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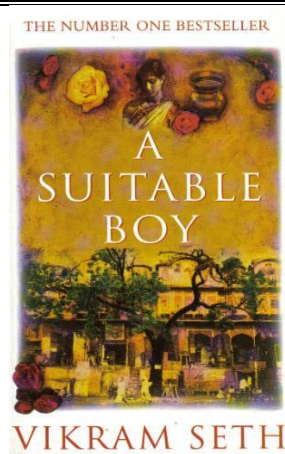
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Theme of Love in Vikram Seth's Novels - *A Suitable Boy and An Equal Music*

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Vikram Seth: In the Midst of Greater Development of Indian Writing in English

The article focuses on theme of love in Vikram Seth's Novels, *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*. Vikram Seth is among the cream of the crop of bold new writers. His impingement upon the scene of Indian English Literature in the eighties was in consonance with the larger development of Indian English Literature at that time.

First of all, Indian English Literature acquired much greater credibility on the one hand and a much larger public reception. Secondly, it came to be reckoned as an important part of Indian Literature as a whole, which was not the case before when Indian English Literature was largely viewed as something away from the mainstream of Indian Literature.

Change in Perspective

Seth benefited from this change in perspective. His novels and poetry grew from a mind integrated with Indian conditions of living. And yet it felt equally comfortable with conditions abroad. One remembers his admission that whenever he writes about anything, at whatever the place may be, he gets immersed in the place and situation and remains completely confined to the conditions, both physical and mental, available there. This is particularly true of his novels.

The Theme of Love I *A Suitable Boy*

The theme of love in *A Suitable Boy*, on the surface, is Lata's story and of her mother's endeavour to find a suitable boy for her daughter. The first statement of the novel, "You too will marry a boy I choose" (*ASB* 3) becomes the harbinger of all the events that Lata, Seth's female protagonist is made to experience throughout the story.

Freedom to Choose the Spouse

In *A Suitable Boy*, Vikram Seth has allowed his heroine the opportunity of choosing her man from among three men who are totally different from each other in their appearance as well as in their behaviour. Kabir Durrani the handsome and dashing Muslim student is the first to enter Lata's life. At the very first sight, she falls in love with Kabir Durrani. They meet several

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times in their university. The romantic, impulsive Kabir kindles Lata's passion, but when she learns that Kabir is Muslim, her immediate reaction is that this would distress her mother. She is at once aware that a relationship with him is impossible, knowing the taboos against Hindu – Muslim miscegenation in the specific cultural and religious practices of the Indian subcontinent. Finally Lata suggests to Kabir that they run away together, but Kabir's insistence on marrying her after two years clinches the issue.

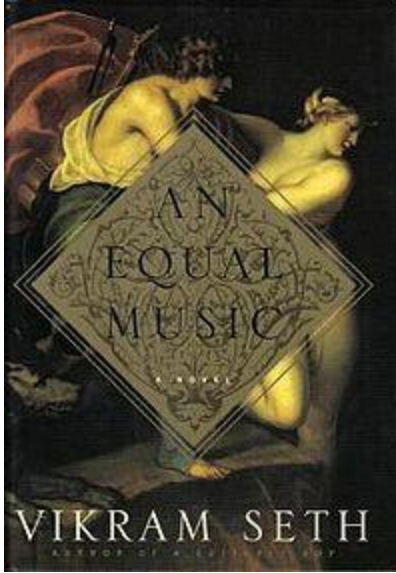
The next man to enter Lata's life is Amit Chatterji. She rejects Amit on the ground that he is too much like her for them to have a smooth domestic life. The last man to enter Lata's life is Haresh Khanna. He enters her life as "the suitable boy", selected after a good deal of research work by Mrs. Rupa Mehra. But he is ironically portrayed by Seth as somebody who is socially awkward and untrained in the sophistries of life. Lata selects Haresh because she knows that under no circumstance can she have any future with Kabir.

Finding the Most Suitable Boy

Lata's decision to marry Haresh Khanna, "the suitable boy" in the novel is likely to evoke in some readers responses that were Lata's. At the time of Savita's wedding, Lata has chosen the least glamorous of the three men that were available to her. She has rejected a handsome budding cricketer in Kabir, who intends to finish his higher education at Cambridge, and a creative artist in Amit, who has studied law in England and who hails from a prestigious family in Calcutta; instead she has settled for a shoemaker or a "cobbler", as Haresh Khanna is humorously alluded to by his friends and Lata's family, who in spite of his stint in England, has not acquired the kind of sophistication or polish that Lata's family expects.

Also, Lata accepts Haresh's proposal at a time when Mrs. Rupa Mehra is having second thoughts about the suitability of Haresh for her daughter. She also does it in the face of opposition from Arun, her elder brother, who is in favour of her marrying Amit, his brother-in-law. It is not so much family pressure then, but Lata's own insight into Haresh's character and personality and her changed views on marital and familial relationships that make her take this vital decision.

The Theme of Love in *An Equal Music*



The theme of love in *An Equal Music* is a tale of Michael Holmes, a successful professional violinist, but an emotionally volatile musician, who has never recovered from the loss of his only true love - a pianist whom he knew as a student in Vienna. Ten years after the affair has ended, they meet again. Despite the fact that she is married and has a child, she agrees to accompany Michael and the Maggiore Quartet to Vienna and Venice, where their passions are rekindled and secrets revealed. They get to re-live the intimacy of the past in the city where they first met and fell in love. Julia McNicholl, is however, unhappy with her acts of deception and ends the relationship. She opts for the dependable James Hansen over the volatile and moody Michael.

Possible Inferences

The arguments presented in the lines above, relating to the novels of Vikram Seth, give a reasonable lead into certain valuable conclusions. The dissertation entitled “Theme of love in Vikram Seth’s Novels, *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*” firmly states that the characters in Vikram Seth’s novel are deeply affected by love. Both novels *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music* clearly depict the love of Eastern and Western people and then, how the characters deliberately fall in love. In both the novels *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*, female characters retain central consciousness, and they make their own decisions. Even though both the

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novels celebrate Vikram Seth's theme of love, in the end, the women renounce passionate love for their family and social order.

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