

The Essence of Patriarchy Portrayed in Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy

M.Vasanth¹ & Dr.L.Rajesh²

¹Research scholar in English, Rajah Serfoji Govt Arts College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India.

²Assistant Professor & Research Advisor, Department of English, Rajah Serfoji Govt Arts College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Thanjavur, Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to introduce patriarchy depicted in the novel A Suitable Boy composed by Vikram Seth. For this reason, Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy has been contemplated. As seen in the writing, the word Patriarchy was around before the current resurgence of the ladies' development and ladies' investigations courses, the idea has been reproduced in the previous twenty years to break down the beginnings and states of men's persecution of ladies. In A Suitable Boy, Vikram Seth depicts the universe of post-autonomy ladies' condition in detail. His ladies characters are related with family bunch. He depicts male centric society. Male tops of the family, for example, Mahesh Kapoor and the Nawab Sahib of Baitar praise the ideal household space like that where people live inside the particular jobs assigned to them. The state of the Muslim ladies and the lower rank ladies like Kachheru's better half and how man centric society constrained on their life additionally depicted in this novel.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Post-Independence India, Feminism, Socio-Cultural aspects, Gender Discrimination.

Introduction

Vikram Seth is a prolific post-independence novelist of global status. He has written several novels and poetry. He was born on 20th June 1952 in Kolkata, West Bengal. His father was Premnath Seth and his mother Leila Seth, a barrister by training. Seth has written *From Heaven's Lake*, a travel book about China, and two collections of poems – *The Humble Administrator's Garden* and *All You Who Sleep Tonight* and the two fables. *The Golden Gate* (1986) is a novel in verse consisting of 596 sonnets. Then, he wrote *A Suitable Boy* (1994) is his magnum opus. He stunned the literary world with his novel *An Equal Music* (1999).

Vikram Seth created history in more than one way. He is the first Indian English novelist to write a novel entitled *The Golden Gate* in verse, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1988. Again he is the first Indian English novelist to get a fabulous amount of rupees two crores as advance for this epoch-making novel *A Suitable Boy*.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. In the domain of the family, fathers or father-figures hold authority over women and children. Some patriarchal societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage. Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures. Even if not explicitly defined to be by their own constitutions and laws, virtually all societies today are, in practice, patriarchal.

Patriarchy Portrayed in Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy

As observed in the literature, the word Patriarchy was around before the current resurgence of the women's movement and women's studies courses, the concept has been recreated in the past two decades to analyze the origins and conditions of men's oppression of women. Originally used to describe the power of the father as head of household, the term Patriarchy has been used within post 1960's feminism to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination. The term has been defined as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Feminists have argued that in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes, whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist, a sex gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. It is observed in the literature that the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization. A patriarchy is considered the head of the household and within the family he controls productive resources, labor force and reproductive capacities based on the notions of superiority and inferiority and legitimized by differences in gender and generation.

In *A Suitable Boy* Vikram Seth portrays the patriarchy. In this novel the conversation between Mrs. Rupha Mehra and Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor in the third part expressed the term patriarchy. It is given below;

Can't we do something about Ramnavami? Won't minister sahib change his mind?
Asked old Mrs. Tandon,

'uff! What can I say, he's so stubborn', said Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor. 'And nowadays he is under so much pressure that he gets impatient at every little thing I say. I get pains these days, but I hardly worry about him so much.'

She smiled 'I'll tell you frankly'; she continued in her quiet voice, 'I'm afraid to say anything to him.'

"Should I speak to minister Shahib (husband of Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor) asked Mrs. Rupha Mehra."

'No, No, No... .' – Said Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, worried at the thought of these two powerful wills colliding. 'He will only say this and that. Once when I touched upon the subject he even said "if you must have it, go to your great friend the home minister – he will certainly support this kind of mischief." I was too frightened to say anything after that... (202-203)

These above conversation told about the condition of Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor is not satisfactory in the society. Mahesh Kapoor wanted his wife to be in private sphere and gives her no room in public. He delights in hurting his wife and scolds her. This is also considered as patriarchy.

Then another paragraph from this novel in the part 5.4 also portrays patriarchy; Priya Goyal would picture herself as a panther in a cage. She would look longingly towards the small house just a few minutes' walk away – and just visible through the jungle of intervening roofs- in which her childhood friend Veena Tandon lived. Veena, she knew, was not well off any longer, but she was free to do as she pleased: to go to market, to walk around by herself, to go for music lessons. In Priya's own household there was no question of that, for a daughter-in-law from the house of the Rai-Bahadur to be seen in the market would have been disgraceful. That she was thirty-two years old with a girl of ten and a boy of eight was irrelevant. Ram Vilas, ever placid, would have

none of it. It was simply not his way; more importantly, it would cause pain to his father and stepmother and grandfather and elder brother – and Ram Vilas sincerely believed in maintaining the decencies of a joint family... (268)

From this above paragraph, Vikram Seth portrays the condition of Veena and Priya is also not satisfactory in family life.

And in one more conversation in the part 9.16 of this novel between Lata and Mr.Sahgal portrays us the patriarchy in post-independence Indian society;

I know you are a lipstick girl. Do you want some lipstick?" said Mr.Sahgal, moving forward along the bed.

'No- 'cried Lata. 'I don't – Mausaji – please stop this – '

'It is so hot – I must take off this dressing gown'.

'No!' Lata wanted to shout, but found she couldn't. 'Don't, please, Mausaji. I – I'll shout- my mother is a light sleeper – go away – go away- ma – ma –'

The clock chimed one

Mr.Sahgal's mouth opened. He said nothing for a moment. Then he sighed... (672)

In this novel, the condition of women in Islamic society is also expressed. They have no interests of their own but they have to do what their husbands demand them to perform. The women in Islamic society spend their lives in the darkness of ignorance, illiteracy and have nothing to do with the outer world which seems them out of their reach. These are also the patriarchy referred from this novel.

The lower caste women's condition is also not better. Kachheru was a lower caste man who maintained the lands of Rasheed's grandfather.Kachheru's wife who belongs to a lower caste Chamar had not gone outside the villages – "the village into which she had been born and village into which she had married". Her daily duty is to bring chapattis, salt chilies, and some butter milk for her husband who is working in the fields, watch her husband eat in silence and go back to her cage. The married life of this woman seems dull, without any charm and attraction. It may be their tradition, destiny, lack of education and awareness that has kept the lower caste women away from the light of charming, self-respectful and honorable life.

Conclusion

Vikram Seth has depicted the state of ladies in post-freedom India in this novel. His ladies characters are related with the family groups. Male heads of family, for example, Mr.Mahesh Kapoor and the Nawab of Baitar commend the ideal residential space as that where people live inside the particular jobs designated to them. Along these lines we considered male centric society depicted in the novel A Suitable Boy composed by Vikram Seth.

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