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Comparative Study of Eastern and Western Culture in the Novels of Vikram Seth

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The objective of this paper is to present Vikram Seth as a novelist who has great understanding of Eastern and Western cultures. For this purpose Vikram Seth's novels *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy*, and *An Equal Music* have been taken into consideration. Here Eastern culture refers to the culture of Indian society and Western culture refers to the culture of American or European society. In his novels, those are set in three different countries; Vikram Seth has made the readers to be familiar with people's way of living, their traditions, customs, and values prevailing in these societies. The novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* depict the Western culture and *A Suitable Boy* presents the picture of Eastern or Indian culture. This brief research paper will analyse a comparative study of the Eastern and Western cultures with their distinct features and characteristics which make them somewhat different from each other.

Vikram Seth, a formidable poet, novelist, travel writer, librettist, children's writer, biographer, and memoirist was born on June 20, 1952 at Kolkatta in the house of Prem and Leila Seth. Vikram Seth got his early education in reputed Public School in Dehradun, graduation from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, post-graduation in Economics from Stanford University in California, U.S.A., and enrolled himself for Ph.D. in the same University but could not complete his thesis because he was so much inspired by Pushkin that he started writing *The Golden Gate* in a hotel where he was staying with his family to celebrate the occasion of the publication of *From Heaven Lake* in London. When he returned to Stanford he devoted himself to *The Golden Gate* and his dissertation work went out of the window. He confessed in *Two Lives* that "my dissertation work fell by the wayside, and I devoted myself to *The Golden Gate*" (Seth *Two Lives* 35). Seth made up his mind to return to India with a purpose to write a novel set in India without caring for his dissertation work to be completed. Seth had to understand the varied worlds of law, politics, administration, medicine, farming, manufacture, commerce, education, music, religion and almost every aspect of Indian life and society to write a novel set in India so it took him seven years to come out with this massive novel, *A Suitable Boy*. With his mind set to write a novel about London he writes *An Equal Music* which is a rich tribute to Western classical music. Inspired by his mother Seth writes *Two Lives* about the life of Shanti Uncle and this book is a "memoir, biography, and represents the Seth family anew" (Punekar 8).

Seth is a versatile writer and his prodigious literary career has encompassed several books of poetry, travelogue, verse novel, memoir and his each book is set in different cultural background and written in a distinct form and genre. Seth has written three novels and all the novels are set in three different countries and through his novels Vikram Seth has made the readers to be acquainted with the cultures of different societies. He portrays the world culture, distilled out of his eclectic reading and world-wide travel and moulded by his own personality. Seth has proved himself as a multi-faceted writer because of his deep and amazing artistic insight and bagged many prizes and awards.

One of the themes of *The Golden Gate* is alienation, estrangement, and isolation prevailing in the American society. In this novel Vikram Seth has depicted the American society — its values, traditions, customs, way of living, mentality and mainly the homosexual relationship prevailing in Western societies. In Western societies romance and love is not regarded as a sacred and internal feeling but “a possible weapon in the battle against the loneliness of life” (Jayabharthi 146). John, the protagonist of the novel, had a love affair with Janet during his college time but he in his carefree youth has not given his love and romantic affair the attention it deserves, preferring “the freedom that bachelorhood connotes to most men to the shackle of matrimony” (Gupta 39). By mutual consent they agree to part and shelter their friendship from all passion as they find their romantic relationship would constrict their freedom and it would be an intrusion in their carefree lives. When John feels himself alone in this world he gives an advertisement to have a lover to kill his boredom and selects Liz as his would be lover by getting attracted by her charm and beauty. Their immediate and violent attraction for each other is physical and “their minds seem to have little room for rational thought” (Punekar 87). They establish sexual relationship before getting tied in the pious bond of matrimony. After getting fed up by their romance and finding John over-dominating, Liz gets married to Phil leaving John to pine alone. Liz’s romance and love does nothing good to John but makes him visit the bars to have sexual satisfaction in the company of cute chicks.

Phil and Claire get married very soon after falling in love with each other but they do not give the importance to their marriage as it deserves. Claire leaves away Phil and their five years old son for another man. It seems that there is no value of love and emotions in Western societies. Liz leaves John and gets married with Phil despite of being in love with John and Claire divorces Phil after feeling dissatisfied with him. Liz and Claire both do not respect the feelings of their lover and husband respectably. They have deserted their lovers without any fault. Claire does not observe the rules of marriage and breaking all the rules, she goes to another man leaving her loving husband and five years old son and does never return to them. She proves herself a heartless wife and mother. Their relationship failed because “it was not based on the foundation of a strong familial network” (Punekar 87). Marriage is a life time contract between husband and wife, to share each other’s fortunes misfortunes, and feelings — sexual or emotional. But Claire could not fulfil this contract because she could not fulfil the requirements of a wife as mentioned by R.K. Narayan in *The Guide*, “A good wife ought to be interested in all her husband’s activities” (107).

In Western culture marriage takes place in a church according to the laws of church and the bride wears traditional white dress. During the marriage ceremony, the bride and groom vow their love and commitment for each other with church provided vows and the marrying couple exchanges rings, symbolizing their never-ending love and commitment to each other. Finally, the couple is pronounced as husband and wife and they have their first kiss as a married couple. Cake occupies an important place in American marriage and there is reference of cake, chocolate, marzipan, and icing wine in *The Golden Gate* on the occasion of marriage of Liz and Phil. In *The Golden Gate* there is reference of Phil and Liz’s first kiss after being declared as husband and wife:

The bride and groom — who’ve left the church
And vanished, some, suggest, in search
Of a spot where, without inspection
By the lewd crowd, a private kiss
May sanctify their nuptial bliss. (11.1)

There is a depiction of modern career oriented women for whom a successful career comes first than anything else. In *The Golden Gate* Liz represents modern woman and the flaw of Liz is the universal flaw of young, ambitious women who in their busy schedule do not have much time and energy left to consider the most important issue of life — selection of a suitable life partner with whom they can settle down for entire life. She is in love with John but when John asks her for marriage she says, “There’s more to life than love. / I’ve got to think this out” (Seth *The Golden Gate* 10.27).

Homosexuality is one of the features of Western culture and one of the themes of *The Golden Gate* is homosexual relationship of Phil and Ed. Homosexuality is a “same-sex attraction: meaning the physical, emotional, and psychological attraction to persons of the same sex” (<http://study.com/academy/lesson/homosexual-definition-lesson-quiz.html>). *The Golden Gate* depicts the issues of American society and the issue of homosexuality was being raised as a legitimate concern during the period of Seth’s stay in America. Vikram Seth has introduced the concept of homosexuality in his novel to give it the touch of American society. It seems to him that the picture of American society would be incomplete without the reference of homosexuality and it is homosexuality that makes the novel particularly true to the American way of life. Homosexuality is by no means an American invention but it prevails in American society in large scale and it has acquired a cult status there. Though Seth has portrayed his two homosexual characters Ed and Phil with a great deal of sympathy, yet he is aware that it is not a socially accepted mode of sexuality and makes his characters to end their relationship very soon. Ed is a Catholic and a firm believer in *The Bible* and he feels himself caught in middle position. He feels his soul at war with his religiosity and sexual inclinations for Phil but at last he becomes victorious to suppress his physical desires and snaps his homosexual relationship with Phil. The reaction of Liz about the homosexual relationship of Phil and Ed proves that this type of relationship is not considered something queer in Western societies, as she does not show any signs of bewilderment about the homosexual relationship of Ed and Phil and tells John about their relationship in a very easy, cool, and natural manner. Though John is shocked knowing about it but he represents the conservative notion of the Western culture.

In *The Golden Gate* there is a reference of the process of olive-picking, olive gathering, incardination of hands and shirt-sleeves with juice, pulp and puce of olive, and the toil it needed. Phil toils with “sweat-drenched brow and collar, / Humming, but without let or lag / Stripping the fruit from twig to bag” (5.34). There is a tendency of rearing pets in Western culture. Paul, six years old son of Phil says to his father, “Dad, get / A spider for us as a pet” (3.11). Phil agrees to his son’s queer demand and they call it Easy Rider. Liz has a cat named Charlemagne and John feels that Liz loves her cat more than he. This Charlemagne also becomes one of the reasons of the break-up of John and Liz, as John has a great disliking for that cat and he feels jealous of Liz’s more care and attention towards her cat. Ed has a pet iguana named Schwarz and even has a small pool for it. During his homosexual activity with Phil, Ed ties the iguana under their bed. In *An Equal Music* Michael’s parents has also notoriously unsociable cat Zsa-Zsa. They love it too much and even Michael’s father sits with Zsa-Zsa on his lap and doses off. Though dog has been made pet since time immemorial but it did not get the position and care as it has got in modern time. Today dog is treated very lovingly and carefully and treated as a member of family. The dog used to be a mark of faithfulness and people kept it to keep a watch on their house but it has become a mark of fashion and modernity in contemporary age. In *A Suitable Boy* the Chatterji family, which is influenced by the Western culture, has a dog named Cuddled and they treat it lovingly, it roams in the house freely and sleeps in their beds.

An Equal Music has been written in the background of Vienna and Venice which represent the West. This novel is a tribute to Western music and culture. There is reference of different musical instruments as violin, piano, viola, cello; musical rehearsals; musical institutions; musical performances; different notes and movements of music as: fugue, scherzos, adagios, arpeggios; and great masters of music as: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Hayden, and Bach. Music is a profession in the Western society and most of the characters in *An Equal Music* earn their living by playing music.

In Western culture pre-marriage sexual relationship seems common. Michael feels attracted towards his fellow music student Julia and they establish physical relationship before being getting married. After his sudden break-up with Julia Michael establishes sexual relationship with Virginie who is his music student and sixteen years younger than he is. Michael does not love Virginie but he establishes physical relationship to kill his boredom and to satisfy his physical need. "She wants it to, and I go along with it, through lust and loneliness ..." (Seth *An Equal Music* 6). Michael establishes physical relationship with Julia despite of her being married to another man James when they meet after ten years of their unbearable separation. Sexuality is prevalent in Western culture, as Michael goes to call girls for sexual satisfaction after being deserted by Julia. But immorality is neither accepted to society nor to Vikram Seth, so he makes Julia to understand her immorality and treachery against her loyal and caring husband and made her to return back to her family leaving Michael heart-broken and alone.

There is neither any reference of joint families in the novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* nor any reference of a daughter-in-law being maltreated by her mother-in-law or any other member of the family because after the marriage the newly-wedded couple bears the responsibilities to run its family independently and they live separately. Besides it the people of Western societies marry in late age or remain unmarried forever, as Michael is thirty-seven years old and is unmarried and there is no hope of his getting married.

A Suitable Boy presents the glimpses of north India which represents Eastern society. In this novel the cultures of both the Hindu and Muslim societies have been described completely. Here India is presented with its traditions, customs, superstitions, festivals, rituals, marriage ceremonies, condition of women in the Hindu and Muslim society, condition of lower class people, and different type of occupations of the society. Seth has presented north India with the description of the life of doctors, professors, lawyers, tenants, landlords, poets, saints, shoemakers, prostitutes, pilgrims, ministers, businessmen, house wives, scheduled castes, university scholars and painted every aspect of their lives on the vast canvas to make the readers to be acquainted with the Eastern culture, to appreciate it, and to adopt its moral values and qualities in their life.

The values and mentality of the people of Eastern society about love, marriage, and family is described in the novel *A Suitable Boy*. The people give more importance to marriage and family than romance, love, and passion. Lata loves Kabir passionately but gets married with Haresh who seems her practical, sober, and mature person, who does not believe in dreams and passion and whose feet touch the land of reality. Lata gives more importance to her family and for her mother's sake she gets ready to forget her love for Kabir and marries with Haresh, the boy of her mother's choice. Savita, Veena, Priya, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, Mrs. Rupa Mehra and other women of Eastern society remain involved in the petty errands of their household and family. They prefer their family than anything else and try their best to keep their family together. There is no reference of divorce and broken homes in *A Suitable Boy*.

The joint family is one of the features of Eastern society and the people live in joint families though they have to adjust or sacrifice their interests in favour of their families.

A Suitable Boy is a novel that deals with the theme of marriage and it starts with the marriage of Savita and Pran and comes to an end with the marriage of Lata and Haresh. Indian marriage is full of customs and pre-marriage, in-marriage, post-marriage ceremonies. A match-maker plays an important role in Indian marriage system and he may be a relative, or a friend, or any other person who tries to settle marriage on the basis of social, economic, and moral status of the two families. Horoscope matching also occupies an important place in Eastern culture. The astrologer decides the nature, physical features, health of the person, and the effects of the alliance on the couple as well as on their family by calculating the position of constellations and planets at the time of birth of a particular person. Haresh's parents ask for Lata's horoscope to ensure that her stars match Haresh. If the stars of would be bride and groom match then the date and time of marriage is fixed by the priest or an astrologer.

In Indian culture the marriage takes place in the house or very rarely in hotels or marriage-palaces. Indian brides decorate themselves with gold and diamond jewellery, apply henna to colour her hand and feet, wear bridal red-coloured suit or sari, and walk to the wedding platform well-decorated with flowers. The priest begins the ceremony with lighting the pious fire. In Indian society, marriage is considered complete after performing religious ceremony *phera*. "To complete the marriage, the bride and groom walk in circle (*phera*) around the sacrificial fire" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriages_in_India). The knot between the scarves of the bride and groom is tied and bright red *sindoor* (vermillion) is applied to the parting of bride's hair with gold ring. The bride and groom also exchange marital vows as to look after each other, to be affectionate and friendly, to have faith in each other, to consult all matters, etc. During the ceremony of *kanyadan* the groom makes three promises in the presence of the sacred fire — to be just, earn sufficiently to support his family and love his wife.

Indian people's belief in religion is described through the character of Dipankar; the references of Pul Mela; descriptions of saints, *Nagas*, Sanki Baba, adherence to rituals; and faith in the superior wisdom of a Guru; Dipankar's wandering in search of knowledge; descriptions of *Ram Lila*, *Bhart Milap*, *Karva Chouth*, *shraddhs*; funeral ceremony; Muslim festivals as: *Muharram*, *Bakar-Id* and the process of their celebrations. Though Seth has depicted the Indian society in its true colours with its rituals and celebrations but at the same time he is against superstitions and blind faiths in religion and through the character of Dipankar, he criticises the irrationality of an educated man who runs behind the superstitious striving to seek knowledge or blessing from the *sadhus* and *Babas*. Indian people's faith in going on a pilgrimage, having a dip in the holy water of the Ganges to purify their sins, and relying on Baba's assurance and blessing is depicted in the novel.

In *A Suitable Boy* there is a homosexual relationship between Maan and Firoz but their relationship is not described as clearly and openly as the relationship of Phil and Ed of *The Golden Gate*. On the basis of some clues it can be said that there might be something between Maan and Firoz as — Maan embraces Firoz when they meet, they spend nights together whenever they get a chance, Maan ruffles Firoz's hair lovingly, and takes him in his hands. Roopali Gupta also says that Maan has a "homosexual relationship with his friend Firoz" (65). But it seems that homosexual relationship is not common in India and it is not referred to openly in the society. It is considered as a relationship that should be kept hidden from the society, as in *A Suitable Boy* Seth has not made any body to know about the homosexual relationship of Maan and Firoz.

A Suitable Boy is not a novel about a single individual or a single family or a single event, but of north India as a whole. But Seth's India is not the India of high fashion, sex and passion, and craze for modernization like any of the Western countries but it is the India of older social and cultural values, arranged marriages, sanity, tolerance, sacrifice, adjustment, co-operation, trust, and mutual-understanding. All these virtues are essential to tide over all the adversities of life successfully. All the women except Abida Khan, Malati Trivedi, and Illa Chattopadhyaya rest of the women absorb themselves in family issues and adjust themselves in the existing environment and circumstances of their family and do not revolt or grumble for the inconveniences. Indian women are described as living "like clock-work, performing her duties at home without a question or doubt of any sort" (Narayan *The Painter of Signs* 108).

In *A Suitable Boy* the pathetic condition of women in Muslim society is described where they have to live in *purdah* in the four walls of their homes, where their position is no better than a servant who has to follow his master at any cost. They have no interests or choice of their own but they have to do what their husbands demand them to perform. The girls in Muslim society are not free to choose their life-partner independently but it is decided by their elders and imposed upon them though it may be against their wish. The women in Muslim 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. It is Abida Khan who presents a beam of light and awareness in Muslim women by denying the rules of *purdah* and due to her courage she becomes a member of Legislative Assembly.

The condition of the lower caste women is not better. 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" (Seth *A Suitable Boy* 532). Her daily routine is to bring *roties* (chapattis), salt, a few chillies, and some *lassi* (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, monotonous, without any charm and attraction. It may be their destiny, or tradition, or lack of education and awareness that has kept the lower caste women away from the beam of charming, honourable, and self-respectful life.

In *A Suitable Boy* Seth has made the women to live, or middle class families. The condition of Veena, Priya, and Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor is not satisfactory in the society. Veena and Priya suffers in the hands of their mothers-in-law and in a revolt compare them to witch and scarecrow. Veena complains to Priya about the cruelties of her mother-in-law and says, "When she sees I'm not miserable she becomes more miserable" (Seth *A Suitable Boy* 245). Priya is married to a lawyer and lives in a joint family where she has to live in the four walls of the house and she has no liberty in the house and even she is not allowed to go out of the house except wedding and trips to temple or a religious fair. When she moves up and down the roof she would picture herself as a panther in a cage. Mahesh Kapoor wanted his wife to be in private sphere and gives her no room in public. He delights in baiting and hurting his wife and scolds her whenever he gets a chance. Though these women are treated badly by their mothers-in-law, family, husband, or society, yet they do nothing amoral or illegal, they do not show their backs to their circumstance but face them boldly and adjust themselves in the prevailing situations. Indian women are described as the idol of tolerance, co-operation, forgiveness, love, and kindness.

There is a tradition of arranged marriage in Eastern culture. In Indian society "it is parents who choose brides and grooms for their children" (Hazarika 86). In *A Suitable Boy* all the marriages, except the marriage of Arun and Meenakshi, are arranged marriages. It means that

these marriages are arranged by the parents, not by the couples themselves after falling in love with each other. All the women who get married to the person arranged by their parents adjust themselves in the family provided by their parents and enjoy the bliss of life. Savita and Pran's marriage is arranged by their parents and there was no love between them before marriage but it develops between them after marriage. Although Pran is lank, gangly, asthmatic, and has dark complexion, yet Savita does not deny to get married with the person of her mother's choice and later they prove themselves as the most understanding and loving couple. On the other hand, Meenakshi does not find herself satisfied in the family chosen by herself. She could not adjust herself in her in-laws and lives in Calcutta with her husband where she could breathe freely without the restrictions of married life imposed in Indian society. Arun and Meenakshi's love-marriage has been described as a contrast to the bliss of arranged marriage. Though Arun and Meenakshi get married after falling in love passionately, yet their love marriage gets exhausted very soon and they find themselves unable to continue their everlasting bond with sanctity and purity it needed. Both of them do not find satisfied with each other and establish extra-marital sexual relationships with someone else and Meenakshi even gets pregnant by Billy Irani. Meenakshi and Arun present "a dark side of marriage where both husband and wife involve themselves in extramarital relations" (Ganjoo 6).

Seth has also presented the dark side of Eastern culture by incorporating the character of Saeeda Bai in *A Suitable Boy*. Saeeda Bai is a thirty-five years old charming prostitute who entertains people physically and emotionally. There are many admirers of Saeeda Bai but Seth has described how Maan, a young son of reputed Mahesh Kapoor, falls passionately in love with Saeeda Bai and puts the name and fame of his family on stake for her. It is the profession of a courtesan to entertain her admirers in their grief and to console them physically and emotionally but she has to suffer because of the society, she is not respected or honoured by any one, and she is exploited sexually in the society. Nawab Sahib establishes sexual relationship with Saeeda Bai in a drunken position and she becomes an unwedded mother of Tasneem.

The people's faith in their religion, communal harmony, tolerance, and friendship are some of the remarkable features of Indian society. Maan and Firoz are close friends despite of being related to different religions — Hindu and Muslim. They set a remarkable example of inter-communal friendship and their friendship gets victory over religious differences prevailing in the society. It reaches its climax in the horrifying scene where Firoz and Maan are attacked by a murderous mob and Firoz could have a narrow escape because of Maan and spends the night at Maan's sister's house. There is a conflict between Maan and Saeeda Bai and Firoz gets a fatal wound on his stomach in the struggle of disarming Maan. Maan is sentenced to jail but it does not affect their friendship as Firoz, in the hospital, desires to meet Maan and in the court Firoz does not blame Maan for his injury but says that he has tumbled over and got the knife on his stomach that Maan had in his hand. After Maan's coming out of the jail, the friendship between Maan and Firoz as well as between Mahesh Kapoor and Nawab Sahib is restored. It is the victory of inter-religious friendship and proves that India is enriched with different religions, inter-religious tolerance, friendship, and communal harmony.

Vikram Seth has depicted these societies in such a way that he has made the readers to feel that they are visualising the particular scenes themselves. Though there are some differences between these the cultures of these societies, yet there are some common things between them. Marriage is a common issue in Eastern and Western culture and one of its aims is to have a life-partner and legitimate off-springs. It is parents' duty to get their children married in proper time and age. Both Mrs. Rupa Mehra and Mrs. Dorati remain worried to get their

children married at proper time. There is a reference of call girls or prostitutes in all the three novels and these are described as a means to kill frustration and to be entertained sexually and emotionally. Rejected by Liz John goes to bars for cute chicks; Maan falls in love with a prostitute Saeeda Bai who in return entertains not only Maan but Nawab Sahib, Raja of Marh, Dr. Bilgrami and many other admirers; Michael also goes to Tricia a call girl after being deserted by his beloved Julia. These may be called as cute chicks, courtesan, or call girls but their profession is to entertain the persons in their distress in return of money and they are not honoured in Eastern or Western societies.

Family and marriage occupy an essential place in any type of society and it is the basis of human society and civilization. In all the novels Seth has proved the victory of marriage and family over passion, romance, and love. Liz rejects passionate John and marries with divorcee Phil because she finds him mature, understanding, and a suitable husband. Lata rejects passionate Kabir and marries with Haresh who seems to her a practical, mature, and sensible person. Julia rejects the passionate love of Michael and returns back to her loving, caring, and mature husband though for some time she establishes physical relationships with Michael despite of being married with James. All the protagonists of these three novels prefer family and marriage over transient passion and romance.

The condition of women is not satisfactory in the patriarchal society. Though the women in Eastern society suffer a lot in the hands of husband and other family members, yet their situation is not better in Western society. Michael's mother struggles a lot to run her family when her husband was suffering from bronchial ailments. Michael narrates, "My mother exhausted herself trying to nurse him, to earn a living working as a dinner lady in a school, and to fight the case. Though it was he who was ill, it was she who died — quite suddenly, of a stroke" (Seth *An Equal Music* 27). Mrs Formby, a childless lady, feels lonely and deserted after the death of her husband and she has to live on the mercy of her cunning nephew who does not love or respect her internally but pesters her to spend her money for the education of his children and to make his will in his favour. Recently in the Western society "women were given very low status in comparison to men. The Christians considered the woman as temptations of the world of flesh and of the devil" (Majumdar 22). The men had access to everything and women confined to domestic work. But with the passage of time the condition of women is undergoing a transition. In *The Golden Gate* Liz is a lawyer and during Lungless march she makes an impressive speech about the bad effects of weapons on human beings, fauna, ozone layer, Janet is a sculpture and takes part in exhibitions, Claire marries with Phil after being fallen in love with him but finding him unsuitable divorces him, leaving even her five years old son. This type of transition is seen in Eastern culture also. Malati Trivedi, Abida Khan, Illa Chattopadhyia represent modernization of Indian womanhood who do not abide by the rules of traditional society. Malati do not believe in love, romance, marriage, and family and wants to become a doctor, Abida Khan breaks away the chains of *purdah* and becomes a member of Legislative Assembly, and Illa Chattopadhyia becomes a professor in a university. To glorify Indian culture, Seth has presented Lata and Savita as two sides of the same coin of Indian womanhood. "Savita is the epitome of the duty-bound, culturally traditional girl, whereas Lata represents the changing persona of the Indian woman — her first tentative steps towards broader horizons of free India" (Gupta 61).

In short Vikram Seth has deep insight and understanding of these two distinct societies and their cultures. By depicting Western and Eastern culture, Seth has proved that there is something unique and special in Indian culture that has made it famous around the world. Seth has presented Eastern culture full of morality, hospitality, mutual friendship, tolerance, sympathy, co-operation, and adaptability. Indian culture is described as full of religious

customs and rites, fairs and festivals, traditions and ceremonies. The people have great faith in God, religion, and customs. They give more importance to family and marriage than love and passion. The people have great regard for elders and parents and they are ready to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of family. Seth has proved superiority of Eastern culture over Western culture. It seems that Seth wants to propagate that East or West India is the best.

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