Religion: A Bitter Sensation of Nation Portrayed in Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy

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Abstract:

India is frequently observed as a post-frontier example of overcoming adversity. It is the world's biggest popular government with a flourishing common society and a culture of pluralism and resilience. Regardless of its tremendous size and multi-ethnic character, struggle has been uncommon and numerous gatherings exist together calmly. The significant special case to this is the religious clash. Religious conflict plays vital role in Indian English literature too. Many contemporary writers have written with the theme of religious conflicts in their literary works. Vikram Seth shows the Hindu-Muslim riots as well as the bond between these two religions in his novel. He strongly condemns the religious fanaticism in A Suitable Boy, a novel which is set in Post-Independence India. The main objective of this paper is to depict religion as a bitter sensation of India through the portrayal of Vikram Seth in his novel A Suitable Boy.

Keywords: Religious conflicts, Fanaticism, Post-independence India, Communal Harmony
Introduction:

India is described by more ethnic and strict gatherings than most different nations on the planet. Beside the much noted 2000-odd positions, there are eight "significant" religions, 15-odd dialects spoken in different tongues in 22 states and nine association regions, and a considerable number of clans and orders.

Three ethnic or strict clashes have stood apart of late: two happened in the conditions of "Assam and Punjab; another, the more generally realized Hindu-Muslim clash keeps on enduring. The Assam issue is fundamentally ethnic; the Punjab issue depends on both strict and territorial clashes, while the Hindu-Muslim issue is prevalently strict. Of the apparent multitude of strict and ethnic issues in contemporary India, history has projected its most profound shadow on Hindu-Muslim relations. The most basic contemporary period of this history was the segment of 1947. Vikram Seth’s A Suitable Boy has a range of diverse themes running parallel to the main theme. The themes include politics, religion, customs, philosophy, art, culture, and academics. Seth shows the Hindu-Muslim riots; he also strives to show the bond between the two communities by depicting the friendship between Maan Kapoor and Firoz khan where Maan risks his own life to save Firoz from the angry mob.

Vikram Seth: An Archway

Vikram Seth is one among the most observed Indian writers and artists. He was conceived on twentieth of June 1952 in Kolkata to Leila, a court judge, and Prem Seth, a shoe organization leader. He has his foundations in Punjab. He voyaged a ton with his family as a kid from Batanagar to Danpur to London. He got his initial instruction from St. Xavier's High School in India. Seth returned to England and during his A-levels he created enthusiasm for Chinese
language and verse. He got degrees in Economics, Philosophy and Politics from Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Seth moved to California in quest for Ph.D. in Economics from Stanford University however couldn't finish the course. His enthusiasm for financial field had dried out and continuously created recorded as a hard copy. Subsequently, he considered experimental writing at Stanford University and old style Chinese verse at Nanjing University. Seth has explored different avenues regarding various classifications recorded as a hard copy. He started his composing vocation with verse. He distributed the main volume of his verse work in 1980, named Mappings. The volume was criticized when he sent a duplicate to a renowned English writer, Philip Larkin. Nonetheless, he convinced Seth to overcome the challenges of composing and compose on. In 1985, the second volume The Humble Administrator's Garden was distributed. With this volume Seth demonstrated his wonderful ability as he gathered Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Seth likewise wrote a couple of travel guides. From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet was distributed in 1983 which investigates the movement through Nepal, Tibet and China. The book additionally happens to win Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

After verse and travel composing, he made his artistic introduction in 1986 with the novel, The Golden Gate. The tale is organized around 690 rhyming versifying tetrameter pieces. It is a parody on sentiment which delineates the lives of elitists that are in journey of adoration for business reasons. Seth got the 1988 Sahitya Akademi Award from India's National Academy of Letters. Notwithstanding, it was Seth's second novel that got him the spotlight. A Suitable Boy (1993) is 1349 pages in length monster, unrivaled to any book distributed as of late in English language. The epic investigates the public and policy driven issues in Post-Independence period. The book did not depend on a solitary story. Seth exhibits the worries of the general public in the
parceled India which run from Hindu-Muslim clashes, scholastic issues, intra-family relations and land changes. An Equal Music was distributed in 1999 that is viewed as one of Seth's magnum opuses. The book is the tribute of his melodic tendency where he outlines a tragic story of a musician anguished by his detachment from a previous sweetheart. The enthusiastic force and music information exhibited in the book puts Seth's inventive forces at the apex. Truth be told, the book had Seth earned Ethnic and Multicultural Media Award.

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In a country as big and ethnically diverse as India, religion has always played a very important part in the life of an Indian. Religious rituals pervade the lives of Indians more than they do the lives of most other people. Religious considerations are sometimes more vital than even economic factors. And for majority of Indians no other factor is more powerful and influential than their religious beliefs and faith. They are dogged followers of religion, firm believers in their respective gods and goddesses, sticklers for ritual and religious practices.

In A Suitable Boy Lata’s family rejects Kabir for the simple reason that he is a Muslim. His good looks, his intelligence, his sincerity are all pushed aside as non-entities, and the only way he gets identified with, is by his religion.

In one revealing passage in A Suitable Boy, the narrator, while praising Pandit Nehru for his efforts at maintaining communal harmony also imparts upon the readers a subtle lesson as to how one can sustain that harmonious state:

And thus his meetings ended, and on he went to the next one, always late, always late, always late, always impatient, a man whose greatness of heart won the hearts of others, and whose meandering pleas for mutual tolerance kept a volatile country, not merely in
those early and most dangerous years but throughout his own lifetime, safe at least from the systemic clutch of religious fanaticism. (1355)

Passion in religion is defined by Seth as fanaticism, bigotry and disgust towards other religions.

It takes its usual course of killing, fighting, firing, bloodshed and then finally, a temporary abatement of weapons on both sides. Always it is a temporary abatement, never a permanent one, because the bitterness and the hostility never die, but lie dormant, awaiting resurfacing at the first possible opportunity.

The opportune moment arrives during the Dussehera festival which also the period for Moharram celebrations. Passion, ego, and stupidity combine fatally resulting in a terrifying sequence of events. Blood flows freely and fire blazes all-consumingly. “Firoz closed his eyes, as if to shut out the terrible vision of the city in flames” (1063).

In the Indian subcontinent, politics, along with religion, is a way of life. Neither is allowed to exist without the other, but the coexistence is far from being a harmonious one. On the contrary the relationship is excessively volatile, with a majority of politicians perfect in the art of manipulation and exploitation. In A Suitable Boy Pandit Nehru is praised in his brief appearance as the enemy of fanaticism, bigotry and racism and a champion of tolerance, unity and modernization.

Conclusion:

In human terms, Seth’s moral designs against religious fanaticism in A Suitable Boy is clearly portrayed in various parts like Firoz and Mann Kapoor’s friendship, Mahesh Kapoor and
Nawab of Baitor’s relationship, and Pandit Nehru’s speeches. Seth’s condemnation of any kind of fanaticism becomes clearly evident in this novel. Thus the readers can find religion as a bitter sensation of India through the portrayal of Vikram Seth in his novel A Suitable Boy. By reading this novel one can understand India is a nation of Unity in diversity.

References: