CHAPTER VI
SUMMATION

This dissertation and entitled *The Evolution of Vikram Seth as a novelist: A Thematic study* contains four core chapters in addition to introduction and the summation. In the introductory chapter, the researcher has undertaken a survey of Indian novelists in English right from Raja Ram Monhanroy to contemporary writers. It concentrates on the evolution as well as the growth of Indian fiction in English first generation writers such as fiction in English. At first, contribution made by Bankin Chandra chatterijee, Toru Dutt, Lal Behari Day, K. Chakravarti, B. R. Rajan Iycr, Samuel Satthiandhan nad Kamala Sathianandhan, Behramji Malabari and Nagesh Vishwanath pai discussed. After that, the light has been thrown on second generation novelists such as R.C. Dutt, Sir Joginder Singh, Bal Krishna, S.K. Ghose, S.M. Mitra, S.M.Banerjee, S. Mukherjee, T. Ramkrishna Pillai, A. Madhaviah and K.E. Ghamat, It is followed by the concentration on novelists like Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan. Their great contribution to the development of Indian fiction in English has been dealt with. Then, focus has been laid on Bhaban Bhattacharya, Kushwant singh, Chaman Nahal and Manoher Malgonkar. After that, the discussion on Arun Josh, Salman Rushdie and Vikram seth follows. Then the contribution of women novelists such as kamala Markandaya, Ruth P. Shabvala, Attia Hossian Anila Desai, Nayantara Saghal, Arundhath Roy and Kiran Desai is discussed.

How every novelist has played a prominent role in the development of Indian fiction in English has been explained at length. Then vikram seth is fixed in his place among the galaxy of Indian English novelists. Vikram seth was barely four when his parents moved to Delhi. Despite further wanderings and half a life spent in Europe and the united states he periodically returns for extended periods to his close knit family which may have contributed to his novels and perhaps even the outlines of characters.
Having obtained a degree with honors at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Seth embarked on his graduate work in economic demography at Stanford. Soon after his arrival in 1975 he took up creative writing and so encountered poets Donald ‘Davie and Timothy Steele. The latter nurtured his poetic ambitions and continued to serve as an exacting mentor even after Seth had attained some measure of literary fame and Seth dedicates his most ambitious work *The Golden Gate a Novel* in verse to him. After that, he has come out with the novels *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*. In addition to this, he has composed a travel book, *From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet* and poetry collections *Mappings* *The Humble Administrator’s Garden* and *Beastly Tales*. This dissertation has not concentrated on his travel book and poetry collections and it deals with his novels only.

Seth’s novels are notable for their stylistic experimentation and mercurial shifts in tone. With *The Golden Gate* he instantly established himself as quite possibly, the most formally inventive and technically adventurous of Asian American Writers. Yet, many of its stylistic characteristics and major themes stem from the same impulses that have given rise to his other major works. The most striking feature of *The Golden Gate* is its revival of the trimetric sonnet from of Alexander Pushkin’s verse novel *Eugene Onegin*. His next novel *A Suitable Boy* has the distinction of being one of the longest novels in English literature. Seth has stated that it has taken him about a decade to complete the writing of the novel. And it is followed by the novel *An Equal Music* which deals with western music at great length in addition to the story revolving around the protagonist in whose first person narrative the novel is structured.

Of Seth’s three novels two have been best sellers and the third much more than a qualified success. The appeal of *The Golden Gate* to a wide reading public can probably be attributed to its engaging and up-to-date portrayal of San Francisco and its avoidance of the twin banes of Asian American literature: immigrant angst and generational conflict. Seth’s five protagonists are not
shaped by distant memories but by the proximity of the eponymous, evocative synecdoche for the Bay area and they are pleased to please each other, their parents and even their demanding pets. Regarding *A suitable Boy* even before it achieved general distribution, Seth was said to be making a bid to write the ‘Great Indian Novel. Initial criticism focused on whether its moby Dick-like proportions concealed another blubbery national allegory or whether it indicated either a self indulgent loss of control or on overly self conscious excess of control. With regard to his third novel *An equal music* No critic has as yet discerned postcolonial tendencies in *An Equal music* or recognized it as the peripatetic Great European Union Novel’ although one is forced to wheel in both Ajaz Ahmad and theodor Adorno within the space of a page in an effort to be nonjudgmental about a work that is not a curry novel and in which there are only white people.

Seth’s subject matter is almost invariably love, in all its myriad manifestations. He does explore other themes in passing India’s political landscape for instance or religions frenzy, but in these instances his role is always that of storyteller, not of commentator. He does feel strongly about issues like religious intolerance, nuclear non-proliferation, but he is not a social activist. Consequently, there is no social gravitas in his writing. He feels that the characters should ring true to the people’s lives they portray. Seth’s characters are thus chiefly involved in getting on with their lives and as an artist seth’s primary concern is to portray them indulging in activities that are in a general sense, common to all humanity. Seth also places great emphasis on the redeeming aspects of private life, portraying in his work that happiness and tolerance start from home. The unifying them that runs through his work are the plea for human camaraderie, spanning political, national and cultural barriers. Seth’s writing is an embodiment of his intrinsic tolerance, a tolerance that is remarkably Chaucer-like, extending itself to include all the foibles of human behavior and evident specially in his acute distress at the destruction of humanity by humans.
Seth is firm about his priorities as an artist he places intelligibility above verbal pyrotechnics. Also, he tends towards realism in all his work. This is evident in Seth’s re-creation of worlds which always ring true, whether he is writing a story about west coast America, India of the 1950s or the world of Schubert and Mozart. However, Seth believes, like Goethe that the artist’s work is real in so far as it is always true: ideal in that it is never actual. Seth is an accomplished artist and treads with considerable poise this fine line, rendering the near and the familiar with artistic verisimilitude.

But the piece de resistance of Seth’s style is his inimitable blending of what constitutes the common men’s bread with literary manna. In a similar vein to the eighteenth century gentlemen Addison and Steele, Seth’s endeavour has been to free the contemporary novel of its seriousness, it high-brow contempt for the simple passions, its increasingly academic concerns with critics and deconstructionists-in which that unimportant entity; the ordinary reader, is all but forgotten-in order to make literature un-daunting and accessible for the general reader. For Seth, writing is a simple business that has been diverted from its original course by an over-emphasis on style and modernist knowingness.

Seth’s awareness of this trend and his conscious shunning of it are what make his work so approachable. He does not try to constantly force the reader to appreciate his command over language and his approach to fiction is unself consciously to the general reader that even when it ends, the reader has not had enough and wants to know what happens next. Similarly, An Equal Music despite being substantially technical, for from putting off the musically uneducated, carrier the reader along in a general sense, so that one seems to hear the music that one never know. Even Seth’s poetry is not of the kind that is difficult to read and even more difficult to interpret, for he places great emphasis on clarity and on the directness of utterance.
Much has been made of Seth’s experimentation with different genres—
but Seth writes as and how the muse takes him, and the different genres are a
spontaneous unfolding of his talent rather than lucubrated attempts at diversity.

There is no doubt that with his technique both inherited and innovative
and his refreshing attitude towards the creative process Seth has transformed
the literary arena and dazzled both the east and the west as a writer with
profound promise. The diversity and range of Seth’s work makes him
somewhat of an enigma. However, for a writer who counts such diverse figures
as pushkin, T’ any dynasty Chinese poets, Chaucer, the Elizabethans,
Tennyson novelists like Hardy Austen, George Eliot, R.K. Narayan and
modern poets like Timothy steele and Philip Larkin among some of his literary
influences, Seth’s wide ranging technique is conceivably not so surprising.
Perhaps, like of Goethe, it can be said of Seth that he has not style only styles.
But whatever be the externals of his technique there can no doubt that with
writing, this economics post graduate has finally found his métier.

Besides, what is immediately apparent about vikram seth is that he is an
artist at home with the world, absorbing influences from various cultural
backgrounds. If the impact of English literature is immediately recognizable in
his prose and poetic works, other traditions are also significant, starting with
the Chinese, as shown in his translations of three poets from Tang period. If it
is a well recognized fact that in the 19th century Indian poets using English as
their expressive means relied heavily on the romantic poets of the period, seth
our contemporary and a sophisticated writer moves with great ease and
nonchalance between different styles, handling modes and the conventions of
different lands with extreme elegance and unit.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, the researcher has concentrated on
love and life in sanfracisco. Seth gives a realistic account of love life of the city
of St.Francis through the characters John and liz, phil and Claire, Ed and Phil
and Art and sue. Seth articulates that even if the youth of America are well-
settled interns materialism, they suffer a sense of loneliness and emptiness in
their personal lives. They are portrayed as thinking who will weep for them if they die and who will care for them if they are down with ill-health. The life, they lead, bears testimony to the fact that financial self-sufficiency alone will not lead to one’s happiness. John who is the symbol of youngsters of San Francisco appears to be capricious, volatile who is a drummer as well as a sculptor. But he is unable to get along with her despite her good-nature. She is of Japanese nationality, settled in the U.S.A. When the novel opens, both of them are described as former lovers and present friends. Jana currently works on her sculptural work “Ma hen” besides being part of ‘Liquid Sheep’ a music troupe.

John who is employed with a nuclear firm in the defense department feels very lonely. Having come out of the college after the completion of his education, he does not show any interest in being in touch with his friends and keeping the friendship intact. Instead, he has begun to place more and more emphasis on his professional life which has made him an odd man out. His father too, after his retirement, is confined to his native town of Kent and he very rarely responds to the letter of his son. He often charges the postal department with not rendering their service promptly and perfectly. If John enjoys the company of either his parents or friends, it will be of some help to him to get over the pain of loneliness. His being financially strong and devoted to duty is not of any assistance to him to enjoy pleasure and peace in life. On an occasion, when he finds it very tough and difficult to deal with the problem of solitude, he thinks of making a call to his college friend Phil but on second thoughts he drops the idea because he is afraid that revival of his friendship with Phil, a champion of nuclear free society, will be politicized. Phil served with a nuclear firm and he, with his serious concern over society, quit the job. He is seen now stoutly championing the cause of nuclear free society. So, John is of the view that it may not be advisable for him to call Phil. Later, John attempt to communicate with Jane whom he managed to contact with some delay.
Even after her separation from John, Liz is still very affectionate towards him. And when John tells her he wants to meet her, she, setting aside her schedule, meets him at a restaurant where John, without suppressing anything airs all his emotional disturbances to her. He states to her when he encounters people sitting and chatting together in public places, it makes him think he has no one to look after him. From her conversation with him, she arrives at the conclusion that what John needs now is a girl friend in whose company he can easily get rid of the problem of solitude. Then, she suggests to him that they can give an advertisement in a newspaper for a girl friend. In a city like San Francisco, where life is said to have turned out to be very fast and mechanical, it is heartening to see a girl like Jane who willingly comes forward to share the burden and grief of her friend. It indicates the presence of the affectionate and the caring in American society contrary to the belief that care, concern and empathy can not be found in metropolitan cities. Jane never thinks that her erstwhile lover is not prepared to revive his affair with her and thereby he fails to recognise her.

Jane herself chooses the literature of the advertisement and John is seen receiving overwhelming response from young girls who have conveyed their willingness through letters with photographs. He chooses two girls and converses with them. And he feels they are not good enough to marry him. Finally Liz, an attorney, fields her candidature by post. John, impressed by her impressive look and qualification, is willing to meet her. The meeting takes place at the initiative of Jane. In due course, they fall in love and meet both in the mornings and evenings. At one stage, their affair becomes so strong that they have begun to spend nights together. Liz’s mother, when she comes to learn her daughter is in love with John is very pleased with it, Mrs. Dorati due advancing age and deteriorating health wants to see her children married and settled in life. She regrets being grand-childless. Only on the persuasion and at the insistence of her mother Liz, responds to the advertisement of John. At one point, Sue, Liz’s sister presents an orchestra on Mozart and Beethoven. John and Liz turn up there at the invitation of Sue. At that moment, Liz tells John Sue only
reaping the benefits of the hard work their mother put in to train them in music. This occasion seems to be the Turing point where Phil is introduced to Liz. Besides in the first meeting itself, he manages to make Liz develop a soft corner and good will for him.

In due course of time, John beings to have a dislike for Liz’s food habits, dress sense, approach and her choice of books. In the meantime Liz’s cat Charlemagne also gets more and more restless with John. Like a human, it has become very possessive of Liz and is not for John being together with Liz. It causes lot of difficulties to him. At one point, it urinates near his head when he is asleep. Unable to bear the nuisance caused by the cat, he complains to Liz about it. Liz, who is very attached towards it, gets annoyed and irritated by the complaint of John. It john wants it to be declawed which Liz vigorously opposes. And they end up in dispute. John shares with Phil his restlessness over charlemagne and the treatment meted out to him by Liz, Phil consoles him stating that Liz will never let him down. Seeing Phil supporting Liz, John tells him not to take side. Later the car journey by Phil and Liz bring them together.

In the meantime, things are not going well for John and Liz either. Charlemagne continues to detest John with a vengeance, and makes his life miserable in all the ways cats can. But Liz is not ready to part with him, even for John’s sake. She has also learned of the affair between her brother and Phil and has accepted it, but this becomes a major bone of contention with John, who is disgusted and censorious breaks off all contact with Phil. The situation becomes explosive when the two are holidaying at Liz’s parents place. John suggests to Liz that they can get married but contrary to his expectations, she does not immediately accept. John is surprised and a little hurt, but decides to give Liz more time. However, when he sees a letter from Phil in Liz’s hand, he rashly concludes that she is cheating on him and ends their affair. Phil and Liz, get married not because they are in love but because they have both realized that companionship is more solid foundation for marriage than passion.
Meanwhile, John, alone again, reawakens his friendship with Janet, and reawakens to the love he had always felt for her. But as fate would have it, just when they are on the verge of committing to each other, Janet dies in an accident and John is left heartbroken and bereft. The basic theme is thus that of broken love and loneliness. John best exemplifies this dilemma of modern man. He has all he could want in terms of material acquisitions, and is handsome, smart well-mannered, well-read-in essence, the perfect companion and yet he is lost and lonely. Seth presents the pathology behind this: in his carefree youth, John has not given love the attention it deserves, preferring the freedom that bachelorhood connotes to most men to the shackles of matrimony. Not only John but most American men and women are equally unwilling to sacrifice what they perceive as their freedom, by committing to a permanent relationship. John and Janet break off their liaison as soon as it shows signs of developing into something serious. Claire abandons Phil without a second thought under the feeble pretext of his dominating nature. This fanatic obsession for keeping the heart aloof from the rest of the body lies at the root of the problem. In psychological terms, this is known as ‘relationship-anxiety’ – the refusal to grow into nature relationship. Almost every major character in the novel suffers from this anxiety and John most of all. Although both John and Jane are making earnest attempts to get over this anxiety in the course of the novel, when Janet dies it is suddenly too late for them. Phil and Liz, are the only ones who do not suffer from it and appropriately, they are the ones rewarded with secure happy lives. Apart from Phil and Liz, the other characters somehow fail to realize that the security provided by a permanent relationship can not be replaced by an outwardly successful life and that pelts can never fully substitute the warmth of human bonding.

All the characters deep down beneath their facades of self-sufficiency and modernity crave the basic human desire to be loved. Another dominant theme in the novel is that of homosexuality which makes the novel particularly true to the American way of life. Homosexuality is by no means an American invention but due to its prevalence in American society it has acquired almost
cult status there. The Goldent Gate is not an attempt to glorify homosexuality. It is true that it is phi, a homosexual, who is rewarded with a rich family life at the end of the novel, while John has nothing left but memories, but Seth espouses the superiority of personal judgement over any opinions held by convention. Another theme in the novel that has been discussed in this chapter is that of nuclear warfare. Seth expatiates upon the theme unhurriedly, using narration, description, dialogue, sermon, demonstrations, peace marches even diatribe, to get the point across. Nuclear insanity is a very contemporary theme and it is very significant in this novel because both the theme and the novel are so quintessentially American. In the novel, Phil gives up a promising career at lungless labs to heed his inner voice which tells him that what he is doing is ethically wrong. Liz participate in the demonstration against the wishes of John speaking eloquently against the arms race. Father O’ Hare sermonizer, proving irrefutably that a nuclear war can only end up in total omnicide and therefore nuclear weapons must never be used. Though all these voices, Seth has devoted considerable time and space to address this issue.

In the chapter entitled Love and Life in Sanfracisco the aforementioned points have been elaborately discussed. After this, the chapter on History, politics and Romance in Vikram Seth’s A suitable boy follows. This chapter sheds light on the historical, political and romantic elements portrayed in the novel.

Seth’ magnum opus A suitable Boy has been structured in the background of 1950s. Literary merit aside, ‘A suitable boy’ is a landmark in Seth’s career because it represents a sort of coming of age. Seth’s formal donning of the mantle of a writer. The novel also grounds him for the first time, in Indian soil. First, because Although seth’s travelogue from heaven lake is also written from the point of view of an Indian sensibility, in it seth does not refer to India except occasionally and that too only in a demographic context. It is with A Suitable Boy that Seth focuses on India an India that furnishes him with a muse and a rather weighty one at that.
What started out as a simple tale involving a small cast of character gradually grew into the sprawling canvas of a suitable boy, ostensibly seeking to put an entire subcontinent between its covers. Seth explains how this came about, saying that he wanted to write about India and planned to write a series of five short novels. Instead, he wrote one rather long novel about India of the 1950s. Seth had planned that he would deal swiftly with this period and then go forward to the Sino-Indian war, the Emergency and so on but he got stuck in that period. The more he researched it, the more the topics obsessed him—Zamindar abolition, courtesans losing their sources of income, Hindu, Muslim riots, the British having left, the new kind of politicians moving in. Consequently, what Seth had envisioned would be his two square inches of ivory, gradually broadened, first into a Victorian oil painting and then even beyond that into an embroidered and patched American quilt “embellished by that multiplicity of details that give it density and richness. Not surprisingly, for all its strength, the novel turned out to be that rarity, a literary bestseller.

The novel opens in 1952 with Mrs. Rupa Mahra’s to her younger daughter Lata, on her elder daughter’s wedding day. “You, too, will marry a boy I choose. The very words imply an uneasy feeling that maternal authority needs to be exercised over Lata, who might be harbouring revolutionary ideas of her own. These words also establish the status quo of the structure of Indian society, where it is the parents who choose brides and grooms for their children. Lata and Savita are now 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 in free India.

Behind this search for a suitable boy for Lata are four paralleled stories: The Mehras, the Kapoors, the Chatterjees and the Khans, all skeins in a canvas on which is woven an intricate story, as complex as India itself. Together these families furnish the social structure of post independence India. Connected by either marriage or friendship, these four families balance a saga of social
manners with a historical account of the Indian sub-continent trying its wings amidst the chaos of politics, religion, language, the land reform movement and so on. The novel has been structured in such a way that when the story unfolds the episodes of politics, history and romance appear in a sensible way.

The narrative is bracketed by two weddings and in between Seth creates a world to borrow a term usually reserved for Jane Austen. The sheer breadth of the novel encompasses on the one hand, parliamentary speeches, the trauma of partition, the Zamindari abolition bill, communal tensions, the flavor of India’s first general election - to the scandalously modern lifestyle of upper - echelons of Calcutta, university life, the fading world of ghazals and courtesans and old-world courtesy and the comic world of chatterjees and Mrs. Rupa Mehra on the other. To the Mehras and the chatterjees falls the light comedy, while the Kapoors and the khans furnish the drama.

Displaying his genius at storytelling, Seth grounds his narrative in some of the most important social and political issues of the day. The khans are Muslim zamindars whose ancient feudal fiefs are in danger of being taken away if the land reform bill is passed. The kapoors have as their patriarch a powerful minister of revenue, who is also a member of the national legislative assembly. The chatterjees are Brahmos and have the first Indian high court Justice as their patriarch, the Mehras boast one of the first Indian “brown-sahibs” executives in high-profile British management firms.

However, despite the grand scale on which the novel is conceived, Seth’s focus is not primarily on these issues. The main interest lies in search for a suitable boy for the heroine Lata who falls in love with kabir, a university professor’s son. Since he is a muslim, her love is vigorously opposed and she has had to marry Haresh, an executive in a shoe company, selected by Rupa Mehra. *A Suitable Boy* thus explores many dimensions of Indian life: arranged marriage, independence, love, family, prostitution, politics, history, poverty, culture and individualism.
As regards style, it becomes evident that *A suitable boy* has been written with leisureliness, the almost forgotten confidence of the Victorian novel. It is a throwback to an earlier generation when the art of novel-writing was an extension of recounting. Seth dons the mantle of omniscient author but the authorial voice in *A suitable Boy* is never conspicuous or overbearing. The novel is written with the quiet and unobtrusive style which Seth attributes to his own tastes and beliefs.

In this novel, Seth displays a taste for scrupulous documentation. As a result, each major setting in the novel—the weddings of Lata and Savita, the pulmela, the raising of the shiva-lingam, the religious festivities— is elaborately reproduced in its social and demographic entirety. Seth is in no hurry to wind up his saga and his unerring eye for detail leaves out nothing—he is not content merely with a page or two long description of Saeeda Bai sing—he must take the reader thorough the entire evening couplet by couplet, ghazal by ghazal.

A noteworthy feature of *A Suitable Boy* is its almost photographic realism. Seth goes to great lengths to procure this effect. From the conversation to the landscaping, from the rich splendor of Saeeda Bai’s chambers to rustic simplicity of Rasheed’s household, from the chatterijee mansion to Mrs.Rupa Mehra’s annual rail pilgrimage, there is no doubt whatsoever in the reader’s mind that things are exactly as seth portrays them seth takes great pleasure in describing what he sees and he has the knack to see straight to salient features, or conversely, to its absurdity. The writing of such a book requires a keen sense of life—a resource, a for more powerful than even technical skill and Seth’s writing displays no dearth of both. Much of the realism in this novel is achieved by dint of seth’s exhaustive research of that period. After Seth began writing the novel, he came to a dead stop and concentrated on research for about a year, burying himself in old newspapers, accounts of legislative debates, interviewing people from that era.

Seth is able to convince the reader of his historical accuracy by the painstaking reproduction of the politics of the time. The state of purvapradesh
is clearly eastern U.P. and the city of Brahmpur is a combination of Lucknow, Agra and Allahabad. It may not be coincidence that Brahmpur and Allahabad have the same literal meaning. The political personages who played important roles after independence are transformed into their fictional counterparts. Nehru appears as himself while pandit S.S. Sharma, the first chief minister of poorva Pradesh is clearly Pandit Govind Vallah Pant. Mahesh Kapoor is clearly and L.N. Agaruval in the sharma’s ministry are Chandrabhan Gupta and Dr.Sampoornanda respectively, with their parallel political rivalry. All these characters firmly anchor the novel in the politics of the period. Seth’s treatment of this political theme is like his treatment of every other-laid back, analytical and accurate. He pays great attention to the land-reform bill, which once passed in parliament, is to effect far-reaching changes; his training in economics enables him to analyze the economics of the village life and the system of a local currency based on this.

The social realism in the novel is equally convincing. Calcutta is an apt choice for the setting of a cosmopolitan family like the chatterjees, as Calcutta was the social, cultural and political capital of the British in those days, long before Delhi became the centre of things. The chatterjees are anglicized upper middle class Bengalis and Brahmos too. Brahmoism was founded by Rajan Ram mohan Roy and postulated the upanishidic message that God is one, though called by different names. Brahmoism thus has an intellectual appeal and a refined spirituality. By making the chatterjees Brahmos, seth is able to establish their non-conservatism.

Having concentrated on the presence of historical, political and romantic dimensions in A suitable Boy in the chapter entitled History, politics and Remance in A suitable Boy, the dissertation in the next chapter has undertaken a critical study of An Equal Music. The novel was conceived one windy day in London, while seth was taking a walk in Hyde park with his friend philippe Monore. Seth recalls that as they were walking, he saw in his mind’s eye a tall figure, European or American by race, dressed against the wather. This person
was looking intently at the water of the lake in the park. Inexplicably farcinated by him, seth turned to his friend and told him that he had a feeling that his imaginary person had nothing to do with the text and wondered as to what his profession was, what was making him look so pensively at the waters of the lake and other such questions. Then Honore, who is a musician, decided that this person a musician too. That is how the novel began. The muse here is thus imaginary ordinary person staring intently at the water as seth says. It is a very visual inspiration for a very aural novel. Published in 1999, *An Equal Music* belongs characteristically in Seth’s repertoire by virtue of it being stunningly different from all his previous work. All Seth’s books are one-offs, and this one is no different. The backdrop of the novel is the enchanted, romantic world of Vienna and venice and the subject is western Europe’s supreme cultural achievement classical music.

In several ways, *An Equal Music* presents a kind of anti-thesis to *A Suitable Boy*. It is everything that *A suitable Boy* is not. In the latter, Seth articulates life from a distance, hurrying the pace of occurrences in the novel. Seth’s intention of writing this novel is candidly stated in the author’s note appended after the end of the narration. He states that music to him is dearer even than speech. When he realized that he would be writing about it, he was gripped with anxiety. Only slowly did he reconcile himself to the thought of it. Hence, he has dedicated this piece of fictional writing to music. The whole firmament of the novel is reverberating with intricacies of the western musical instruments like violin, viola, piano, cello and bass, etc. Details after details are piled up in discussions among the members of the maggiore about performance complications involved in musical compositions of classical music composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, Schubest, Bach and others. The writer in abundant in the knowledge of various forms of musical compositions like a trio, a quartet, a quintet, the Art of Fugue, Trout and a sonata, etc. The reader is astoundingly impressed with the opulence and exactitude of finer subleties of music expounded by the author. The dominant theme of love-affair is basically interwoven with the pursuit of music as both the lovers take to liking each other
by dint of their common deep, life-long interest in music. Music and love are inseparable and make a natural corollary in the events unfolded in the novel.

The world of music is all-embracing. The ambience saturated with overflowing love for music admits of no barriers of nationalities, languages and cultures. The English, the viennese, the venetian, the French and the American characters engaged in the common pursuit of love of music meet, perform and feel together. The life so envisioned in the novel is global, music, therefore, is a potently unifying a binding force. The realization that the power of music is elevating and capable of lightening the gloom and burden of a failed love affair dawns upon the protagonist in the concluding part of the novel. Michael, despite his feelings of frustration and disenchantment, rushes back to London from his native place Rochdale so that he may attend the solo musical concert held by Julia which he abinitio thinks of skipping over by refusing a ticket for the show. But on the day of performance, he gets entry into the wigmore Hall on Billy’s ticket. After listening to Julia’s rendition of the “Art of Fugue” on Piano, he feels relaxed and goes through a calming down experience that gives him inner strength to get reconciled to the inevitable.

The ardour and consuming fire of failure in human love-affair are doused and made bearable by the divine, sublimating nature of celestial music. Happiness or grief cases to matter in such a soul stirring ambience. The protagonist gets salvation from the obsession of physical love form of Julia by listening to her enthralling, soul-searing and liberating music.

The next chapter entitled Thematic Analysis of Seth’s novels focuses on the pain of broken love. Seth’s heroes John of The Golden Gate, Kabir of A Suitable Boy and Michael of An Equal Music have ended up in fiasco. They have not been able to marry their swee-hearts Liz, Lata and Julia respectively. But, all their female partners have entered into wedock. The theme of broken love is dominant in all the novles of Vikram Seth. This dissertation has made a study only on the novels of Seth and it has not made any indepth analysis of his poetry as well as the Travelogue by Seth.