

# Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*: Voicing the Political Issues of Post-Independence Era

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## Abstract

Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* has been compared to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels of George Eliot, Jane Austen and Leo Tolstoy. The novels of these writers and Seth's *A Suitable Boy* tend to hinge on the panoramic depiction of the social, economic and political issues. *A Suitable Boy* is set in the fictional town of Brahmipur, and the action starts at the beginning of 1951 and finishes at the end of April 1952, the year of Seth's birth and the year of India's first election by universal suffrage. At the centre of the novel, no doubt, is the love affair between Lata, a Hindu heroine, and a Muslim Boy, Kabir Durrani. The reader observes the progress of their love and also notices the strong reaction of Rupa Mehra (Lata's mother) to the so-called unsocial step of these young characters in the backdrop of Hindu-Muslim riots of the post-independence period. Apart from this central issue, the novel functions as a political fable showing the emerging polity of the newly independent India and has its fair share of politics and politicians. Seth depicts the decadence of the post-independence Congress and the role of corruption in politics. The Congress was an ideal party before independence and it thought for political freedom, social upliftment, moral regeneration and economic freedom. After independence, the situation changed and the leaders could be seen working for their personal benefits. In *A Suitable Boy*, Mahesh Kapoor is a symbolic figure representing those idealistic congressmen who were hugely disillusioned by the decadence of the post-independence politics whereas L.N. Agarwal is a manipulator who is involved in corrupt practices. He is a political opponent of Mahesh Kapoor and his chief concern is vote bank politics. The novel has numerous instances of political rivalry and one such example is the political drama of Salimpur-cum-Baitar constituency during the first General Elections in India. In this constituency, "Waris was a bitter rival to Mahesh Kapoor" and "nothing was left unexploited in the mauling battle that led up to the polls"(1234). Here, the Muslim population, swayed by religious feelings, votes for a communalist, Waris and rejects a secularist, Mahesh Kapoor. Mahesh Kapoor is defeated because he refuses to come to terms with the forces of corruption and communalism. Vikram Seth worries that if people like Waris are going to hold the reins of power in independent India, she will hardly need any enemies to ruin her.

**Keywords:** Political, Post-Independence, Social, Rivalry, Secular, Tussle, Corruption.

## Introduction

The political events of 1950s have an important place in Indian history and *A Suitable Boy* voices them realistically. To give a graphic description of the political happenings, Seth transports the reader from present to the historical past of India. He infuses history into politics and vice-versa and then adds the colour of imagination to depict what cannot be presented through the eyes of a historian. Politics and history cannot be treated separately as today's political events will become a part of history in future. That is why Vikram Seth could not avoid to include the situations and incidents which are historically true to present effectively the political situation and conflict of the post-independence period. But it doesn't mean that he is a historian and his aim was to write a history book. In history, the historical events are presented realistically keeping in mind that the facts and names must not be distorted. In fiction, on the other hand, an incident

or a situation is presented as a story narrated with hypothetical characters. In this connection, Butterfield says that history "provides a story which a writer has to work into his own fictions" (1924:31). The novelist borrows the story from the history book. But he develops and rounds off the story with the fictional elements. Vikram Seth presents a harmonious blend of history and fiction in *A Suitable Boy* to deal with politics and the political conflict of 1950s. He uses fictional elements to fill in the lines where history is inadequate, and it is not easy to disentangle the fictional elements from history, as they reinforce each other. Perhaps Vikram Seth is aware of the suggestion of Butterfield who has said, "The story taken from history has to be dovetailed in the fictions of the novelist"(1924:32). Vikram Seth does hold on to a fictional garb, but it keeps often slipping to reveal living historical personages.

#### Review of Literature

1. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus state that a large number of Indian English novels deal with the political issues of the post-independence period. So, fiction should be read in the context of social-political views of the novelist; "for a writer's political and religious beliefs are not excrescences to be laughed away" (1976:33).
2. Angela Atkins argues that Vikram Seth's Political ideas find expression in *A Suitable Boy* and his other works. "In *From Heaven Lake*, he compares the political system of China and India and concludes that although democracy is a difficult institution for a poor country to preserve India has achieved it" (2002:38).
3. Roopali Gupta points out that in *A Suitable Boy*, the political material is properly integrated with the fictional content of the work and "Seth is able to convince the reader of his historical accuracy by the painstaking reproduction of the politics of the time" (2005:69).
4. Agarwalla states: "Seth's fiction is posited in a very specific period, 1951-52, the period of intense political infightings in the Congress Party, between the Tandonites and the Nehruites, the communal disharmony, the cultural slavery of the anglicized Indians and the search for an 'ism' for Indian political, social and economic policies" (1995:88).
5. Vahnav discusses the role of criminals in Indian politics. He states that the such "politicians have been memorized in Bollywood films like Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs of Wasseypur*" (2017:14).

#### Aim of the Study

The article proposes to show that Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* highlights those aspects of social and political unrest which posed a threat to the progress of India after independence. The study will help the readers to understand the political conditions of 1950s in light of the politics of Hindu nationalism of 1980s, 1990s and of the present times. In present conditions, India's secularism is passing through a period of crisis and this study will help to spread the message of peace and stability as proposed by Vikram Seth in his novel. Seth himself supports the right attitude, stability and secularism in politics and

denounces the prevailing political situation. Through this novel, Seth emphasizes the secularist viewpoint for reconciling religious and political differences through dialogue and peaceful co-existence.

#### Textual Analysis

The political characters of *A Suitable Boy* fall into three categories. The first group is of the national figures like Jawahar Lal Nehru, Rajrishi Purushottom Das Tandon, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai who appear in their real names. In the second group, there are some leaders whose names have been changed but their personalities are identifiable. For instance, there is the Purva Pradesh (Uttar Pradesh) Chief Minister S.S. Sharma who looks like G.B. Pant. Then there are two states ministers – Mahesh Kapoor and L.N Agarwal who seem to represent Damodar Swaroop Seth and C.B. Gupta. In the last category are some fictional characters who represent the emergent forces in the Indian polity. Among these, the two prominent figures are Abdur Rasheed and Waris Khan. Through these fictional and historical characters, Seth deals with the political issues of the post-independence era.

*A Suitable Boy* depicts the political incidents of the newly independent India and has its fair share of politics and politicians. We know that the Congress was an ideal party before independence and it thought for political freedom, social upliftment, moral regeneration and economic freedom. It is also true that the party faced many problems before independence because the leaders were divided on various issues but their only mission and ambition was to get freedom. After independence, the situation changed and the leaders could be seen working for their personal benefits. In *A Suitable Boy* Mahesh Kapoor tells Masterji, "Previously politics was not profitable.... Now politics is profitable, and naturally the kind of people who are interested in making money are keen to join the game. If we move out they move in" (324). Vikram Seth also seems to be concerned with corruption in politics and deals with it in the novel. It indicates that he wants to see an honourable India with no corruption because it still exists in Indian politics. The people and freedom fighters had dreamed of a nation free from inequality and corruption but their hopes and aspirations are shattered after independence. Masterji, an old freedom fighter in the novel, had cherished a dream that his sacrifice would help in creating a new nation. But Masterji feels disappointed when he finds that both the politicians and the officials are corrupt. He visits the Chief Minister, S.S. Sharma, to take action against specific politicians but the Chief Minister's answer is enough to arouse his anger and hatred. The Chief Minister says:

"Masterji, your work, that of the teacher, is a sacred occupation. Politics is like the coal trade. How can you blame people if their hands and faces become a little black?" (323)

Mahesh Kapoor, a freedom fighter and an idealist, is free from corruption but the people could dare to offer him bribe. It indicates that money plays a significant role and the politicians can favour the people by taking bribe. Mahesh Kapoor says, "As for that bastard, do you think that he can get his way with

me? He came into my office with a wad of money, trying to get me to soften a provision of the Zamindari Bill and I was tempted to have him arrested – title or no title”(326). Mahesh Kapoor is, in essence, a symbolic figure representing those idealistic congressmen who were hugely disillusioned by the decadence of the post-independence Congress and the role of corruption in politics. Corruption has always been present in politics and it has allowed the novelists and dramatists to raise their voice against it and condemn it. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is also about a corrupt King in a corrupt polity and the playwright condemns it. In the play, the guard Marcellus states that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark”(I.iv.98). Vikram Seth shows the dissolution of Jawaharlal Nehru’s humanitarian perspective and the politics becoming restricted to personal gains in the post-independence period. Manipulation, nepotism and communalism perverted the Indian political value systems. L.N. Agarwal is a manipulator in the novel. He is concerned with vote bank politics. When the conflict takes place between the traders and the jatavs at Misri Mandi, he openly favours the traders as he belongs to the same community. His duty as a Home-Minister is to tackle the conflict without any favour and to resolve the issue as early as possible. But L.N. Agarwal always seems to be more concerned with the votes and the voters than his duty: “What will Sharmaji say when he comes back? What capital will Mahesh Kapoor’s faction make out of all this?.... What will the effect of all this be on the jatav vote and the Muslim Vote? The General Elections are just a few months away”(242).

Politicians like L.N. Agarwal betray the sacred trust reposed by the people in them. The ideals of the freedom fighters seem shaken up by unscrupulous leaders and their unwillingness for a common cause. L.N. Agarwal is a shrewd politician and his brutish nature is evident when he says: “. . . if you have a number of outrageous things to do is to do them simultaneously. People will scatter their complaints, not concentrate them. When the dust settles, at least two or three out of five battles will be yours. And the public has a short memory” (260). He doesn’t care whether people are attacked, robbed or stabbed.

As depicted by Vikram Seth, the political figures of the post- independence period keep on fighting for their personal interests and forget to work for the development of India. In *A Suitable Boy*, rivalry between the leaders and parties is seen inside and outside the Legislative Assembly. It is interesting to note that the important historical and political events of the novel are debated in the Assembly. The caste conflict, the Hindu-Muslim tussle, the mishapening of the Pul-Mela, and of course the Zamindari Abolition Act are discussed in the Assembly. The conflict or tension that occurs outside the Assembly leads to the conflict inside the Legislative Assembly. The politicians are seen involved in the political debates. The leaders of the ruling party are attacked by the leaders of opposition and they are forced to take responsibility for the incident. A caste conflict takes place at the heart of Misri Mandi. The members of the

jatav communities demonstrate in front of the Govind Shoe Market. L.N. Agarwal, the Home Minister, orders the police to make a lathi charge on the crowd. The role of L.N. Agarwal as Home Minister is questioned and challenged in the Legislative Assembly. A verbal conflict between the two politicians is evident here:

The Home Minister looks across the well of the great circular chamber and states calmly: “There was no lathi charge in the usual sense.” . . . “Is it a fact”, continued the questioner, “that on the same evening, the police beat up a large number of jatavs who were peacefully attempting to picket the Brahmpur Shoe Mart nearby?”. . . “It is not a fact”, he (the Home Minister) stated, keeping his voice level. “The police, being hard pressed by an angry mob, defended themselves and, in the course of this action, three people were injured”(248).

This battle continues and L.N. Agarwal answers that an inquiry has made it clear that the very minimum force was used which was unavoidable. L.N. Agarwal’s problem doesn’t end here and a member of the Socialist Party also attacks him in the Assembly. L.N. Agarwal feels restless during this hot discussion and finally makes it clear that “there is peace at last in Misri Mandi” (250). His answer is challenged and the Legislative Assembly fills with shouts and laughter.

The Legislative Assembly again becomes a place of political debate when Hindu-Muslim conflict is discussed in the Assembly. This conflict enables Seth to explore power-hungry politicians with vested interests. As the resurgent Hindus try to rebuild the temple to consecrate the holy linga, Brahmpur goes up in flames. A huge riot engulfs the city fuelled by rumours and aggravated by the mismanagement of the controversial Home Minister, L.N. Agarwal. The incident of police shooting of an unarmed crowd in the vicinity of a recently erected Hindu temple is discussed in the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly becomes the place where the conflict between L.N. Agarwal and Abida Khan, representing the Congress and the Democratic Party takes place. Abida Khan, a representative of the Muslims and one of the leaders of the Democratic Party, flourishes her aggressive rhetoric in attacking Agarwal on the issue. The conflict runs thus:

“Is the honourable Minister for Home affairs aware that at least five people were killed by the police in the firing near Chowk last Friday?” . . . . “Indeed, I was not”. . . “will the honourable Minister inform us exactly what he is aware of?” . . . . “What would the honourable Minister say was the death toll in the firing in Chowk?” Demanded Begum Abida Khan.

‘One’ said L.N. Agarwal. Begum Abida Khan’s voice was incredulous: ‘One?’ she cried . ‘One?’

‘One’ replied the Home Minister, holding up the index finger of his right hand, as if to an idiot child who had difficulty with numbers or hearing or both” (251-52).

Abida Khan rejects the figure of one death. She emphatically informs the house that at least five people were killed and to support her point she shows the copies of death certificates of four of the

deceased. When she demands to allow her to table the death certificates, the speaker answers that “that is not possible under the Standing Orders . . . .” (252). The speaker’s protest ignites her anger against the entire house. Begum Abida Khan waves the documents around, and raises her voice higher. Here the political rivalry takes the shape of a conflict between a ‘communal’ Muslim and a ‘communal’ Hindu. Abida Khan condemns L.N. Agarwal because he is a Hindu leader and his Hinduism, perhaps, disallows him to show his regret at the death of innocent Muslims. L.N. Agarwal’s problem is aggravated when suddenly the voice of Abdus Salaam, of the more left-leaning part of the Brahmipur Congress Party, is heard. He asks Agarwal why a deterrent police force was not maintained at the site of the temple itself so that there would have been no need to fire in that panicky manner. “Why were there only a dozen men left to maintain law and order in this grievously disturbed area, especially after the contents of the Friday sermon at the Alamgiri Mosque became known to the authorities?” (255) Agarwal is enraged at this attack from his own party and feels threatened and defenceless. He hates secularism and is convinced that it is plotted by Muslims and secular Hindus to attack him. This particular political conflict indicates that the political leaders are not free from religious fanaticism. The leaders of the Post-independence period were also not above factionalism and religious thinking. The conflict is not resolved within the Assembly. L.N. Agarwal again protects himself in a way that is generally used by a shrewd politician. He says, “The government admits nothing. The report will detail everything” (257). The conflict forces us to think about the concept of secularism but both Agarwal and Abida Khan are not fit enough to bring secularism.

The Zamindari Abolition Act which was initiated by the Congress Party is another issue of the post-independence era which persuades the leaders of the Democratic Party to defend the Zamindari system. The issue leads to the conflict between the Congress and the Democratic Party. A rift or gap can be seen between the two parties in *A Suitable Boy*. Vikram Seth authentically presents the drama which takes place in the Legislative Assembly. Here, Abida Khan strenuously defends the Zamindari system against the land reforms being pushed by the ruling Congress Party. Her speeches express a wish to preserve Muslim culture and the Zamindari system in the state:

“. . . the fact is that it is we Zamindars who made this province what it is – who made it strong, who gave it its special flavour. In every field of life we have made our contribution, a contribution that will long outlive us and that you cannot wipe away” (286).

The Congress Party is against the Democratic Party and believes that the Act will improve the condition of landless farmers. The Democratic Party rejects this idea and thinks that the bill is an election gimmick by the Congress Party. Finally, the bill is passed in the House and the Democratic Party unanimously votes against it. “The members of the Democratic Party walked out of

Assembly. There were a few hisses and cries of ‘Shame!’” (288) We find that the judges of the Supreme Court also agree that the Zamindari Acts are constitutional. Practically, the bill doesn’t bring the desired change but it certainly initiates the process of change. Thus, the bill is passed and the conflict ends in the Legislative Assembly.

The conflict or hatred between the politicians continues even outside the Legislative Assembly. Both L.N. Agarwal and Mahesh Kapoor belong to the Congress Party but a vast gap between the two is visible in the novel. L.N. Agarwal is a corrupt politician whereas Mahesh Kapoor doesn’t care for his personal happiness and comfort. Politics for Agarwal is a game for personal gains but Mahesh Kapoor takes it as an opportunity to serve the people. “Truth, work, generosity and other elements of character-building should become the primary Concerns of politics. . . .,” says Dr Lohia (1965). Mahesh Kapoor “works terribly late and sometimes comes back home from the Secretariat after midnight. . . .” (217). But for L.N. Agarwal politics is like the coal trade. This difference leads to conflict and hatred which is evident at many places in the novel. The political rivalry between Mahesh Kapoor and L.N. Agarwal deepens and its consequences are seen at the end of the novel. Such differences among political figures lead to a crisis in the Congress Party itself. The Congress is divided into two groups – one led by Pt. Nehru at the national level and S.S. Sharma & Mahesh Kapoor at the state level, and the other led by Purushottam Das Tandon at the national level and L.N. Agarwal & some others at the state level. Actually, since independence the Congress had been split between the leftist followers of Nehru, and the conservative right-wing led by Sardar Patel. The Patel loyalists see “Nehru as a rootless, deracinated Indian, whose sentimental creed was a pro-Muslim secularism, and who was divorced from the majority of his own Hindu citizenry” (955). The challenge to Nehru’s supremacy arises in the form of Purushottam Das Tandon who fights for and wins the office of the Congress President despite Nehru’s strong opposition.

The Nehru–Tandon clash is further intensified by the constitution of the new Congress Working Committee. Tandon includes his conservative colleagues in the committee, and “did not include – and had indeed refused to include – either his defeated opponent Kripalani – or Kidwai, who had planned Kriplani’s Campaign. Prime Minister Nehru, already upset by Tandon’s election . . . at first refused to join . . . . But in the interests of unity . . . he swallowed his objections and joined it” (954). Political conspiracy is not a new phenomenon. In Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, a conspiracy develops against Caesar, in which even Brutus, an old friend of Caesar gets involved in the murder of Caesar. Brutus compares Caesar to the egg of a serpent “which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous”; thus, he determines to “kill him in the shell” (II.i.32-34). Tandon also conspires against Nehru by not allowing Kidwai and Kriplani to join the Congress Working Committee. Tandon adopts an oblique way of attacking Nehru. E. Prior makes the point (*Richard II*)



that "Bolingbroke's challenge to Mowbray is in effect an oblique way of attacking the king" (1973:144). The political conflict deepens when the Nehruvites break away from the Congress and form the KMPP, including prominent leaders like Kidwai and Kriplani. Mr. Mahesh Kapoor is a Nehruvite who resigns from the Congress and joins the KMPP. They persuade Nehru to quit Congress. Here Nehru emerges as an astute political strategist. He knows that he is liked by the people of India. Even his opponents concede that the people "loved him and would almost certainly vote for him. . . ." (955). Finally, Nehru writes a letter of resignation to the president of the Congress Party. Nehru's move caught the Tandon faction by surprise. They lost confidence, fearing a total defeat in the forthcoming General Elections. Maulana Azad also resigns from the Congress Working Committee. To solve the problem, Tandon decides to summon the AICC and he declares:

"Nehru is not an ordinary member of the Working Committee; he represents the nation more today than any other individual does" . . . and he announced that if no acceptable formula could be reached by mediators, he would resign from the Congress Presidency the next day. And this is what, the next day . . . he did . . . he joined the Working Committee under the newly-elected Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru. It was in effect a coup; and Nehru had won" (992).

Thus, Tandon offers his resignation from the Congress Presidency and Nehru wins not through conspiracy or unfair means but through strategy. Like Tandon, he also attacks him in an oblique way. Mr. S.S. Sharma who had voted for Tandon against Kriplani now favours Nehru's leadership. Mahesh Kapoor also rejoins the Congress.

The political conflict reaches its climax during elections in India. India is a parliamentary democratic republic at the heart of which is a commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections. But elections in India are neither free nor fair. The political parties force people to vote in their favour. In *A Suitable Boy*, Vikram Seth critically presents the conflict and the use of unfair means during the first General Elections in India. The 1952 election, as the narrator comments, "was in fact to be the largest election ever held anywhere on earth. It would involve a sixth of its people" (1085). Salimpur-cum-Baitar constituency seems to represent the whole of India during the first General Elections in India. Vikram Seth authentically presents the political drama of this constituency. The description begins in this way:

"It was a single member constituency . . . . Ten candidates in all were standing: six represented parties, and four were independents. Of the former, one was Mahesh Kapoor, the Minister of Revenue, who was the candidate for the Indian National Congress. Of the later, one was Waris Mohammad Khan, the candidate who had been put up as a dummy by the Nawab Sahib of Baitar in case his friend did not get the Congress ticket or chose not to stand or bowed out of the race for some reason or other" (1166).

Various issues are raised by the parties and the independent candidates to attract the voters. The Jan Sangh promises to "advocate the spread and extension of the highest traditions of Bharatiya Sanskriti" (1167). It favours war with Pakistan over the issue of Kashmir. The Socialist Party's main aim is to defeat the Congress Party. Ramlal Sinha, the candidate of the Socialist Party, shows his anger and hatred against the Congress Party and Vikram Seth presents it with a touch of humour and irony. Ramlal says:

". . . . We must throw out the Congress. We must uproot it. This tree whose roots have sunk so deep, which has sucked all the water out of this soil, . . . and it is our duty . . . to uproot this rotten and hollow tree from the soil of mother India, and to throw it aside . . . ." 'Get rid of the tree! Don't vote for the tree!', shouted a voice from the back" (1171).

Mahesh Kapoor and Waris Khan join hands to defeat the Socialist Party but this friendship ends when Mahesh Kapoor's son is involved in a violent act, injuring the Nawab's son. Now the political tussle between Mahesh Kapoor and Waris Khan begins. Waris Khan now deems him an enemy of his Master, Nawab and decides to defeat Mahesh Kapoor by hook or by crook. "The fight now was an extremely harsh one. Waris was as bitter a rival to Mahesh Kapoor . . . . Everything had changed . . . nothing was left unexploited in the mauling battle that led up to the polls" (1234). On the day before the election, Waris Khan uses an unfailing way to defeat Mahesh Kapoor. A small handbill printed in thousands on flimsy pink paper appeared and it had no author or printer's name at the bottom. "It announced that Firoz (Nawab's son) had died the previous night . . . . The murderer even now walked the streets of Brahmipur, free on bail, free to strangle more helpless Muslim women and slaughter the flower of Muslim manhood" (1244). The Muslim population is swayed by religious feelings and votes for a communalist, Waris and thereby rejects a secularist. The political tussle ends but a wrong man wins the election. Vikram Seth worries that if people like Waris are going to hold the reins of power in independent India, she will hardly need any enemies to ruin her. The people like Waris Khan can be seen all around us in the Indian political arena.

We notice that Mahesh Kapoor, an honest and impartial man, is defeated in the General Elections. He is a good administrator, honest and impartial. After the General Elections, he is called to Delhi and L.N. Agarwal again gets an opportunity to serve his purpose. As Mahesh Kapoor leaves Brahmipur, he is ready to rule the state. L.N. Agarwal is an opportunist who plays the Hindu-Muslim card for political gains. This is what the common people think of L.N. Agarwal:

"Saap ka zahar, insaan ki khaal:

Yeh hai L.N. Agarwal . . . .

Ghar ko loot kar kha gaya maal:

Home Minister Agarwal! . . . .

L.N. Agarwal, wapas jao,

Baniye ki dukaan chalo!" (619-20)

Yet all this clamour amounts to nothing in the world of real politics and L.N. Agarwal, at the end of the novel, is all set to occupy the Chief Minister's chair in Purva Pradesh. The political conflict indicates that the emergent polity was sliding towards communalism. Political leaders like Abida Khan and L.N. Agarwal are selfish. Abida Khan seems to support only Muslims in the novel. The use of the words like 'we zamindars', 'our mosque', and 'our contribution' are enough to prove the point. The victory of Waris Khan is the victory of communalism and corruption. Mahesh Kapoor is defeated because he refused to come to terms with the forces of corruption and communalism. Finally, L. N. Agarwal is elected as the Chief Minister of Purva Pradesh. He sends "a firm note to the Raja of Marh refusing government or police protection for any further attempts to salvage the linga"(1341). No doubt, this act of L.N. Agarwal brings a ray of hope in the midst of political upheaval.

#### **Conclusion**

The foregoing analysis of *A Suitable Boy* shows that the post-independence period experienced political instability because the leaders forgot to work for the progress of the Indian masses. Nepotism and fanaticism replaced idealism and secularism in politics. As already discussed, the Congress was an ideal party before independence and its leaders worked for political freedom, social upliftment, moral regeneration and economic freedom. After independence, the situation changed and the leaders could be seen working for their personal benefits. Corruption was also rampant in the post-independence era. Masterji feels disappointed when he finds that both the politicians and the officials are corrupt. Mahesh Kapoor is also disillusioned by the decadence of the post-independence Congress and the role of corruption in politics. Politicians like L.N. Agarwal attain power and betray the sacred trust reposed by the people in them. The political parties

are expected to learn a lesson from the leaders of the pre-independence period who sacrificed their life and comfort for the nation. Like many other writers who wrote on social and political issues, Vikram Seth wants India to be free from vote bank politics. He seems to advocate secularism in politics, the only ideal which can establish peace in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country like India.

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