

Indian Society and Religion in Vikram Seth's 'A Suitable Boy'

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ABSTRACT

This critical analysis looks at how Indian society and religion are portrayed in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. The year 1993 saw the publication of this fictitious work. The setting of *A Suitable Boy* is a recently independent, post-partition India. The stories of multiple families from various origins are combined in this book to provide a broad overview of Indian society, culture, and religious ideas in addition to ethos and bathos. This study deals with the various cultural elements which Vikram Seth portrays and contributes to the in-depth understanding of Indian culture and how it is represented in Literature, it also throws light on which cultural dynamics shape individual experiences and identities. Despite the fact that Seth has depicted cultural variety in this work, there is still peace and unity because all of the characters live under one roof, regardless of their differences in gender, religion, culture, case, or economic status. That is, a single nation.

Keywords: Indian Culture, Vikram Seth, Religion, Cultural Dynamics, Post-independence India, literary representation.

INTRODUCTION

The well-known author Vikram Seth wrote the book "*A Suitable Boy*," which was released in 1993. With 1,349 pages, the book is regarded as one of the longest to be published in a single volume.

The novel is set in India's post-independence era, focuses on Mrs. Rupa Mehra's attempts to find a "suitable boy" to marry her younger daughter Lata, and follows four families over the course of 18 months. The narrative starts in the made-up town of Brahmpur, which is situated beside the Ganges. The novel reflects the social, cultural and political changes which took place during the post-independence era of India. The story revolves around a young girl Lata, whose mother is in search for a suitable boy for her.

This analytical study aims to explore the Indian cultural glimpses shown in the novel through its scenario portrayed by its characters. The major focus is on the norms laid down by the society, religious beliefs and political events that took place and carved the country during that time. The suitable boy deals with several aspects of the Indian culture, such as caste system, arranged marriage, religion centralism and provides its readers with immense of in-depth understanding of all the characters and their way of thinking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“A Suitable Boy” by Vikram Seth is a novel that explores the lives of several families in post-Independence India. It offers a glimpse of a country and its complex cultural heritage. Vikram Seth’s work in this has been praised by many across the world because of its chosen characters and its portrayal of Indian culture, society and politics.

This literature review will examine some of the key scholarly works that have been explored in the past with the help of the glimpses portrayed in the novel “A Suitable Boy”.

One of the major and most important themes explored in the novel is the caste system. There has been a social structure laid down in a hierarchical manner, which has been seen followed for so many years. The caste system divides the people of the society into different groups of social classes based on the birth and caste of the person. Vikram Seth throws light on how caste is such a hurdle to survive in a society, which has also been seen influencing every aspect of an individual’s life, including marriage, education, career. When it comes to the central character of the novel Lata, whose family wants a suitable boy for her, caste plays a major role as the groom must be within their own community.

Another theme which falls under the topic is religion. Religious beliefs and practices which has been seen in the novel, with particular emphasis on Hinduism and Islam. The novel shows the deep understanding of these regions and the reflection on the lives of the individuals in a certain way. Further it shows the political events which took place at that time such as Indian partition and the formation of the new country named as Pakistan.

When the protagonist of the book, Lata, falls in love with a Muslim lad named Kabir, it also demonstrates how religion is a problem. She was nearly disowned by her own mother after being discovered to be having an affair with a Muslim boy.

Shriya S. And Rohit J (2017) examines the representation and secularism in ‘A Suitable Boy’ by analyzing the attitudes of the characters towards their faith and their conversations with people from different religious backgrounds. The study by Shriya S. Rohit focuses on the novel’s portrayal of India as a society who believes in multi- religion and where religious tolerance and coexistence are essential for social harmony.

As per Rakesh and Shweta (2017) ‘A Suitable Boy’ contains discourses relating to the analysis of the conversations of the characters with the political institutions and the challenges of democratic governance in India.

In their study of Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy," Divya M. and Rajni R. (2018) examine how women are portrayed by examining the characters' attitudes regarding gender roles and their battles for agency and autonomy in a patriarchal society. The study emphasizes upon the portrayal women as an active agent of social changes, challenging traditional gender norms and expectations.

Exploration of religion has been an important aspect when it comes to Indian narratives. As per Shweta M., and Rahul B. (2018) to examine the representation of religion and belief in the novel. ‘A Suitable Boy’, there should be an analysis of the attitudes of the characters towards religion and their struggles with their religious identity.

Raman k.and Neha S. (2017) in their study examines the portrayal of youth and modernity in the novel 'A Suitable Boy', by analyzing the attitudes of the characters towards modernization and their struggles with generational arguments and conflicts. Their study shows the youth as driving forces for social change, norms change and cultural innovation challenging traditional value and norms laid down.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the literature studies examined in this research provide a thorough and extensive examination of Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy" from a variety of angles, with the addition of a thorough comprehension of the themes and their importance that are explored throughout the book.

The reviews demonstrate diverse cultural society, yet there remains peace and harmony amongst the people despite of all the diversities. The studies also show the depiction of gender, religion, caste, language, modernity and education by showing how these issues help in shaping and molding the characters experience and their perspectives towards a situation.

It is obvious that "A Suitable Boy" is a series on social milieus because it presents a clear mirror and image of post-independence Indian society in terms of its nuances, such as family values, which include marriage rites, the need for religious peace, etc.

Overall, the literature reviews provide a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of 'A Suitable Boy'. Through the novel's portrayal of Indian culture, society and politics, it makes very evident about the work that it is considered as one of the most signifying pieces of Vikram Seth as it shows cultural significance while capturing the complexities and contradictions of contemporary India by offering insights into the human conditions.

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