CHAPTER II

LOVE AND LIFE IN SANFRANCISCO

Vikram Seth’s first novel *The Golden Gate* is a novel, in the sense that this is a fiction in verse. Novel in verse is a thing of novelty. In the recent literary history, novels in verse have not appeared though Vikram Seth says he has drawn inspiration from Alexander Pushkin who has composed *Eugene Onegin*, a novel in verse. Seth’s *The Golden Gate* has all the ingredients to be described as an ‘American novel’. It deals with the lifestyle, culture and love of present America. Regarding this Z.N.Patil in his article *The image of America in Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate* comments this way:

“Some literacy critics would like to classify Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*, a novel that breaks new ground in the sense that it is a novel written in sonnet form as an Indian novel in English just because of the reason that Vikram Seth was born in Calcutta and lived in India for about the first fifteen years of his life and he did not set foot in America until he attained the age of twenty three. But I personally feel that this alone is not enough to justify the novel as an Indo-English novel. ‘Quite a few critics describe it as a California novel’ (21).

Susheila Nasta quotes critics who describe it as the great California novel’ and a thoroughly California novel peopled by unmistakably California characters(11). Besides, C.N. Srinath in *Essays in Criticisms*, comments in the following way:

“Judging by his novel *The Golden Gate*, it is hard to see how Vikram Seth can be considered an Indian Writer except by accident of birth. There are few Indian references in the text, such as the “Taste of Honey” and the charioteer metaphor and the non-violent attitude of the peace marchers has obvious Gendlian connections... but there is nothing here that California has not possessed for a long time ....This is , in fact, a totally California novel”(25).
This is because of Seth’s total involvement with life in California. Seth emphasizes that it is not his detachment but rather his love of California that is most valuable to him in writing the novel. Seth states that one cannot come with a cold and objective eye from outside and then write with affection about a place. One must have lived years in that place and not just observed for years. The novel is replete with enormous amount of information on California. And Pandurang says “that he finds hardly any traces of Indianisms in Seth’s polished verse whose idiom is transparently American and more immediately California. Thus in terms of linguistics and theme, the novel can be considered to be a reflection of American Life especially that of San Francisco”(4).

Before the researcher concentrates on “Love and Life” in San Francisco a brief survey of the technicality of the composition of the work is attempted here. The novel The Golden Gate is composed entirely in rhyming tetrameter sonnets. It consists of 594 sonnets, written in iambic tetrameter. And it follows the fourteen line stanza pattern of Eugene onegin. Regarding this, Seemita Mohanty in A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth’s Poetry and Fiction comments in the following way:

“Eugene onegin is written in verses of iambic tetrameter with the unusual rhyme scheme ‘aBaBccDDeFFeGG’ where the lowercase letters represent feminine rhymes and the uppercase represent masculine rhymes. This form has come to be known as the ‘Onegin stanza’. Unlike the Shakespearian sonnet of ‘ababcdeffegg’ the Onegin stanza does not divide into smaller stanzas of four lines or two in an obvious way. There are many different ways the sonnet can be divided, for example the first four lines can form a quatrain or instead join with the ‘cc’ to form a sestet. The form’s flexibility allows the author more scope to change how semantic sections are divided from sonnet to sonnet, while keeping the sense of unity provided by keeping a fixed rhyme scheme”(125).

Vikram Seth has used this stanza in his novel The Golden Gate. There are thirteen chapters with an average of forty five sonnets. Seth’s rhyme scheme
differs from the traditional sonnet forms. The traditional sonnets were written in Pentameter, and the rhyme scheme employed were abba abba cde cde (petrarchian) or ababbcdece (Spensarian) or ababcdcd efefgg (Shakerspearean). Seth’s rhyme scheme is very much unlike these and goes ababcdcd in the octave and efefgg in the sestet, and this is rare in the sonnet form. For Seth the sonnets function as interlinked units which gradually progress with the narrative pace of the novel.

This chapter dwells on the love and life of Sanfrancisco. As part of surveying the evolution of Vikram Seth as a novelist, which is the objective of this dissertation, this chapter deals with the love and life of Sanfrancisco that is portrayed in *The Golden Gate* his first novel. The researcher brings out the love and life of Sanfrancisco through the key characters John and Liz, Phil and Claire, Phil and Ed, Sue and Art. Of these pairs, John and Liz seem to be in focus. It is learnt from the work that John was in love with Janet Hayakawa also previously. But when the novel opens, they are termed as former lovers and present friends. All the above mentioned pairs suffer only fiasco in their love lives except Art and Sue, though Phil and Liz get married in the end.

Leela Lakhsmi Narayen comments on *The Golden Gate* in the following manner.

“This book is a lyrical composition with variations on the theme of love, its forms, degrees and dimensions. It is truism that the golden gate to happiness is love, although both love and its definition are elusive. Is love a chemical affinity? Lust? or is it concern, respect, trust, understanding and friendship? Certainly all these are facts of love. Seth’s long poem elaborates on this multidimensional emotion both in its historicity and its contemporarary world. Love is a reaching out between man and man and its simplest symbol is that of bridge. That such bridges need to exist is as obvious as the fact that they do not, or if they do are too fragile to support spiritual oneness”. Then she goes on to throw light on love discussed in this work in the following way.
“The book probes “porous myths”. It deals with a) man’s blind love for an invisible God and his edicts (Ed and Bible) b) man’s concern for his fellow men, and for the universe where he lives (Father O’ Hare’s Crusade against nuclear research) c) Paternal love (John Brown and his transatlantic father contrasted with phil weiss and his son paul), d) maternal love (Mrs. Boratis Solicitude contrasted with Claire’s heartlessness) e) romantic love (Liz Dorati for her boy friend John Brown), f) friendship and affection born of respect for the partner (Liz and phil weiss) and finally generosity of mind and selfless devotion (as in Janet Mayakava)” (44).

Of all different types of love among people discussed above, romantic love is in focus. There are three key pairs in this work: John and Liz, Phil and Claire, Art and Sue. It is also known that Phil and Ed are also in homosexual affair for a brief period and John and Janet Hayakawa are also erstwhile lovers and present friends.

The key character is John whose acquaintances fill out the multitude of Sanfrancisco. The novel begins and ends with him. He is a blond haired, good-looking, healthy, employed, ambitious, sound, solvent, self-made, self-possessed out a depressed person. John is a young man of twenty six and is described as aloof, prim and lonely. He longs for a family which he thinks will cushion his solitude. John feels a cold cast of self-pity envelops him. He has no family to care for him. His mother is dead and his English father after his retirement from government service dwelling in his native Kent rarely responds to the letters sent by John. When John blames his father for not promptly and frequently responding to his letter, his father camouflages himself behind the poor service of postal department. If he is in touch with his son who suffers a sense of loneliness, it might comfort John to some extent. After he leaves the college, his life has grown duller and more monotonous. Even though he leads an economically and financially comfortable life, he has nobody with whom he can have sharing of things. After the completion of his education, he does not show much interest in keeping his friendship with friends intact. He prioritises
his professional life over his friendship. He works with the nuclear firm which manufactures nuclear arms. Loneliness may have frustrated him to great extent but it has not made him unempathetic. Whenever his co-workers are in trouble, he makes it a point to lend them a helping hand to come out of it. When a fellow worker of John is fired from his job, John takes up the case with the boss who is very stubborn and obstinate and says what is done is done and he can not do anything about it.

A fellow engineer’s been fired

John pleads his cause (what is done is done his boss replies) (GG 29).

John with his perseverance champions the cause of his dismissed colleague and he emerges successful in reinstating him. This is an instance that shows the empathy of John for others. That he shares the grief and sorrow of his friends becomes obvious and evident from this incident. But at the same time he has undergone a transformation in him. His friends say he is not what he used to be. Work and the syndrome of possessions leave little time for life’s digression. And it cannot be said that his present plight is due to his employment with the defense but his childhood brought up and upbringing also has impacted him to a great extent. In his childhood, he is not able to enjoy motherly love, affection and care. It may also be a reason why he has completely confined to his work and not moving with others freely. After he returns home from the office, to get rid of the pain of loneliness, he endeavours hard to do his reading but he finds himself unable to do it due to lack of concentration.

He suffers the pain of loneliness and in order to overcome it, he visits ice-cream parlours where the sight of girls being together and their conversation among themselves remind him about his solitude. Such scenes of people sitting and chatting together further worsens his plight and he leaves the place at once. On an occasion returning home, he thinks back to his college days and his college friends such as Phil and others and the nights they spent together. That he suffers emptiness in his private life is so frustrating that it forces him to make calls to his friends such as Phil over phone. On second
thoughts, he gives up that idea since Phil has committed himself to nuclear disarmament. John works with Lungless Lab where nuclear – weapons are manufactured and he is afraid that their relationship, if renewed, will be politicized. Then John makes a call to Janet Hayakawa who is of Japanese nationality and erstwhile lover and present friend of John.

The sensitive and artistically gifted Janet is passionately involved with her sculpting of “Ma Hen” her work in stone. She is also a drummer in a band called Liquid sheep. Furthermore, she is waiting for sober critical recognition for her “Three Eggs”, An Adolescent Lion, clothed Nude,” “Study of Young Man caught in Eagles claws” and “Biased Portrait of an Ogress”. When John and Janet meet, she comes to know the problem with John. And she says to him what John requires now is someone to love. The action is set in motion when she takes the initiative to place a personal advertisement for a companion in a newspaper with the intention of easing John’s loneliness. It is to the message written by her, Liz responds. In addition to Liz, two other girls by name Wasp Bluestocking and Belinda Beale respond to John’s personal, matrimonial advertisement. But both of them fail in their attempt to impress John who is in search of love and company that will weed out his fearsome solitude. Out of a pile of pornographic replies to his advertisement, he selects these two, desperately hoping to get a suitable love partner. He takes Wasp to see the play Macbeth Where he is bored by her insistent exigencies. The literary critic in her overtakes her amorous self. She untiringly talks of appearance and rearing themes, the significance of dreams and darkness and the singular thesis that the Third Murderer is the central figure of each act. Throughout the meal, she oozes French and throughout the play she oozes critical jargon. Thus her philosophizing renders John as pale and white as Banquo’s ghost.

Belinda Beale is the second candidate contesting the selection. Unfortunately for John, she is another imbalanced and partial woman. In her, the physical is dominant over the intellectual. She is a pornographic maenad mad with morbid lust. She is highly sex-conscious, sex-obsessed, and almost sex-mad. Her passionate movements during the play shocks John and her
disgusting physical movements underneath the dining table horrify and render him mute. Z.N. Patil in his *The Image of America in Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate* remarks “that these two ladies might be described as perverted counterparts of D.H. Lawrence’s Miriam and Clara in Son’s and Lovers. Both of them unable to impress John are rejected” (24).

Liz Dorati is a twenty-seven-year-old, high-powered ex-Stanford Law school attorney. She is beautiful, vivacious, blue-eyed, well-rounded blonde who is from a family of Italian immigrant wine-growers. John is impressed by her handwritten reply that Jane forwards to him, and invites her to meet him. They share a passionate whirlwind romance that lasts for a brief period. It is also known that when people are used to complimenting her elegance and prettiness, she silently accepts it without responding to them. And Liz’ mother Mrs. Dorati in the strongest terms advises her to get married. Liz manages her saying that after her studies get over and she obtains a law degree, she will enter into wedlock.

Her mother, anxious, loving, rigid
Said, “Liz, a pretty girl like you
Ought to be thinking of ................. “IT tu”,
Sighted Liz, “Mom Do you think I’m frigid?
Just let me get my law degree
Out of the way – and then, I’ll see (GG–39)

When she pursued her graduation in at Law school, Liz gets into odd affair or two, but so far she has not come across anyone who is fit for marriage, until she meets John through the advertisement. Meanwhile, John is seen meeting her during day time because his earlier attempts in romance prove to be a fiasco as he meets them at night. John and Liz meet at a restaurant called Cafe Trieste. When the meeting takes place there, Janet Hayakawa who is instrumental in making this arrangement because of her care and concern for John turns up and seeing them talking so closely to each other, she leaves unwilling to disturb them. John’s intimate conversation with Liz delights Jane to a great extent. She being his former lover and present well wisher and friend.
is quite delightful to see John forgetting about all his worries immerses himself in conversation with Liz. Unable to part company, Then John and Liz move towards another restaurant called Tree of Heaven. During their talk, Liz mentions her pet cat Charlemagane to him. Since John has so far suffered only solitude and loneliness in his life, his new relationship and affair with Liz is really God sent to him. During his childhood also, John has not been blessed with motherly love and affection. On an occasion Phil states to Liz John’s odd and strange behaviour can be attributed to his lack of caring and affectionate upbringing. Considering all these factors, John’s affair with Liz means so much to him and its is of paramount importance in terms of love life of John.

After Janet Hayakawa, only now John has managed to earn the heart of a young girl. That he is very happy is a surprise to John who states to Liz about it. Liz asks him why he is surprised to be happy and if he gets downcast often. Liz is delighted to comfort him. The relationship between them has grown so stronger that they begin to stay together at night. Regarding their love and romance Angeline Multani in her essay A Metro Sexual Love story Points out that “When John and Liz embark on their relationship, they are giddy and overwhelmingly in love. This kind of passion is represented a little indulgently by Seth as it is made clear that romance is also some kind of mentally debilitating factor, something which destroys reason and sense”(47).

There follow weeks of Sweet addiction
To insular if Sparkling wine
Liz, now addressed by John as “Honey”
Responds to him with “funny bunny”.
Their diction has alas, become
Incomprehensible and dumb
Their brains appear to be dissolving
To sugary sludge as they caress (GG 51)

In addition to this, they share their views and opinions on movie-stars, the ills of their cars, the cats, the microchips, the flotation of corporation bonds, sunsets, inflation and their childhoods, which cement their relationship and
They have begun to meet on a regular basis. John who initially is quite anxious and nervous to talk to her has slowly overcome his shortcomings and moved casually with her. Liz, on her part does everything possible to make him comfortable with her. She emboldens and encourages him in such a way that John, with ease and comfort overcoming his sense of hesitation articulates his opinions and views on a wide ranging topics from the concept of ‘truth’, ambition in life to the beauties of human life. They meet both in mornings and evenings. Besides the duo start going to movies together and frequent restaurants they spend their nights together. By this time, the love between them has grown to an extent where John addresses Liz as ‘Honey’ and see, him, as ‘Funny bunny’. What surprises is that after they have led a life of enormous intimacy and love, shared and seen everything, they depart from each other unable to get along. The following incident paves the way for that.

At this point, Liz apprises John about a concert to be presented by her sister Sue in her almamater Starford and she further adds that Sue will look forward to their visit. In order not to cause any disappointment to Sue, Liz stresses that they have to visit the concert. When Liz and John turn up at the concert, Sue performs there and it drives Liz to recall her childhood days when her mother Mrs Dorati used to insist them on learning music. She tells John that Sue only reaps the benefits of the pains their mother put in to hone their skills in music, adding that on account of the advancing age of their parents, they are unable to make it to the concert. And Liz furthers that Sue has said she will tape the Mozart performance for them.

What a magnificent requital
For all Mom’s pains. Too bad she’s ill
It’s two hours drive to the recital
Down from our place; Dad’s not young still
Sue said she’d tape the Mozart for them (GG 69).

They words assume importance since they are reflective and expressive of low much love and affection Liz and Sue have for their parents. Even though they are residents of cosmopolitan city of Sanfrancisco where it appears love
and affection for parents, care and concern for them do not seem to have any predominant place, Liz and Sue fondly remember their parents. Another episode that has completely altered the course of action in the novel is also associated with daughter – mother relationship. When Mrs. Dorati constantly persuades Liz to get married early, she is unable to turn down her advice resulting in marrying Phil when Liz and John go through a tough phase of their affair.

The concert presented by sue turns out to be an important one because this is where John introduces Phil to Liz by saying that both of them used to be college hostel room mates.

Phil, old buddy, how is it going?
“Not too bad,” Smiles phil. “And this?”
“Oh, let me introduce you Liz....” (GG 69).

After being introduced to Phil, Liz invites him for a party they host the following Friday night. Phil says that if his son Paul permits him, he will join them at the party. Paul, who happens to be beside them allows his father to attend a party and says that he will play with Chuck Lamont, his friend, that day. That Phil wants to have his son’s permission even to attend a party hosted by friends clearly indicates the magnitude of Phil’s paternal care and affection. He bends over backwards to make his son realize he will always be with him, even though his mother has left him. Phil in his first conversation with Liz itself has managed to make her develop a good – will as well as soft corner for him by complimenting her sister Sue’s performance at the concert.

For your address.................. what brilliant playing
That cellist .................” She is my sister, sue”
“You are serious?” “Yes” she is quite amazing (GG70).

On the same occasion, John and Phil former college friends also revive their friendship. John, too on his part, invites Phil to make it to the Friday party hosted by John and Liz. Further, when John happens to utter the name of Claire, Phil’s former wife a ray of gloom spreads in the face of Phil who adds that they need not dwell on that subject. John studying the mind of Phil
changes the topic and enquires with the resignation of his Job from Datronics a firm where nuclear – weapons are manufactured. Phil replies after he comes out of the firm, somebody else is appointed to his position.

While the party progresses, Liz’s mother Mrs. Dorati, who is replete with joy and cheer, tells Liz that she is so delighted to see John and Liz together. With the progress of the party, Liz, having to cope with the history professor called Pratt who parades his knowledge and research work on Bitsburgh, finds John in a pensive mood. She rushes to him and enquires what the matter is with him. John responds with so much annoyance that Liz’s cat Charlemagne has pissed on his tux. She requests John not to go all stiff and stuffy. She says to him everyone at the party watches him and his behaviour will mar the well being of the atmosphere. Liz adds when he has made her mother develop a good impression on him if he behaves this way, he will go down in their impression. Liz is so anxious and nervous that the pleasantness of the ambience should not be marred.

Oh, By the, Mom thinks you are fine
I wonder why Dad couldn’t make it ...........

Liz ripples on, while John thinks, “Drat
That Margy misbegotten cat....... I hate the beast, and I can’t take it ..... (GG 74).

This is the first incidence that has caused a friction between them. This looms large later bit by bit and by degrees. Charlemagne, the cat of Liz is the apple of discord. Later, John finds himself in a stage where he thinks that Liz’s love for the cat is greater than her love for him. With the progress of the novel, it seems that his thought has grown stronger and stronger in him. Still they are together.

Even after this, they stay and live together. When the love and romance between them advances this way, Charlemegne like a human, becomes possessive of Liz, its mistress. It is unable to put up with the intimacy between John and Liz. Commenting on the activities of Charlemegne, Leela Lakhsmi Narayen in her essay A Study of Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate states that
“Charlemagne, Liz Dorati’s siamese magnificent who jealous of Liz’s affection for John dismissed John from her life with kingly authority. Before that, Charlemagne damages an official report of John who has become completely displeased with it” (65).

Then other incidents which further infuriate John also take place. At one night, Charlemagne urinates near his head while he is asleep and on another occasion it attempts hard to damage the suitcase of John which is placed in a locked room. He is no longer able to tolerate the nuisance Charlemagne causes to him. John flying into rage complains to Liz that its sex organ should be removed to make it perfect and behave well. Liz who has got a great deal of love and attachment for Charlemagne does not like the remarks of John. And the friction between them becomes wider and wider. The following morning John takes a dig at Liz stating that there are two kinds of people in the world. The first sort likes cat whereas the second does not. He further adds that he endeavours hard to like it but he is unable to do so. And so, he stresses his stand that it must be declawed. On hearing these words, she burst into tears.

While John becomes aware of the intensity of Liz’s attachment towards her pet cat Charlemagne ever after she knows well that it causes unbearable nuisance to John, he aims at getting closer to it to delight her. And he does not leave any stone unturned to get close to it. He shows pity and affection on it but his efforts do not materialize at all. The cat has no liking for him, which plunges him into gloom.

Out of frustration, John detests this cat so much that he asks Liz to choose either him or the cat. And she replies that the cat is brave, fine and useful. When John states to Liz that they had better get rid of the cat, Liz wildly stares at him which subdues him. At this point, John makes a statement on cat freaks that they weep more tears for one lost pet than floods in Sulawesi. She gets annoyed and exasperated to hear the words of John, nevertheless, she loves him. John is very stubborn in getting rid of Charlemagne whereas Liz is very firm in retaining it. With regard to nuclear weapons also there’s no agreement between them. When Phil who champions the cause of creating nuclear
weapon-free society, stages lungless march mobilizing the support of hundreds of people to press for the closure of Lungless Labs where nuclear weapons are manufactured. Liz is enthusiastic about offering legal assistance to Phil who is the forefront in the protest against nuclear arms. Besides, Liz also participates in it at the behest of Phil and delivers the speech in support of nuclear disarmament. He is ready to brave even imprisonment on this cause. Liz also participates in the protest at the behest of Phil and she delivers an impressive talk on the issue. In her speech she says if human beings are killed, there is justification for this and on account of their folly and belligerence they put the future of human race at stake. But what about the flora and fauna and other creatures dwelling on earth and why they should face extinction due to the activity of humans, Liz asks. John is completely against the protests on nuclear arms. He comes down heavily on Phil stating that Phil’s attack on Lab is undemocratic adding that while they have the options such as the courts, the press and the elections, to resort to duress is inexcusable.

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\begin{align*}
\text{You have got the courts, you have got the press} \\
\text{You have got the vote. To use duress} \\
\text{Is inexcusable. You are screwing} \\
\text{Your country while you claim to be} \\
\text{The high priests of humanity (GG 143).}
\end{align*}
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That Phil and John have no similar stance on nuclear weapons is of no importance. What is noteworthy is that Liz is not in agreement with John in this regard and not only that, does she openly express her support to Phil in this regard. It also causes a wedge between John and Liz.

In addition to this, how other things also bring about their separation and split is analyzed. John finds himself in a situation where he feels that Charlemagne, Liz’s interest in tuneless songs, her tofu-eating and Kefir-drinking habits further aggrieve him. Liz’s caring, affectionate and loving enquiries which once delights him now do not give him any joy any more. He realizes that his love for Liz does not get bright. On an occasion, Mulling over
the cat, and Liz’s defence of it, he comes out of the room and happens to meet Phil coming in a car.

While both friends meet, Phil realizing the dullness and grief of John asks him about the reason of it. John, in a dull voice replies that Liz loves Charlemagne more than she loves him. He cites Liz’s abundant affection for the cat as the reason for his grief. Phil pacifies John saying that Liz is not dizzy in her affection. John asks him not to defend her. Phil comes out saying that he does not take any side and he urges John to speak his mind to his friend. At this point, John mentions that he never thinks a cat wreck his joy and peace. Phil attempts to offer comfort to him. In due course of their talk, John sees that the left eye of Phil is damaged and he enquires about it. He further questions whether it has been caused by a lover and Phil answers that it happened last week. And when John is very keen on knowing the identity of the person who has caused it to him, Phil finally discloses the identity and says it is none other than Ed, Liz’s brother, which hugely shocks John.

“Someone I know? “Yes” So I have seen her
Not quite, but – “Sue?” “No” “Rose?” “No” Jan
you are on the wrong track. “Not Rowena”?
No, Phil, I give up” Ed is the man (GG 199).

John who is very traditional and orthodox in matters related to sex is really shell shocked to hear it from his friend. It is very hard to digest for him. And he shouts to Phil that he needs brain – transplantation. Flying into rage, John asks him how Phil, a married man, can do such things. To another question from John as to what two men can do together, Phil replies he can try it himself to know more about it. That Phil has homo-sexual relationship with Ed is an unbearable and intolerable shock to John. Both have become uncomfortable and incompatible in the presence of each other. In matters with regard to Love and Romance, they are poles apart. They are staring at each other.

At this juncture, Liz appears in the scene. While they eat together, Phil reminds them that it gets late and he has to leave for his home. Liz interferes and
mentions that his departure from there will be permitted on condition that Phil has to disclose to her what John and Phil have talked about before her arrival there. Since Liz is very firm in this connection, Phil has no other option but to express that John is unable to put up with his homo-sexual affair with Ed. At this point, unable to bear the conversation that goes on between Phil and Liz, John stages walks out. Surprisingly Liz is not serious about it unlike John. Later, when she endeavours to set right things between erstwhile college classmates, she can not do it. She pacifies John that Phil is his friend and he should not get angry with him so much. John retaliates by saying that Ed is only her brother. Further the fact that instead of correcting Phil and Ed Liz supports them irritates John. Meanwhile, Phil unable to stay there any longer leaves that place. John reacts to his exit by stating that he does not throw Phil out. Liz questions him whether he really does not know Phil will be offended by his words and deeds. Liz quite helpless wonders how to bring about peace between them. She follows Phil. The incidents that follow strengthen the affair between Phil and Liz. And it leads them to fall in love and get married.

Liz rushes to Phil’s car which he is about to move. He asks whether Liz has come to stage an ambassadorial good-will gesture for John she replies she is really there for herself. She also gets into the car which moves and during their journey Liz tells him that she is aware of the relationship between Ed and Phil a month ago itself. Phil who is very surprised to hear it questions whether Ed reveals it to her. Phil listens to her in awe. Both of them have struck a rapport between each other. Phil adds he owes a lot to her for visiting Paul the very day that she returns from Lungless march. Liz reacts saying John and she were driving down to dine in the peninsula restaurant and combine that visit. She furthers that their visit delighted Paul and Phil also informs her Rowena’s enquiries on Liz. It seems Rowena who is the daughter of the house owner of Phil has an eye on Phil. She being possessive of Phil is not pleased with his meeting with other girls.

When their car journey progresses, Phil opines to Liz that he feels sorry for not being able to be a role model to his son. Liz replies Paul will finally
grow up as a fine boy with allround development. In due course of their talk, they also dwell on books they read when they were kids. After that when Phil asks her how she convinces herself to turn up there that day at Lungless, she states that the books he gave her have urged her to participate in the Lungless march. Then Phil is also delighted that her speech there has been adjudged as one of the best speeches delivered there. To a question on his incarceration, Phil replies that is really a heaven since there is an assemblage of like-minded people. Later, they park the car by the marina. While the conversation progresses, Liz mentions that at work when senior partners are not in favour of Liz bringing Charlemagne there, she openly told them that she would rather quit the job than not bringing the cat.

And she also apprises him of the fact that if she had not been the only woman attorney, she would have been fired from her job. Besides, Liz expresses her preparedness to help him in legal affairs if he needs her help. And Phil compliments her courage. Then Liz goes on to inform him about the details of arraignment and puts a question to him what his intentions are: attainment of a good verdict or good press support. Phil says that if he achieves both, that will be well and good for the cause he fights for. And Liz opines that some flamboyant and robust courtroom proceedings may pave the way for their conviction. The judge may be of the view that the whole defense is a fudge. Some calmness follows this after which they go for horse riding. Overall they have had a nice time that has cemented the bond between them to a great extent. Both of them find themselves on the same wave length.

At this point, Liz tells him that Ed her brother, and he are well suited. But soon after that he contradicts his own statement by saying that he is unable to understand Ed, adding that he is heaven struck.

You two are suited for each other.
Phil hesitates, then starts to speak
I doubt it, Liz. I felt last week
I’d never understand your brother(GG 208).
Liz attempts to patch up the strained affair between Phil and Ed and persuades him to give a chance to Ed who in course of time will change his stance. Responding to Liz, Phil explains that he tries hard in vain to convince Ed about the fruitfulness of their affair. Phil echoes his longing for love.

This past year’s been — God knows I only
Want to — O God knows what — to live
Without this emptiness- to give
A little love, to get a little (GG 210).

After the expression of his pain of loneliness and his longing for love, he is quick to add that he ought not to have said about these things to her. Liz with a small gentle nod of comprehension says she understands the feelings of Phil. And she elucidates the love is fun at first but living with a lover will be less than appealing, if anything in bed is great without anything in your head.

After this they turn to John whose behaviour Phil says is a reflection of his loveless childhood phase. Liz agrees with him that John is not vicious, unaffectionate or unkind but at times he becomes almost blind. And she with all openness and frankness states that she has her shortcomings and her own share of immaturity. But the problem with John is he finds every quirk a good to make him bubble or explode. Then later, Liz states to Phil it is not food for them to subject their loved ones to dissection. He tells her that he speaks only for himself. With Liz’s enquiries on Paul, they return. This episode illustrated above has turned out to be very crucial. Their heart to heart discussion on wide range of things from their favourite book, food and career and to Phil’s verbalization of longing for love and loneliness has taken them to a stage where they are about to fall in love.

After this, when John and Liz pay a visit to the place of Mr.and Mrs. Dorati, he happens to witness a letter from Phil to Liz. It leads him to suspect that there might be some illicit relationship between Phil and Liz who requests John not to suspect her. He is not prepared to trust her any more. The relationship between John and Liz starts off well but they are unable to carry on their affair to the next level where they can get married. The reason for this
appears to be that they are not on the same wave length. Whether it is issue of nuclear weapons, homo-sexuality, music, or rearing of pet animals there is no consensus and agreement between them. When at this point while Liz’s parents especially Mrs. Dorati persuades Liz, their eldest daughter, to enter to wedlock early so that she can see her grand-children, Liz has to take a decision considering the poor health and advancing age of her mother. Liz at certain points finds Phil more compatible to her than John. She has become fed up with the suspicious nature of John and his restlessness over her cat. Finally, breaking her affair with John Liz marries Phil. When they give birth to a boy child, they inform John that they will name their son after him. Thus the central figure of the novel John’s affair with Liz Dorati has ended up in a fiasco and Phil emerges as the winner.

Regarding the separation of John and Liz, Frank Day in his work on Vikram Seth comments in the following way:

“Despite the sexual pleasure that Liz and John enjoy, their life together remains edgy because of John’s blunt, rigid personality and the mutual animosity he endures with Liz’s cat, Charlemagne. Section 10 brings several issues to a climax. It is thanks giving Day at the Doratis’, a close family whose everyday lives focus on their vineyards, and the family scene presents Mr. and Mrs. Dorati settled comfortably in the evening reading their novels: “Thus together/ They pool their prose, and intertwine/ Their lives along a common vine”. Mrs. Dorati has been not so subtly hinting to Liz and her sister, Sue, that she would like to see them married soon. Sue has won a scholarship to study for a year in Paris, however, and Liz thinks, “there’s more to life than love. / I’ve got to think this out”. Neither sister knows yet that their mother, stricken by cancer, has only a short time to live. The events that conclude section 10 occur too fast to convincing. John finds an unopened letter to Liz and when he recognizes the handwriting of an old Berkeley buddy, Phil, he with no justification thinks that Phil is Liz’s secret lover. Liz has just learnt the truth about her mother and compounding the improbability of
the same, she enters the room on her way to visit Mrs. Dorati only to have John lash out at her over the letter. John storms out of the weeping Liz’s life permanently as she holds her mother tightly. The denouement speeds by in the last three sections with section 11 catching the reader by surprise by opening with Liz and Phil’s marriage” (26).

With regard to the split between John and Liz, in the work entitled *Common wealth fiction*, by John Thieme, it has been remarked in the following manner:

“In the delineation of the theme of love, there are the eternal triangles but with a difference- three different ménage a trois situations. John’s love affair with Liz is an interrupted melody with a discordant note struck by the love of Liz for her cat- the celebrated ‘magnificat’ called Charlemagne. The ‘third party’ in the homosexual affair between Phil and Ed is the memory of the ex-wife of Phil, Claire, who never actually appears in the novel. The third situation is the usual, normal triangle of two men and a women. Liz decides to leave John and marry Phil who was not only divorced from Claire his wife but who had the aforementioned affair with Ed, her brother” (198).

In this chapter, which sheds light on the love and life in San Francisco, the researcher concentrates on the affair between Phil and Claire and its fiasco. Twenty eight year old Phil, the least conventional of the characters, is John’s former room–mate in Berkley. Once a nuclear engineer with Datronics and computer expert, his self accepting psychic bounce and moral vision forces him to get out of the rat race that John is caught up in and to devote himself to the anti-nuke movement as a peacenik. Phil is lonely now and he has a six year old son Paul as well.

When Phil and Claire are in love, for entering to wedlock they have to cope with great deal of hardships. Claire has no direct appearance in the novel. What has taken place between them in their love-life and later in their marriage life is known only through Phil’s expression of rumination only. It seems that
Claire’s family is absolutely unwilling to allow her to marry Phil on account of his Jewish origin. Claire’s protestant family never approves of her marriage to a good atheist Jew. Phil thinks that the great aunts of Claire who were particularly against Claire’s wedding with Phil would have been extremely delighted at their separation. Even if there is no presence of Clarie in the work, from Phil’s recollection of early occurrences, it is known that after a brief period of wedding life, Claire has eloped with someone and settled in East Africa. Before she deserts him, it appears that Clarie charges Phil that he dominates her.

You said I tried to dominate you.

What gave you that idea – Claire (GG 61).

At one point of time, after Claire’s separation from her husband Phil and son Paul, the father and the son are seen in a garden. Paul is playing and also asking his father to catch centipedes for him. A little later, when Paul suggests to his father they can have a spider as their pet, Phil replies that instead of a spider, they can rear a rabbit as their pet. But he is unable to complete the sentence that it will be liked by his mother as well. No sooner does Phil mention his erstwhile wife’s name, than Paul questions him why he speaks as if his mother were dead. Instantly, Phil tackles the situation saying that the first thing they will do the next day is to have a spider as their pet. Despite the damage control measure of Phil, his son Paul has begun to sob and cry with his folded arms across his eyes. He is quite inconsolable. At this time, when Phil endeavours to comfort and console the inconsolably sobbing Paul stating that he should never think he is alone and he, his father, will always be with him. As soon as he completes his statement, Paul asks him when he will desert him. Phil gets emotionally broken into pieces.

- but never

Think you are alone. You have got me” “When will you leave me?” phil, shocked, stares then holds paul (still snot – nosed ) to him tightly,

And says, “Don’t say that ( GG 61)
Phil ponders that Paul misses his mother more than he misses Claire. He further ruminates that it has been a year since her departure and she can atleast write a letter or send a prize to Paul. Phil driven to despair, decides that he will never be desirous of meeting his former wife who is with a heart of stone. At this stage, the striking dissimilarity between two mothers one aged and another young can be noticed. Mrs. Dorati inspite of her advancing age and poor health is very keen on seeing her children getting married. She accords top priority and preference to the bright and joyful future of her children Liz, Ed and Sue. She puts in enormous pains to convince and persuade the elder daughter Liz to enter into wed-lock so that before her end, she can see her grandchildren. A caring, affectionate and loving mother is seen in Mrs. Dorati whereas Claire gives the impression of being uncasing, unaffectionate and unkind. Had she been a loving mother, she would not have broken her relationship with Phil at least for the sake of her son Paul.

The second love episode described between phil and Claire ends up in utter fiasco. Angeli Multani in her essay *A Metro sexual Love Story* comments on the affair between Phil and Claire in the following manner.

“Phil’s marriage with Claire is one such relationship that is established as a failure right from the opening of the novel. Claire does not enter the narrative directly almost at all, in the text like her son’s life; she remains absent, but her absence too figures as a presence; underscoring what the reader sees directly in the collapse of Liz and John’s relationship. Phil and Claire started out as a couple in love, when they were sweet and twenty and dumb and twenty one respectively. Their marriage was unconventional in most ways, going against Claire’s background, family and her family’s personal values. It was conventional in the surrounded by possessions. The break up of Phil and Claire foreshadows that of John and Liz even before the latter couple has formally became one(67).

Apart from Angeli Multani, Z.N. Patil too in his paper entitled *The image of America in Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate* dwells on break up between Phil and Claire in the following way.
“The Love –life of husband and wife is not satisfactory and they are mutually incompatible and ill-adjusted. Claire, after living with Phil for six years, leaves him on the pretext of Phil’s domineering disposition. Though a year passed since her departure she neither visited nor sent a gift to her six year old son Paul. The reason she gives for not visiting her son is that her erratic visits might create anxiety in Paul. Phil married in haste and repents at leisure. In fact, they were happy, had a son, invested in a piano, plenty of furniture, a Ford Capri, Insurance, dishwasher and television. But today Phil’s divorce from Claire has left Paul craving for a mother who once kissed him and read him stories in bed” (76).

After dealing with the love-life and later break up of Phil and Claire, the researcher now sheds light on Phil and Ed’s homo-sexual relationship. Phil does not agree to the view that gay and family life are mutually exclusive or that one is the enemy of the other. For Phil, Z.N. Patil in his paper on The Image of America in Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate States in the following manner:

Homo-sexuality and hetro-sexuality are not substitutes but are complementary to each other. Phil used to have homosexual relationship with someone while he was at college. Even after his marriage, his eye might stray toward other men. This becomes clear through Phil’s discourses which are attempts not only to justify but even glorify homo-sexuality. He breaks out of the totemic world of his ancestors and enters the rational world of science where sexual expression is freed from taboos. He has never bothered with convention. Seth describes at length their nights spent together, their magnetic draw of each other, their physical encounters, their caresses and their love-making. Phil and Ed are erotically attracted and at some points sound like man and woman or lover and beloved. But Ed Dorati, twenty three years of age, caught in a dilemma between his spiritual beliefs and his natural homosexual preferences. Even if he shares a tender relationship with Phil, he is unable to come to terms with his sense of guilt, a result of his Catholic
upbringing. At one stage, Ed asks phil why they cannot just be friends. He quotes the Bible to defend his stand that man sleeping with man is a sin. And phil counters Ed stating that Church itself is strict or lenient according to what is convenient and the teachings of the Church are much the same as when Christ came to save his fellowmen. Ed is firm and bent upon breaking up this relationship and he states that he strives for purity of heart” (33).

Phil moves the heaven and the earth to bring about a transformation and change of heart in Ed and states to him that if Ed allows his body in its sweet maturity to remain unused, it is tantamount to abusing God’s gift. He questions whether Ed’s body, earthly beauty, prevails for contemplation. He also raises a question as to why Ed should play a game on other’s rules. All his persuasion has not brought about any change in Ed who has by this time made up his mind completely against homosexuality. And they part Regarding their relationship, Seemita Mohanty in *A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth’s Poetry and Fiction* states that:

“As long as Phil and Ed are together, they shared a tender – relationship. She furthers that when they were in affair, their relationship has all the love, warmth and sharing that truly characterizes the best man – woman relationship. And inspite of the rather light-hearted reference to censors, the readers can feel the purity and almost elevated quality of their relationship.

What is key in a relationship is not sex but the kind of fulfillment and comfort people have in the company of their partners. How far and to what extent they are compatible and comfortable with each other is largely decided by the intensity of love between the pair. Until phil Ed’s relationship came to an end, it has all the characteristic features of man-woman relationship it is not the sex that matters nor the sexuality but how far one is comfortable in each other’s company” (131).

Phil’s love marriage with Claire ends up in a fiasco. She charges him with dominating her and deserts not only her husband but her six year old
son as well. Then, Phil’s friendship with John also has broken. John accuses both Phil and Liz of breach of his trust. John finds himself in a position where he thinks Phil is primarily responsible for Liz’s separation from him and Ed, despite their whirlwind affair of homo-sexuality is quite restless with Phil while the latter is very stubborn and obstinate in continuing their homo-sexuality when the former, quoting from the Bible which instructs man sleeping with man is a sin, wants to delink their affair. Even Janet Hawakaya, who is on Cordial terms with all the characters in the novel, does not get along with Phil whose former wife is a friend of Janet Hawakaya. At the party hosted by Liz and John on a Friday, when she happens to meet Phil, Janet Hawakaya does on a bunk unwilling to spend much time with him. Claire’s great aunts also do not seem to have soft corner and good-will for him.

Notwithstanding the fact that he is not in the good book of John, Claire, Ed, Janet, and great aunts of Claire, none can arrive at the hasty conclusion that he is not concerned about fellow humans and he has no liking for them. It is Phil who stoutly champions the cause of elimination of nuclear weapons and creation of nuclear weapon-free planet. Previously like his friend, he is also employed with Datronics, a nuclear weapons manufacturing firm. He quit the job on the issue of eradication of nuclear arms. After that, even though many such firms come forward to employ him in their concerns, because of his experience and expertise he turns down their offers and makes it a point to mobilize the support of people to fight against this menace by organizing protests and demonstrations in front of nuclear establishments especially Lungless lab. And he is mentally prepared to brave the oppressive measures of government such as arrest and imprisonment. This temperament of his is indicative of his selflessness. Moreover he is the one who shoulders the responsibility of running the family consisting of Suck Lamont the son of the dead Lamonts, Paul, his newborn baby, Liz and pets. Although he is financially not bright and some how manages to run his family, he is not willing to encash his expertise for his well being. This quality of his also has impressed Liz to great extent to prefer Phil to John. The likes of Liz and
Rowena have been so impressed by him but Claire has abandoned him, though theirs is love marriage. Even Ed who now shows unwillingness in continuing his homo-sexual affair with Phil on ground of the lessons of the Bible is attracted to Phil at their first sight. It is he who has taken the initiative to enter into this relationship with Phil. Though he has turn out to be a villain for his friend John, given his personality he appears to be a likeable character.

Apart from the pairs discussed above, Sue and Art are the next pair. Art makes a brief appearance in the novel that too in the latter part of the work. Sue is the younger sister of Liz Dorati and Ed. When Mrs. Dorati is keen on having grand children, she first prevails upon her daughters to get married. And her spouse Mr. Dorati who spends much of his time in the vineyard, they own, attempts to convince Liz to enter into wedlock so that her mother suffering from cancer can fulfill her desire of having grand children. When Liz delays her marriage, both Mr. and Mrs. Dorati persuade Sue to get married, She turns down their request by citing her proposed visit to Paris for higher studies. Even if it is not mentioned whether Sue and Art settle in life through marriage, both of them are on the same wavelength, unlike John and Liz. And Sue is given to helping Mr.Dorati in the execution of his work in vineyard. Art has struck rapport with Ed as well. Ed is used to playfully ridiculing Art by describing him an ardent fan of local library and the mild mango of Sue’s heart.

But, Sue, please help me solve a mystery
“Sure, Ed”. “Well, Sue, it deals with Art,
Your ardent fan of local library
And the Mild Mango of your heart”.
“What about him?””Well”, Ed says, Sighing
“How can one man be – without toying -
So boring, doughy, stiff and weak?”
Liz frowns, and gives Ed’s nose at weak (GG 216).

After the researcher throws light on ‘love’ portrayed in the novel, he deals with depiction of ‘life’ in Sanfrancisco. Before that, the dissertation makes an observation that it is disheartening to note that the end of the novel
ends the lives of loving hearts such as Janet Hayakawa, Mrs. Dorati and Matt Lamont and his wife. When Janet Hayakawa has arranged a party to celebrate the success of her sculptural works, She has scheduled it at the venue, ‘Marcus Laded’. She has invited Phil and his pregnant wife Liz, John and others as well. When she picks up Matt Lamont and his wife in person in her car to bring them to the party, the car is involved in a deadly accident which cost their lives, except the kid suck Lamont. The doctor couple also have been of great help him to Phil’s family. They planned to spend their latter part of lives for the wild life protection. In Vikram Seth, the Literary Genius: An introduction, by Pramod K.Nayar, it is thus described with regard to the story of The Golden Gate:

“The Golden Gate is ultimately a sad love story. All the requisite elements are present: the search for love, first love, circumspect first moves, gradual acceptance of the indispensability of the loved one, the move towards sharing a life and space, the consequent anxieties and adjustments the “betrayal”, the turn to another, heartbreak and the death of the loved one. John’s search for love, his relationship with Liz the break-up the entry of Phil as the sympathetic friend during the moment of crisis and the unfortunate death of Jan just when John appears to be finding himself again- all narrated with a touch of sardonic humour that translucently reveals the underlying theme of the book. This theme is to be Seth’s staple in each of his three novels: the search for love or at least companionship by alienated, intelligent and sensitive individuals indeed The Golden Gate might very well be called a sentimental novel”(17).

Another part of his chapter discusses the life of Sanfrancisco that has been portrayed in The Golden Gate. As Pushkin has mirrored the life of Russia in his “Eugene origin”, Seth has done it for America. Sanfrancisco in its manifold chalm has been presented in The Golden Gate by Vikram Seth. All the dimensions of Contemporary life in Sanfrancisco such as Friendship, Love, work, play, sexuality, the nuclear age, single parent child rearing and death are in focus. Besides, thee are the wonderful light touches of scrabble and chess,
Symphonies and art critics, interesting party scenes and personal resolution through personal dating advertisements. Such insignia’s like the bumper stickers and billboard slogans seen while driving down a freeway are artfully and engagingly rendered in verse. It has been hailed as the great Californian novel, because the themes it treats of: disillusionment from love, estrangement, discontentment at the work place, silicon valley, nuclear bombs, one night stands, homosexuality, rock music- all these coalesce into a very detailed picture of life in the costal, cosmopolitan city of Sanfrancisco, which represents the entire state of California in miniature. The issues that are further addressed are: love, life, work, eating, drinking, politics, conversation, music, parties, friendship, alienation, death, birth, loneliness and pain. There is nothing here that California does not posses this is because of Seth’s total involvement with California.

Sanfrancisco has often been a magnet for America’s counterculture. During the 1950’s “City Lights Bookstore” in the North Beach Neighborhood was an important publisher of beatnik literature. During the latter half of the following decade, the 1960’s Sanfrancisco was the center of the hippie culture. Thousands of young people powered into the Haight Ashbury district of the city during 1967, which was known as the “Summer of love”. At this time, the Sanfrancisco sound emerged as an influential force in rock music, with such acts as the “Jefferson Airplane” and the “Grateful Dead” achieving international prominence, baring the boundaries between folk, rock and jazz traditions, “The Church of Satan” was founded and made its headquarters here in 1966. During the 1980s and 1990s Sanfrancisco became a major focal point in the North American and international punk and rave scene.

Yuppie style follows the lifestyle of Hippies that has been discussed above. *The Golden Gate* has an all – American cast of characters and it offers an perceptive look at the 1980s Yuppie lifestyle in northern California. Seth has narrated a tale which demonstrate the Yuppie lifestyle through the key characters for which readers develop deep sympathy. Seth has drafted his work in such a way that he pardons all because he understands all.
The term “Yuppie” has now come to be referred to more than just a demographic profile: it is also a psychographic profile. It describes a set of behavioural and psychographic attributes that have come to constitute a commonly believed Stereotype. According to this Stereotype, Yuppies are more conservative than the preceding Yuppie generation. Dispensing of the social causes of their more passionate parents who themselves shed traditional values, Yuppies tend to be professional workers. Yuppies tend to value material good especially trendy new things. In particular, this can apply to their stocks, imported automobiles (eg. BMW, Lexus and Mercedez Benz) sported utilities, development houses, and electronic gadgets, particularly cell phones. Unfortunately, the fast-paced pursuit of these material goods has unintended consequences. Usually in a hurry, they seek convenience goods and services. Being ‘time poor’, their family relations can become difficult to sustain. Maintaining their way of life is mentally exhausting. Sometimes, they will move every few years to where their job goes, straining their family. The fast-paced lifestyle has been termed a ‘rat race’. Heavily influenced by a competitive corporate environment, they often value those behaviours that they have found useful in gaining upward mobility and hence income status. They often take their corporate values home to their spouses and children. According to the Stereoscope, there is a certain air of informality about them, yet an entire code of unwritten etiquette can govern their activities from golf and tennis to luncheons at cocktail and Sushi bars.

Seth has made every effort to portray an intimate Californian lifestyle. He has said that it was not his detachment but rather his love for California that was the most valuable to him in writing the book. One cannot come with a cold and objective eye from outside and they write with affection about a place. One must have lived years in that place and not just observed for years. There are a number of details that range from the seemingly inconsequential to more serious social issues open to debate such as contemporary sexual include housewarming parties, winemaking picnics, weekend jaunts followed by sumptuous breakfasts and gestalt group parties.
Seth’s players share exclusive relationship with their pets which is indicative of the wide prevalence of pets rearing in America. It includes a Siamese cat called Charlemagne and an iguana called Schwarzenegger. The former is pet of Liz and the latter is reared by her brother Ed. Regarding hobbies of the residents of Sanfrancisco, it ranges from a child’s addiction to the star wars to art exhibitions and classical symphonies, as also performances of a raucous punk band called “Liquid Sheep”. Seth has worked hard to include as many culture specific indicators as possible so that reader may have no reason to suspect that this is an non–Californian doing the writing. Leslie suggests that the text is filled with details about California that natives sometimes overlook because of over familiarity (4) and Craig Tapping Comments if the work might be considered in terms of Seth returning the gaze that has so often found India exotic, on that most exotic not house of late 20th century capitalist culture – California (1992-294).

The novel portrays the contemporary California lifestyle through the story of the relationships of a group of young professionals. It is a life of love and lust, told with wit, restraint and intelligence and deals with white American Characters with just one character of partly Japanese descent. There are no Indian characters at all and Seth seems completely at home in white American culture. It is an America where people from all over the world – and not just from Western Europe – shed their ethnic dimensions after sometime and acquires a new American identity. When Seth was asked why he writes about it, his reply was one cannot quarrel with inspiration.

The setting of the novel, as mentioned earlier, is Sanfrancisco, ‘the city of Saint Francis”, “the loveliest city in the world” – “light pearled”, “fog-fingered”, “Pinnacled” with its famous bay – the “unruffled daughter of the pacific”, glimmering in the evening with light from the golden globes of its street lamps – “Like sequins on black velvet robes.” In short, Sanfrancisco comes alive in the novel. Along with these vivid touches and beautiful descriptions, the milieu and ethos of life lived there, of Yuppies and urban officials or artists and ordinary people, also gets successfully evoked. Seth has
vividly captured the people and the places in the city – especially its “Yuppiness” that has since multiplied. The novel is an acute portrayal of an educated, hippie, typically San Franciscan circle of friends and their highly entangled love affairs.

It is to be noted that the acceptance of *The Golden Gate* by American reviewers who acknowledge the text as an “American product”, recognize its American qualities and read it as being very much “American in intention” and a quintessential California novel (Bobb and Digirolamo 1986). Gore Vidal states that the book is “the California novel”, while a New York Times reviewers calls it “as splendid achievement” and “a thoroughly California novel peopled by unmistakably California characters. But According to Markanda Paranjape, the microcosm of Seth’s moral world is not only of California but as Seth would have it of our brave new world itself. He says, “These who are not on the correct side of the correct causes are corrected by life itself and hence the moral standard that forms the underlying framework of the book are projected to be universal and absolute (Makarand Paranjape 1986). He again suggests that central public theme of the book is world place and therefore in the Seventh Chapter where the members of an anti – nuclear movement organize a place protest march against the “Lung less Labs” the Centre of Defense Research has the best claims to be considered as the climax of the book. It seems that anti – nuclear movement has gained momentum in America. The intensity of the words and deeds of protesters protesting against Lung-less Labs candidly explain that opposition against atomic weapons turns out to be more and more vigorous. The demonstration and the speeches by protestors especially Father O’ Hare reflect the picture on anti-nuclear movement in America. In this regard Father O Hare’s speech is worthy of mention here.

As many as two thousand minds submerging their disagreements come forward to voice their resistance against proliferation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction manufactured in Lung less Labs. Father O’ Hare gives an impressive speech there. He asks whether they, the protesters, should not
attempt to douse a fire that threatens to consume away not just their homes but the whole city.

Should we not try to douse a fire
That threatens to consume away
Not just our home but the whole city (GG 157).

He goes on to declare that they have the preparedness and mental toughness to face the oppressive measures of the government. Father O Hare furthers that cutting across different denominations of Church and putting aside their differences they all should be united on this issue. He criticizes those who open that priests have nothing to do with such protests and demonstrations and states that they the priests cannot be godly when the governments act oddly. He also utters that separation of Church from state cannot exempt the former from action. He also puts a question to the workers of lung less labs whether they can be proud of the being midwives when deaths take place in large numbers and on a large scale. He then unleashes attack on governments, stating that to have ten hostage is terrorism and in million it is strategy. To ban books is fascination but to threaten all culture, all humankind all creation it’s a task of decorous skill that needs high – statesmanship and will.

Ten hostage is terrorism ;
A million and it’s strategy.
To bar books is fanaticism;
To threaten in Totality
All culture and all civilization
All humankind and all creation
This is a task of decorous skill (GG 163)

His impressive and absolutely justifiable speech assumes much more significance and importance in the context of worldwide opposition against weapons of mass destruction. Only on this occasion when Phil’s presence as well as his action is solid, Liz turns up there to express solidarity with their cause. While asked to deliver a speech, she states that on account of their follies humans can have for their sufferings and agonies in the event of nuclear
war. How it can be defended when massive devastation and destruction is inflicted on the planet and its flora and fauna. This incident has cemented their affair further.

With regard to the speech delivered by Father O Hare Pramod K. Nayar and R.K. Dhavan in a Paper entitled *Vikram Seth, the Literary Genius : An Introduction* they collectively published have commented in the following manner.

“One of the most sustained pieces of serious seven sententious writing in *The Golden Gate* is Father O’Hare’s Speech. His speech thematises war, disarmament, peace and civil liberty and is very unlike anything else in *The Golden Gate*. However, when we look at the sensitivity of individuals in Seth’s *An Equal Music* and the descriptions of Communal unrest and politics in *A suitable Boy*, one realizes that these passages are only prolepsis. Using several descriptions that qualify as the grotesque, Seth here critiques the greatest killing machine that human beings have ever invented! War and its newest try, the nuclear bomb” (70).

In addition to that, *The Golden Gate* is placed in the eighties of the last century. The poet describes the landscape around Sanfrancisco, the flowers, the shrubs and the trees. The episodes about olive picking and animal rearing could not have been located in different region. Even the habits of whales, gulls, pigeons and sea-lions are observed with the eye of a naturalist.

R.K. Kaul in his essay *Life and Love in California* states “that the structure of the novel is episodic and it resembles a chain in with each part is linked to what goes before and what comes after, but it has no centre. What gives continuously to the story is the Dorati connection” (17). Every character is in some way related to the Doratis. Their family or clan as the author calls them is an interesting sample for a historian of culture. They spend their leisure hours in Concert halls, movie theaters, play chess, scrabble and hunting kitsch; they have a passion for pets and they watch the TV for football matches. The younger members are sexually maladjusted. Mrs. Dorati senior has a compulsive wish to be a grandmother. In spite of individual variations, they are
a closely knit clan. They regularly go to Church to nod or pray. He says that Doratis are fairly representative of the affluent middle class in contemporary America.

With regard to families, they do not loom large in the work. It appears that young unmarried ladies play the decisive roles. Nevertheless, old women play a major role on some occasions. Mrs. Dorati, wife of Mike Dorati and mother of Elizabeth, Ed and Sue is a loving, caring and anxious mother. This rheumatic lady fears that her children will prove to be fruitless crew. And she also foresees the danger of having a grand childless death. Fortunately, she lives to witness the marriage of Liz and Phil and the born of a child.

There is a glimpse of disintegrating family system in America. Readers are unable to come across the idea, gentle and good women- loved, loving unselfish, self-sacrificing wife and mother and the eternal virgin. Seth has given a portrayal of American women who seem to be deficient in love, tenderness and even in any feminine fullness. Women in *The Golden Gate* do not seem to act as full individuals. Moreover, the increasing emancipation of women has nothing to ease the situation but rather tends to exacerbate it.

*The Golden Gate*, in short, is Seth’s San Francisco novel – with the portrayal of alternative lifestyles, gender breakdowns and anti – military protests. It uses a fresh, unusual and extremely interesting experiment to look back to the ancient epic tradition, and bring it right up to date in modern California. It is a vibrant absorbing novel, notable for its vivid characterization as well as for its linguistic dexterity.