



Diasporic rationality in Vikram Seth's the golden gate and an equal music

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Abstract

Vikram Seth is not only one of the fascinating and multitalented writers but one of the most important and prominent diasporic writers of post modernism also. He decorated his novels by using sonnet, verse, epic and music. He illustrates different social realism and multicultural aspects. Seth always uses his classical style in his writing. His style of writing outpaces him from other literatures of his contemporaries. Seth is as a citizen of the world portrays international image in the variety of his works and multifarious themes. The subjects of *The Golden Gate* (1986) ^[10] and *An Equal music* (1999) ^[8] are exclusively the lives of Americans and Europeans respectively. *The Golden Gate* is a novel in verse, the story of a number of young professionals in San Francisco and Californian Culture. It is also the depiction of post modern culture with love and lust. *An Equal Music* depicts a turbulent love story of dedicative musical professionals. The central characters of this novel Michael and Julia are attracted to each other by music and passion in nurtured by it. The music becomes the cause of their separation and tragic life. These two novels have nothing about Indian culture and citizens except writer. Seth moved easily from medieval Chinese poetry to San Francisco Yuppiedom and from the Hindi belt in north Indian to the world of Britain and Vienna. This is the essence of Diasporic and multiculturalism. He is not only obsessed with the theme of cultural displacement and Diasporas dislocation but also make the world his own. This paper is aimed to investigate the migrant rationality in Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music*.

Keywords: cosmo political, multiculturalism, californian culture, diasporic rationality, dedicative professionals, post modernism

Introduction

Vikram Seth is an extremely versatile writer and as a student of Economics, novelist, poet and translator he has had a worldwide reputation. Seth is an Indian by birth but lived and educated in different countries where he spent his progressive period of time. Seth adds multicultural milieu to his artistic skills which has helped him to bringing his English writing to the stage of world literature. Seth has experienced a significant amount of intercultural mobility. Seth has lived in three countries and has written a variety of literary works. As a true classical realist Seth relies on middle class characters and their sensibilities and due importance is given in lower strata and working –class sections of the people at appropriate positions in the novel. Seth adopts his own version of realism to represents the politically servile, economically deprived and socially circumscribed post independent Indian society. Through his first novel, *The Golden Gate* emerged as a new comer in the stream of Indo English literature. In *The Golden Gate* Seth depicts American culture, living style of people, customs and their mentality. His fictional world is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. For Vikram Seth the world is like a stage and its people his characters no matter to which nation and background they belong Seth has never restricted to themes of cultural displacement, search for roots or diasporas dislocations but is a universal writer and write as the muse takes him Seth's works reach an audience beyond geographical and ideological boundaries

Seth's *An Equal Music* (1999) ^[8] comes under the category of international literature. It is a realistic fictional adventure in verse medium and adheres to all the features of social realism. Through this novel Seth eschews his localized

status and Seth himself as a writer of translational identity. The story runs through London, Vienna and Venice but the essence of the novel is music. It is story of musician Michael Holme and his recovery of the self. This novel is the depiction of the philosophy of universal humanism. The novel does not talk about the cultural gaps or explore the issue of ambivalence. Rather *An Equal Music* could be read an attempt to interconnect different boundaries of nationalism. Vikram Seth is a cultural traveller he enjoys his experience of having multiple homes. He is a universal writer and is honest enough to follow his inspiration.

Meaning of Diaspora

Diaspora is derived from the Greek word, *Diaspeiro* means scattering. Its use began to develop from the original sense when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the first mention of Diaspora created as a result of exile is found in the Septuagint. A Diaspora is a population that is scattered across regions separate from their geographical place of origin. Indian Diaspora is a generic term to describe the people who migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the republic India. India has a second largest Diaspora in the world. The Indian Diaspora has played an important role in the field of literature, science and technology, international trades and education.

The meaning of literary Diaspora is literary works which are written by authors who live outside their native land. Diaspora literature may also be defined by its contents, regardless of where it was written. Diaspora literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narrative of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions. Diaspora

theory with its various structures has influences literature of every language of the world. This literature is widely known as emigrant or diasporic literature.

Literature of Indian Diaspora constitutes a major study of the literature and other cultural text of Indian Diaspora. For this concept its applying a theoretical framework based on trauma, sorrow, spectres, identity, travel, translation and recognition this anthology uses the term migrant identity to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously or unconsciously as a group of displacement. Vikram Seth also applies different cultural realism in his works. Like as in his three Chinese poets he told Chinese culture, in *The Golden Gate* he talks about American culture as well as in *Mappings* and *An Equal Music*, he told about British culture and in *A Suitable Boy* he describes Indian culture. Through his fictional world he is recognized as emigrant writer and a person of universe.

Seth's American Diasporic Rationality

The Golden Gate (1986) is the first work that brought Seth's fame and the work was heralded for its European connection and American centred theme. Indian born poet carries the rich tradition of unmemorable Indian epics, fables and folklores as well as the sonnets in English literature; all seen to unify in the making of this masterpiece. He was noticed not just for the concise and ingenious treatment of the theme i.e. - the existential anguish of the main protagonist but also for the dexterity with which he adhered to the rhyming tetrameter versification.

The Golden Gate thematically depicts romantic passion, materialism, loneliness, alienation, frustration, isolation, disillusionment and discontentment. This novel is a representative and symbolic of modern life in metropolitan cities of the world. It is a tragic love story of modern Americans living in San Francisco, California in 1980s who are called Yuppies. John is the central figure of this novel, a successful young executive of Silicon Valley. Seth portrays that John is an isolated unhappy alienated man in the very opening of the sonnet and novel ends with John's unhappy life. John comes in contact with one of his old friend getting inspiration from whom he places an ad in a local newspaper and after many attempts he succeeds in finding a companion of his choice. His companion Liz Dorati an intelligent charming lawyer. John's relation with Liz becomes so much deeper. But Liz's brother has a homosexual relationship with John's friend Phill and Liz' priority for her cat who John does not like, become the cause of departing this relation and they were separated. This separation becomes the reason of painful environment of loneliness and frustration John Brown. His mother is no more and his father also doesn't take responsibility his relation after retirement from government job.

The Golden Gate represents a true Californian character. For the testing when he is invited to become godfather of Liz's child and also he has to face the deaths of so many people with him i.e. the death of his first lover and later friend Janet, Mrs Dorathi and Doctor Hutt Lamont.

The Golden Gate is basically Californian Diaspora because most of the characters portrayed in the novel by Seth seem to be exploring the vision of reality and illusions already found in the lives of Californians. In this novel, major characters replaces by minor characters. The reference of Shakespeare's King Lear is seen in sonnet 2.24 through a letter written by Anne T Friese i.e. Janet addressed as 'the

king's third daughter'. This is a direct reference of Cordelia, the third and the youngest daughter of King Lear.

Janet is an important character in this novel that is a drummer and chiefly a sceptre by profession, is in a close contest with John. Janet as the only female friend of John is who head steadily devoted to her act during some serious negotiations with John. She always tries to take care of him. So she found a suitable life-companion for John though advertisement. John selects three girls on the advertisement of Janet but finally Elizabeth Dorathi alias Liz with whom he falls in love. Phill is also an important character of this novel. He is John's former roommate and presently his friend. Because of separation from his wife Claire out of misunderstanding, he also lives a lonely life. He attends music concerts organized by Liz and John and Sue is the chief performer. There in the concert he becomes in contact with Ed who is Liz's brother. Phill started homosexual relationship but everything has a limit. So that after Liz's separation from John she married with Phill.

The other theme of *The Golden Gate* is nuclear warfare. A lengthy segment the novel deals with anti-war demonstration nuclear is natty the theme of the novel and it deals with the life of America. America is the only country where people are aware enough to protest the acquisition of nuclear weapons the novel shows that Phill who proves as rigid in his sight wing pro-bomb politics as he is in his dislike of Liz's cat, leaves his promising career of nuclear science and joins another job. Liz participates in the anti war demonstration and gives a persuasive speech against the arms race the seventh chapter of the novel is devoted entirely to the protest march against the bomb eighteen sonnets.

Vikram, Seth earns a mention as an emigrant Indian, although not strictly one in the limited definition of the term, by various listings of prominent south Asian American amongst whom he commonly included. Seth epic fiction *The Golden Gate*, borrows modernism assumptions of ennui and purposelessness into the context of upper middle class. Seth succeeds in showing the gap between romantic, courtly assumptions and culture behind the form against the dull, dry and highly practical life of Yuppies, Seth defends his chosen form as an attempt to raise it the mere 'hudibrastic tricks' to which it has descended but much of Seth own verse appears to achieve little else.

It is under the structure of Diaspora that we can assemble such different works as *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (Anita Desai, 1971) and *The Golden Gate and Wife* (Bharati Mukharji, 1975) Vikram Seth's bridge and his details signs of the social and physical landscape constitute structures that simultaneously suggest belonging and distance, continuity and morality of the individual. Seth has tried his utmost to delicate an intimate Californian life style. There are a number of details that range from the seemingly inconsequential to more serious social issuing open to debate such contemporary sexual men and nuclear ornaments. Seth enters into the culture of his American world completely and is above to write about lives of specific calls of Americans with great cultural in teriority making invisible his own Indian self. A borderless and multicultural world is conjured up by the novel by the facts surrounding its inspiration and its author.

In San Francisco, the east and the west do not meet actually blend. *The Golden Gate* shows the relative proximity of the east and sharing the same ocean with the west here. Seth

points the city of San Francisco in all its colourful glory, delineating all the minute things that constitute the heart beat of the city and California itself is the place in America for migrant and expatriate multicultural sin. The book is however very much a Diasporas narrative seen point of view of an Englishman who has gone to Stand ford to get Ph.D and moves in Yuppie circles of second generation Japanese artists. Lastly it can be said that *The Golden Gate* is novel written by Indian writer Vikram Seth owing largely to its firm American locate specially of California, proving it to be a Californian Diaspora as well as American Diaspora.

Seth's British Diasporic Rationality

Vikram Seth has expressed his migrant feeling of loss and displacement in his works. Seth introduced himself to the world as a writer through his first poetic collection *Mappings*. Seth's Diasporic identity and its features are heightened throughout the collection. The themes of alienation, exile, rootlessness, loss, nostalgia and other experiences of the poet are expressed in many poems. As a migrant writer he has infused his work with the application and experiences of multi- culturalism, hybridity and search for identity. The autobiographical elements play a significant role in the Diasporic writing.

An Equal Music (1999) ^[8] is Seth's third novel set in London with classical western music in its background. Seth combines the story of love with music passion and the culture of musicians. The musician Michael Holden, is the protagonist of the novel and this novel centres on his life. The socio- cultural concept combines two main fields: society and culture. Community involves a group of people who are the members of various societies, and culture is the conduct of the community as a whole such European performers, musicians, singers all moves very swiftly from one location to another. Vikram Seth depicts his characters along with their culture, tradition and celebration.

Seth explains Michael's and Julia's miserable and lonely lives while Michael wanted to live with Julia. She did not like Nora in *A Doll's House* wants to sever the familiar connection. Julia still keeps up with her culture and adheres to limitations, though she is a modern woman. The lovers did not cross the limitation of culture. Julia's married life awakes her to behave in a proper manner. The life of Michael was very disturbed because of the separation. However Michael and Julia are usually bound in this situation, their culture would not allow them to behave like lovers

In *An Equal Music* Seth depicts British culture by setting London and Vienna. Seth does not try to criticize the country which had once colonised his motherland. In this novel Michael is the second violinist with muggier quartet. The novel deals with how Michael reacts when he finds his lost love and become lonely person. Michael and Julia firstly meet in Vienna where both were studying music. Seth draws a picture here of two lovers from different places as student and return after a long period of ten years. They became significant musicians in Vienna and London. Seth also shows their vicissitudes as classical musicians where in English schools seldom classical music is taught and chamber music is losing its appeal and string quartets finds it difficult to survive. This novel is written after much research by Seth and this is evident in the minute's details about turnings of structuring a performance of violin maker, of the hatred arguments amongst the characters regarding

nuances of their performance. Seth's novels are written in Diasporic elements.

The migration can be seen in *An Equal Music* where Michael moves away from his hometown in countryside to Vienna and then to the city of London to pursue a musical career. The character takes up a cosmopolitical identity rather than a pan-national identity. This is one of the traits Diaspora. Seth also moves one country to another country. He grew up in India and he had travelled as he was a student at Oxford in Britain, Stand Ford in America and Nanjing University in China. His works reflects his in- depth knowledge with these different countries.

An Equal Music reveals Vikram Seth's fondness for irony that Michael happens to be batcher's son is itself ironic. Seth approaches to social reality helps the novel to set its foot in the real world of man. When Michael describes the changes in Rochdale, he serves his creator's role of a social critic. In this novel Seth has created living, breathing world that enchant and grips the readers and a love- epic of Michael and Julia. Seth has presented discontinuous lovers meets after a long period and they established physical relationship despite of Julia's being married to James. But sexuality is acceptable neither to Seth nor to society. Vikram Seth portrays the lifestyle of the young people with responsibility dream, passion, love, pain and sacrifice. Seth is also interested in exploring western culture and classical music which evokes the nation's cultural prosperity and he successfully depicts the diasporic elements in his novels like *An Equal Music* and *An Equal Music*.

Conclusion

Vikram Seth as novelist, posses multiple identities and he is easily and effortlessly transcends national barriers. In Seth's we find him dealing with different continents and cultures and he take up different countries like India in *A Suitable Boy*, China in *Three Poets*, America in *The Golden Gate* and Britain in *Mappings* and *An Equal Music*. Each of his works true to the backdrop in which Seth places them and he negates himself as an Indian. All works exclusively deals with different cultures and countries. Seth gives an authentic representation of those settings which he achieves after a rigorous research and this makes him an international writer. So we can conclude with saying that Seth is a Diasporic, migrant and Global writer of Indian English Literature.

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