downtrodden rural people, lower castes, untouchables from the corrupt politicians to the academicians, from music soirees from Dusehra to Holi revelry to Moharrum Mourning, from college board meetings to amateur poetry sessions and singing of love poetry by the Tauwaifs, (courtesans) from the fictional city of Brahmipur in Purva Pradesh to the cosmopolitan city of Calcutta.

It depicts post-independent India of 1950's on miniature scale. It is of epic proportion in size, and it begins '*in media res*' and has a main story which interweaves with stories within stories. It realistically mirrors contemporary India which was still a “babe-in-the-arm” nation in the comity of “Free countries of the world”. India became a free country on 15th August, 1947 and seven decades of span in the life of a country is a very short, India was partitioned and ‘two nations’ were born.

The novel depicts the social codes and how the defiance of these codes affects the lives of the characters involved. The novel centres around four families from different

backgrounds and all the individuals are somehow caught unawares by the problems emanating in the society in transition. Factors like war, communism, modernization and westernization, anxiety, fear of the future, insecurity, guilt of negating the parent roots are exemplified through the characters involved.

The traditional Indian society, as projected in the novel, is seen being over-powered by the advent of modernization and westernization. In the struggle of Indian traditions to continue their existence in the Indian society versus the western traditions to set firm in the transient society, the former is seen to be choking and thus losing the battle.

In “Swimming in a Sea of Language V. Seth’s *A Suitable Boy*,” Cristopher Rollason is of the opinion that, “In *A Suitable Boy*, Vikram Seth offers a hybrid blend of the fictional but typical with actual historical characters and events” (65). It is interesting to point out that large number of critics have shown great interest in the novel. In “The Social Geography of *A Suitable Boy*.” Cielo G. Festino has drawn a sketch of fictitious city of Brahmpur which is appended hereto. He comments that:

A Suitable Boy is a long saga that takes place in post-Independent India in the 1950s at the end of the colonial rule and the beginning of the Indian republic and extends geographically from the imaginary community of Brahmpur and its countryside, Delhi, Calcutta, Kanpur and Lucknow clearly, *A Suitable Boy* is a novel in which ‘place’ plays a central role (163).

Brahmpur, is an imaginary quintessential city of India. It is a symbol of the hundreds of such cities that are scattered all over the country. It holds within itself all the variety of people, diversity in religion, caste, colour, race, language, class culture, traditions, customs and professions including politicians that make the mosaic of twentieth-century India soon after its Independence from the foreign rule. The city is described in detail, the old and the new, of the rich and the poor, the residential and the commercial. The novelist sketches

realistically:

Nabiganj was the fashionable shopping street where the quality of Brahmipur were to be seen strolling up and down of an evening ... The signs were painted in English, and the prices matched the signs. Book shops ... well-stocked general stores ... fine tailors ... an elegant jeweller's, restaurants and coffee houses ... two cinema halls ... The Tonga ... among the bullock-carts, cycle-rickshaws, cycles and pedestrians ... (89).

While describing the tanning pits and leather industry in Ravidaspur, a slum neighbourhood near Brahmipur, Seth's photographic realism proves its worth. Haresh pays a visit to Jagat Ram, a tanner in Ravidaspur, led by Kedarnath. Both are nauseated by the stink at the location. Seth's attention to detail is impeccable, and the reader can sense the dangers lurking about him. He presents contrasting pictures of wealth and poverty, crowds and individuals, beggars and rich, young and old, aggressive and meek, leprous, students, mangy dogs, skeletal cats, and flies. It is not only the public places that bring to life, but also the private garden in the bungalow called "Prem Nivas" and it brings out the lavish lifestyle of rich people in Indian society.

Society deals with all sorts of people good and bad. Seth has shown a small specimen of this kind of love which is a reality; young boys very often become the toys in the hands of time and become indecisive, for they get confused between true love and infatuation.

India is just into her fourth year of freedom and the nation is shown to be grappling with a number of complex economic, political, cultural, social, lingual, academic etc. problems. He artistically blends various strands of everyday life into his novel. There are descriptive and evocative passages in the novel. The visit to tanning pit by Haresh and Kedarnath is described realistically:

The dirt roads abruptly came to a halt in an open space surrounded by shacks

and dotted with round pits sunk into the earth and lined with firm clay. The stink zone emitted a terrifying odour... The sun shined brightly, and the heat intensified the stink. Some of the pits were filled with a clear liquid, while others were filled with a tannic white liquid. Scraping fat and hair from a pile of hides, Dark. A pig drank from a ditch full of stagnant dark water. Two filthy matted-haired toddlers were playing in the dust near the pits (200).

The Ravivar bazar, a Weekly Sunday Bazar of the village, is a very common sight even in the Metropolitan cities of India, is truly presented in detail.

In India, a person's individuality gets submerged under the heavy burden of familial ties and constraints. The Indian Joint Family System, particularly among the Hindu Community, is the pivot on which the novel rests. The novelist does not critique the system but presents it as it has existed at that time. At present time the 'Joint Family System' is rapidly vanishing from the society.

Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law, the whole gamut is found in it and marriage is the fulcrum on which the entire book rests.

The novel begins with a marriage and it ends with another. In India the happiest moment in one's life is his /her marriage. It opens with the words "You too will marry a boy I choose" (212) and ends the day after that wedding. It presents the realistic picture of emerging progressive India.

The focus is on four families: the Mehras, Chatterjees, Kapoors, and Khans; just two individuals who are known as Lata Mehra and Maan Kapoor, are noteworthy, despite Lata being the main character. Each family has a primary storyline, therefore there are four major plots in total, with numerous sub-plots to help those four plots go slowly and steadily toward the main plot - the hunt for a suitable boy. The intellectual skulduggery, the political conflict

between Nehru and Tandon, and the political divide between L.N. Agarwal and Mahesh Kapoor, on the one hand, and the affair between Saeeda Bai and Maan, on the other side, all contribute to the main plot's growth.

Mrs. Rupa Mehra, wife of Late Raghbir Mehra, heads the Mehras. Lata, Savita and Pran, son of Mahesh Kapoor, is her son-in-law, Varun on the other hand with Mrs. Mehra are orthodox and traditionalists. Arun Mehra and his wife, Meenakshi Mehra, the daughter of Justice Chatterjee represent modernity.

Seth for the sake of humour adds and incorporates such intellectual activities into his novel's social comedy and political realism. Though the narrative is set just after three years of independence, the disintegration of morals has reached its peak. The dominance of middle-class life is one of the major hallmarks of the book on realism.

The typical representatives of this class are Arun and Meenakshi. In her spare time, Meenakshi daydreams about Arun and flirts with Billi Irani. This is a true depiction of avarice and slavish consumerism that has gripped the Indian middle class in recent years. As a result, Seth is keen enough to notice it and mimetically represent it. Much of the realism in the novel is achieved by dint of Seth's exhaustive research of that period.

The Chatterjees are headed by Justice Chatterjee, a Judge of Calcutta High Court and his father, a retired Judge of Calcutta High Court, five children and Mrs. Chatterjee are his protege. All the persons are snobs and symbolise the twilight glory of the British Rule and Westernised culture. Dipankar is a follower of Aurobindo and Mrs. Chatterjee is a great admirer of famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

Mahesh Kapoor, Revenue Minister in the S.S. Sharma Ministry of Purva Pradesh, leads the Kapoors. Mrs. Kapoor is a conservative woman who is profoundly religious but superstitious. His daughter, Veena is married to Kedamath Tandon, who is completely dependent on the Nawab Saheb life and the elder son

Pran Kapoor is working as a Lecturer-in-English at Brahmipur University. He is married to Savita Mehra. The entire family with the exception of Mahesh Kapoor and Maan Kapoor are orthodox and traditionalists and all are enjoying lives in their own ways. Seth has succeeded in presenting the cruel realities of life that one faces in one's life.

The very essence of existence of Navabs is portrayed by Seth's realism. The Nawab Saheb of Baiter, an aristocrat, a rich landlord and a big man in every respect head the Khans. Though his sons and daughter are completely dependent on the Nawab Saheb, they are enjoying life in their own way except Begum Abida Khan, who is a modern woman.

All these four major plots are supported by the sub plots of less significance but equally move on with these four main plots. Prof. Mishra, Head, Department of English leads the sub-plot of the academic dishonesty of English Department, Brahmipur University with the full support of his orthodox and traditional colleagues except Pran Kapoor. Prof. Mishra is a traditionalist in academic field. L.N. Agarwal's subplot, opposing Mahesh Kapoor, helps to underline the political conflict between the Nehru and Tandon factions in the country's ruling "Indian National Congress Party" in 1950-52. In the Tandon group, Mr. L.N. Agarwal is an orthodox and traditionalist while Mr. Mahesh Kapoor, a progressive secularist, is a follower of Nehru.

Haresh Khanna's tannery work is a subplot that runs parallel to Mrs. Mehra, Mr. Mishra, Mr. Agarwal, and Mrs. Kapoor. Haresh is a single man who works in an industry where in shoes are manufactured. While narrating the shoe-making process, Seth's realism transforms into a documentary manner. The present novel is very lengthy, and it has many plots and sub-plots, so the story moves slowly. Seemita Mohanty, in *A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth's Poetry and Fiction*, avers that:

It provides a thorough and concise description of the myriad factors at work in Indian society in the years following independence, as well as a fascinating

examination of the collision of personalities, convictions, and cultures. *A Suitable Boy* is both a mirror of today's societal nebulosity and a steady attempt to pry into it and figure out how best to mould and govern it. Seth's work is unique, rich, and authentic, with a reality that is both amusing and touching. Life moves with a charged aimlessness across its wide frame, as it does throughout the world (49).

After critically analysing the novel, its plot structure, various themes and characterization, mode of narration, style, language etc. The novel is both a story of love and a portrayal of India; unlike the other Indian novels in English which represent the entire nation, Seth's attempt is to depict only a specific slice of the same. It depicts only a small portion of North Indian society in the early 1950s, namely the middle and upper classes. Its depiction is also broadly speaking in true comic. The tone varies but is most often light, and the plot finishes with a wedding, which is traditionally a happy ending.

On the whole the novel is long and complicated, mingled with extraneous elements - i.e., entire episodes are borrowed from contemporary Indian history and the prevailing current of thought is interrupted by large number of digressions and moral reflections that the novel appears very loosely put together. It begins in a dramatic fashion, with discussions, actions, and the introduction of character.

Mrs. Mehra is a major character. Lata is a daughter of Mrs. Mehra and the marriage of sister Savita with Pran is in full swing, full of bonhomie and suspicion. Pran is a son of a minister, Mahesh Kapoor. The Chief Minister of Purva Pradesh with his senior colleague L.N. Agarwal and his old friend, Nawab Sahib is present at the reception hosted at Prem Niwas, the residence of Mr. Kapoor. Two more key narratives put the family stories of Mr. Mehra and Mr. Kapoor together.

Seth has offered a serious portrayal of the post-partition Indian political environment that is true to the country's history. He expertly fictionalises historical personalities, blending them with his own imaginative conception. Lukacs' view about the literature of realism is supported by Seth. There is, in the development of characters in realist literature, a sense of history for sure.

Malati is a surgeon's daughter. She also lost her father when she was young, and she remembers ever her fondness for him though unable to resume her normal state of life from the shock of her father's death. She has been taught by her mother to be independent. Both of her daughters for their education preferred language Hindi to be the medium of study. The daughters were learning English as well as classical music and dance too.

The novel's social realism as portrayed in the novel is quite convincing. Earlier the city Calcutta happened to be the socio-cultural and political capital of British India that too long before Delhi became the capital of India. So, it is very apt for Calcutta to be chosen as the setting for cosmopolitan family like Chatterjees. Seth, piece by piece recreates 1950s India for the reader, including University academics, political rivalry, and dead-end stagnation.

The writer portrays realistically the Indian society as well as some significant events of the period largely due to his meticulous research. The writer took eight years to complete the manuscript of the present book. He is indebted to a young research scholar, Priya Jayakumar. He helped the writer in the fieldwork to meet freedom fighters and the people who used to visit Tauwaifs Kothas at night regularly. He also met those persons affected by the abolition of Zamindari system i.e., tenants as well as Zamindars.

The Zamindari Abolition Act was a sincere attempt to raise the standard of living of an agrarian community, which constitute major population of India. It was passed in order to deprive Zamindar's powers, by taking away the right to collect revenue and also right of

ownership of the land. The law ensured that any tenant who had been tilling the same field for more than a certain number of years would be given the title of ownership of the agricultural land.

No doubt that it is Seth's devotion to realism which provides him the much-needed might and source of a link to a preconceived reality by which he is able to author his realistic narration. He, in his novel by depicting the rural world has widened the scope of the modern Indian English Fiction. He divides the sub plots into two regions of the city of Brahmipur and the village of Debaria with the intention of abolishing the Zamindari system.

The remarkable culture of men-of-letters and artists, particularly poets, singers, dancers, musicians, and courtesans, who were reliant on the patronage of the Zamindari system and whose survival was threatened by its abolition have been thrown more light on and depicted by the city-based narrative Technic. Zamindars were rulers of very big areas consisting of large number of villages. The implementation of this Act was delayed by litigation in the courts.

Seth's portrayal of Realism which represents the rise of the Indian middle class and the event that he brought all Indian states together with the intention of consolidating them along the line of secularism by Nehru in 1950-52 differed from his contemporaries like Mistry, Ghosh and Rushdie. They do not share Seth's optimism about the prospects of the Nehruvian developmental state. While many of their works express an implicit or explicit support for Nehruvian ideas, they also deal with the ever-growing division between states and nation in the post-Emergency years.

In India, there is still a rigid practice of caste system which divides Hindu society into lower and higher caste which brings a split in the society. It reflects the prevailing social conditions of lower castes and downtrodden. Since the ages past cobblers known as Chamars have been the makers of leather shoes and chappals and they are considered untouchables.

When in the last century the factories producing footwears were established, many upper castes Hindus entered the profession of shoe making.

Seth also reflects realistically the suppression of lower castes in the villages. The higher caste people's ruthless oppression and cruelty are gruesome. It is a well-known fact that untouchability is a crime against humanity. And the novelist gives one such heart-moving incident of atrocity and inhumanity realistically:

One of the Jatavs of his own village, who had spent a couple of years in Brahmpur, had gone back home during the harvest season. After the comparative freedom of city, he had made the mistake of imagining that he had gained exemption from the generalised loathing of the upper-caste villagers. Perhaps also ...knew the men who were responsible, yet no one had dared to testify; and the details had been too horrendous for even the newspapers to print (1038-1039).

Seth further goes on to point out the conditions of untouchables living in rural areas of the country.

The main theme of perennial interest of the novel is love and selection of *A Suitable Boy* and marriage of the heroine by name Lata. Seth talks about "arranged marriage," "love-affair," "romance," "encounter" etc. in the novel. Lata is a young girl of nineteen-years from a middle-class conservative, traditional and orthodox Indian family. She is simple, innocent and virgin. She is undergraduate student of English literature at Brahmpur University, Purva Pardesh. She first falls in love passionately with a fellow student, a good cricketer, a son of a professor, Kabir Durrani. Later on, a poet-novelist and an idealist Amit, passionately loves her and she finally comes in contact with Harish Khanna, a businessman in shoe industry.

Lata is only three-dimensional character to a certain extent. She plays a dual role of being an individual person and a type character. Though it was the early dawn of newly

obtained freedom but the Indian Women of 1950's were aware of their rights and have started their own movement for freedom and equality on par with men in family and society life as well.

Seth realistically analyses human sexual relations in various angles while presenting the amorous relations between Kabir and Lata. Seth's uncanny probing skill in human sentiments and complicated mental labyrinths may be seen in Maan Kapoor's personal friendship with Firoz and his romance with the courtesan Saeeda Bai. The romance between Maan and Saeeda Bai ends in futile. In their drama of fleshly passions, the social comedy leads to an inevitably sad conclusion. On several occasions, Seth's unique approach to realism goes photographic.

Lata's feelings for Kabir overwhelms her. Lata in reality loves Kabir passionately and the intensity of love is revealed from the letter in which she discloses to him about her two dreams. When her mother comes to know that Kabir is Muslim, there is conversation between Mrs. Rupa Mehra and Lata in the presence of Savita. Mrs. Rupa Mehra got infuriated and slapped Lata hard twice.

Though Lata was drifting away from her lover Kabir and was moving towards Harish but she was unable to erase off the thoughts of Kabir from her mind. She was visualising to meet Kabir but she was unable to see him after final Exams. Kabir was always present in her mind. Sometimes Lata sat on a banyan root and looked out over the Ganga and thought that she would have been happy with Kabir or he with Lata. He was so jealous now, so intense, so violent, so unlike the casual cricketer whom she had seen laughing and practising at the nets a year ago. Lata has decided to marry Harish but still she was unable to forget Kabir. Seth realistically mirrors her inner working of the mind.

Lata is in Calcutta. Malati writes a letter to Lata about Kabir who is in Brahmipur. The novelist describes her condition that Lata did not sleep well. She lay awake well through

the night. She lay awake for hours, racked with jealousy. It reveals the intensity of passionate love between Lata and Kabir. Malati is the only person who is aware of this reality. This is how Seth creates an universal love that is free of unrealistic expectations and firmly grounded to day to day life practically.

The second man, who comes in Lata's life, is a poet and writer by name Amit Chatterjee from Calcutta, who is a gifted, intelligent, witty, but eccentric and materialistic and "rather enters in Lata's life more as a friend and a relative, a suitor" (122). Amit's eccentricity serves as the balm for her. His intelligence, his concern brings out a cheer to carefree Lata to the fore.

With the passage of time Lata's innocence and simplicity charm Amit. It is interesting that Amit's wooing comes in the form of a poem, which is full of logic, irony, passion and wit. Neither Amit's passion nor his intelligence moved Lata's heart and as such she finally rejects him. She feels that he is whole-heartedly devoted to his creative activities, and he cannot bear the burden of life and shoulder the responsibilities of a husband. Lata rejects Amit Chatterjee.

Mrs. Rupa, after an extensive investigation and needed research chooses Haresh who is the third man to enter Lata's life. He is socially awkward, but he is sincere, hardworking, honest, outspoken, broadminded, egalitarian, and a firm believer in family traditions. According to her Haresh was generous, vigorous, enthusiastic, impatient, and responsible in her mind. He stood as firm as a pair of Goodyear Welted Shoes in Praha pore, winking his eyes fondly as a gesture of his love for her. Also from the pages of his letter to her tells how lonely he would be without her. All these positive qualities outweigh the gushiness and loudness in his personality. Haresh is a symbol of hope for a new Indian, ambitious, pragmatic, anti-snobish, and a representative of a new emerging capitalist class.

Lata decided to marry Haresh because of his unaffected ways and sincere concern

for everybody. Haresh is not handsome but mysterious and strange. Haresh has a sense of compromise, which seems to be the dominant trait of his personality. Lata selects Haresh because she knows that she has no future with Kabir and the sexual fulfilment has less significant place in her scheme of things.

It is Indian woman's view in general that sex is one of the basic needs of human being for warmth and for the continuity of family in particular and human life in general. Therefore, for Lata as well, sex is only a process of procreation of family in particular and Lata talks about a lifetime of sexual union sans excitement and passion. It appears, a matter-of-fact as suppression of sexual instinct and hence is unnatural.

Seth's purposeful selection of commonplace characters fits in to the canons of classical realism perfectly. Seth distinguishes himself from his predecessors by infusing his characters with a strong sense of humanity. It is rather surprising to point out that in both the marriages of sisters Savita and Lata, Seth has not presented the aspects of horoscope and dowry as two necessities. These two social realities are undeniable and inevitable in an Indian Hindu "arranged marriage", the one is the horoscopes of the boy and girl to be married and other is "dowry" given by bride's parents to bridegroom. It is an open secret that in every Indian marriage, the dowry is a must. This practice has been affecting the people hailing from middle class family.

The conclusion of the novel is very significant to understand the suitability of a suitable boy which Lata has selected and got married and help the reader to guess the future marital life of Lata. The last scene of the novel is symbolic and pregnant with meaning. Lata's father used to call her, his little monkey. The monkey is a symbol of Lata and "musammi" is symbol of her "youthful life". Harish is rather a symbol of old monkey sitting at the end of platform whereas Kabir, Amit etc., as other monkeys. And the train serves as the symbol of life. Lata's future life is unpredictable and not clearly visible like the future of her

“musammi”. It is rather difficult to foresee the working of her future “marital life.” It is not possible to foretell what fate has in store for Lata. Though in the end the novelist has given a clue but it is for the readers to arrive at the conclusion.

Thus, we are shown the reality of life by Seth by the characters of Meenakshi, Lata and Maan. These three characters present three different situations before us: Meenakshi and Billi Irani represent those men and women who believe in an extra-marital affair, not caring for the society and its traditions; Lata represents those young girls who fall in love but cannot rebel against their parents and finally surrenders themselves by forgetting their love and present as an ideal child of their parents.

Maan represents those young boys who do not care for the sentiments of their parents and do whatever they like as Maan does by mitigating the reputation of his father. He presents that young blood who finally when it's too late comes to their senses. One more culprit who is caught in this category is the Nawab Sahib whose illicit relation is revealed later in the novel.

An “arranged marriage,” according to the writer, gives a sense of security, understanding, affection, economic stability, tolerance and adjustment - the essential requirements for a long and happy married life. The reasons put forward by the novelist are not convincing. The novelist prefers reason to passion. Like his first novel *The Golden Gate*, the present novel *A Suitable Boy* also unfolds a tragic love story and in the end the lovers are separated forever.

The commoners and the downtrodden were given an adequate space and representation by the writers, as great realists, of the bygone years in their world of fiction. But in his treatment of the common people, Seth's realism differs from that of his predecessors. Seth refuses to acknowledge the so called reality that life of the people who gone for the arranged marriage, is dull, robotic and monotonous without genuine love

between both of them and thus there is no union of two true minds in terms of arranged married life.

Seth's delineation of his characters in a lifelike way reminds us of classics of realism by great realists of the past such as Gustav Flaubert and Emile Zola. Seth's explicit features of realism as shown in *A Suitable Boy* include his impressive linear narration, skilful characterization, credibility and frankness of the plot, his careful selection of common people as the subject matter for fictionalisation, a sense of history to link the plot with a preconceived reality, and an Austenian classical realist style are a few of many.

A Suitable Boy is a social realism novel that depicts a society in which men and women can achieve self- and societal equilibrium by means of understanding each other and being empathetic. The work through the treatment of theme of marriage subtly illustrates the nation in disintegration with regards to certain ideals, its difficulties and failures that pervade the various doctrines of society. At the same time, it is possible to give an in-progress political response to India for those who can perceive "here is God's plenty." Yet, the novel offers a silver lining.

A Suitable Boy is a genuine and realistic story of India. In a dispassionate and in a detached manner, the modern realistic fiction depicts all facets of life, including both the good and the bad. The reader, in such novels, is provided with both the joy and the misery of the human being with no exaggeration. The brilliance of literature and its standard could be measured by the way the society is reflected that it speaks about. Though it is impossible to say how authentic or true this depiction is, Seth's sensitivity in reflecting the social difficulties enmeshed in the social fabric of Indian life cannot be questioned.

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