Chapter-III
Hypermodern Society . . .
In Silicon Valley of California,
United States of America.
Vikram Seth

"The Golden Gate" (1986)

(A) Time of Action 1980’s in United States of America

(B) Persons

♦ Major Characters:


2. Janet Hawakaya (Jan) Japanese immigrant descendant sculptor interested in Music Drummer in Liquid Sheep-Ex-girlfriend of John. Love is revived but in the end she dies in car accident.

3. Elisabeth Dorati (Liz)  27 years first falls in love with John Brown but marries Philip Weiss

4. Edward Dorati,(Ed)  23 years old Younger brother of Elisabeth unmarried-had homosexual relationship with Philip

5. Philip Weiss, (Phil) A Jew- Computer Wizard, nuclear Engineer resigned from the the job and devoted to Anti-Nuclear War Movement.

He first married Claire, a Christian. He has six years old son, Paul-Claire deserted Phil for another man and returned to East Coast. Later marries Elisabeth Dorati.

6. Father O’Hare  60-years old leader of Anti-Nuclear Movement-runs a paper “Truth”.

♦ Minor Characters:

1. Mr. & Mrs. Dorati Parents of Elisabeth Dorati.

2. Sue – unmarried sister of Elisabeth –She gets scholarship & Plans to study at Paris

3. Mrs. Weiss- Mother of Philip comes to attend Philip’s marriage with Elisabeth, Dorati down from Florida.

4. Kim Tarvesh- An Indian Research Student
5. Paul  
Aged six years. Son born out of Wed-lock of Philip Weiss and Claire.

5. John-  
New born son of Philip Weiss and Elisabeth Dorati

7. Mat & Joan Lamout  
Friends of Jane, who were killed in Car accident.

8. Bjorn  
Swedish sprinter

9. Lucinder  
She works in Liquid Sheep

**Pet (Animals)**

1. Charlemagne  
A Siamese cat of Liz (Elisabeth)

2. Schwarzeneggar-  
A large tree climbing Lizard of tropical America of Ed (Edward)

3. Cuff and Link-  
Cats of Jane (Janet Hawakaya)

**Places**

- Silicon Valley, San Francisco, California, U.S.A. (United States of America)
- St. Ann’s Chapel
- American’s Centre for Defence Research.

**Resturants/Bar**

1. Shu Jing

2. Winking Owl

3. Rose

4. Cafe Trieste

**me of Exibition Hall**

Marcus Ladd-where works of Art of Janet Hawakaya were exhibited.

**Magazines**

a) The Clarion- Art magazine

b) Truth- Name of a paper run by Father O’Hare
(F)Musical Band

- **Liquid Sheep** - Janet plays as a drummer
- Protestors - speakers - police - Judge - Driver
- T.V. Reporters - T.V. Crew -
Chapter-III

In this Third Chapter, Vikram Seth’s first novel, The Golden Gate receives a close look and clinical interpretation. He produced a novel entirely in rhythmic verse in the form of sonnet sequence. Its publication heralds a new era in the history of Indian English Literature. Jacques Leslie says that it is a rare and arguably anachronistic commodity. It is in the form of sonnets including the acknowledgements, table contents, dedication and the novelist’s autobiographical note. The sonnets are written in iambic tetrameter that has been out of use for over a century. It is said, Vikram Seth was inspired to use the verse form for a novel after reading the Russian writer, Alexander Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin (1831) (English translation). After a period of one and half century another novel is written in verse. Angela Atkins elaborately points out that:

“In 1986 The Golden Gate was published. This novel in verse about 20 somethings in San Francisco met with huge acclaim. It uses the verse form of Charles Johnston’s translation of Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin ... ... each stanza is 14 lines long with the rhyming scheme ababcddeffegg. Sonnets have different rhyming scheme ... the lines are Octosyllabic and the rhymes are alternately feminine and Masculine. A feminine rhyme is one where two or more syllables rhyme, as in “various” and “precarious” and a Masculine rhyme is one where the last syllable only rhymes, as with “verse” and “purse” In stanza 5.3, the poet refers to his use of the rhyme scheme of Eugene Onegin as “This
whole passe extravaganza" but this old fashioned novel in verse went down very well with the public. ... It is organised in the same way as Eugene Onegin; both are divided into chapters and stanzas with each being numbered 1.1, 1.2, and so on to 13.51. This is a structure Seth was to use in his two subsequent novels. There is little elaboration within stanzas or chapters, instead a world is created through their interplay."

The novel thematically depicts loneliness, alienation, disillusionment, discontentment and isolation that characterise contemporary life in United States of America. The chapters are entitled as under:

1. The world’s discussed while friends are eating
2. A cache of billets-doux arrive
3. A concert generates a meeting.
4. A house is warmed. Sheep come alive.
5. Olives are picked in prime condition.
6. A cat reacts to competition.
7. Arrests occur. A speech is made.
8. Coffee is drunk and Scrabble played.
9. A quarrel is initiated.
11. The winking Owl fills up by night.
12. An old offer is renovated.
13. Friends mediate on friends who’ve gone.

The months go by; the world goes on (p. nil)

In the beginning of the novel there is a sonnet which gives a very brief biographical data and the works written by the author:

The author, Vikram Seth directed
By Anne Freedgood, his editor,
To draft a vita, has selected
The following facts for her:
In’52, born in Calcutta.
8 lb.102. Was heard to utter
First rhymes ("cat", "mat") at age of three.
A student of demography
An economics, he has written
From Heaven Lake, a travel book
Based on a journey he once took
Through Sinkiang and Tibet. Unbitten
At last by wanderlust and rhyme
He keeps Pacific Standard Time. (p. Nil)

In the Acknowledgements the novelist expresses his debt and gratitude to the University, some friends and his mother more.

"My debts are manifold and various:
First, Stanford University
Second, to friends who’ve read this, quickly
Advised me to desist and cease
Or burbled, "What a masterpiece!"

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
Third to John and Susan Hughes
For refuge, friendship, ears and views.

(p. Nil)

The writer does not forget the readers and finally he acknowledges them:

And, fourth, to you, who did not question
The crude credentials of this verse
But backed your brashness with your purse.

(p. Nil)

He has dedicated the verse-novel to Steele, a fellow poet:

I pray the gentle hand of Steele
Will Once again sift through its pages

(p. Nil)
It consists of 594 sonnets, in the first part 41, second 57, third 37, fourth 53, fifth 43, sixth 49, seventh 47, eight 37, ninth 39, tenth 39, eleventh 55, twelfth 35 and in the thirteenth 51 sonnets are given. In all there are 8316 lines. Nayar and Dhawan points out the theme and the pattern of the story:

“*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, heart break and the death of loved one...All narrated with a touch of sardonic humour that translucently reveals the underlying theme of the book...theme is the search for love or at least companionship by alienated, intelligent and sensitive individuals...Postmodern in its narrative techniques and registers...a sentimental novel, this děçavism of a cleverly articulated sentimentality and the portrayal of sensitized and all too human individuals.”

It is a tragic love story of modern Americans living in San Francisco, California in 1980’s, who are called Yuppies. There are serious ruptures and the cracks within the social fabric of the cosy and comfortable but discontented life of the middle class professionally employees in the ulcer alley of the Silicon Valley, which is synonymous with the latest software technology. It portrays realistically “the artificial culture of consumption” of United States of America’s society. The present hypermodernism is an outcome of modern high technology. It has finally resulted in hyperactivity, which is indicative of a nervous restlessness in American culture.
Hyperactive society shows dislocations and the symptom of sullen resignation, passivity, and incapacity to produce new things or invent new things or to do a creative work. It has produced a kind of paralyzed irresponsibility among Americans. The novelist presents a tale of relationship between five characters in different combination such as the story of John Brown and Janet Hawakaya in terms of love, separation, reconciliation, reunion and final loss. The novelist dramatizes existential anguish of these major characters. It is a critique of the seductive materialist hypermodern society.

It presents the social issues which includes house warming parties, wine-making picnics, wedding parties, weekend jaunts, sumptuous breakfast and gestalt groups and Art exhibitions, relationship with their pets, and even contemporary sexual mores. It also presents a social phenomenon of young professional couples, DINK (Double Income No Kids) culture. It is an engaging story of the pangs of love, interlaced with serious ruminations on homosexuality, the danger of nuclear war and significance of personal advertisement to find out a true lover. Angela Atkins rightly comments that:

"There is also a mistrust of passion which runs all the way through Seth’s oeuvre. ___ it is “not that the novel is without passion ___ it is bursting with it, but each time passion appears it is, as one of the characters remarks, “a prelude to disaster”. These aspersions are cast by Phil, whose passionate relationships first with Claire and then Ed, turned sour, and who marries in the end not for love but for companionship and a family.”
It is a story of 26 years old John Brown, a high-tech computer executive, who is lonely and his search is for love as an antidote to loneliness. The story revolves around John Brown, Janet, Elisabeth, Philip and Edward. It also depicts superficial social life, alienation, isolation, gay rights, and women’s rights, which are also the hallmarks of contemporary social life of U.S.A. It is full of social realism. The novelist favours new and progressive ideas in arts and literature.

There is an attempt to develop a system of intelligence that would exceed human intelligence in search and capacity could be counter productive and it may be harmful and have negative effects on human society. New information technology such as fax, phone and mobile keep “in touch” with family and friends in a shallow sense and in reality there is a need for an individual to move in person towards each other. It has resulted into disconnected, disembodied and disoriented kind of life.

The title of the novel is symbolic. The Golden Gate is a suspension bridge that carries its burden with no visible means of support. The bridge connects the geographical locations in the Bay area. The bridge is in fact a symbol of connecting The Old World (i.e. the present world) and The Brave New World (i.e. the future world) with its postmodern culture of artificial consumption prevailing in the present American society. The group of characters that form the story are uniquely Californian. These characters are mostly descendants of migrants, who have settled long back in United States of America.
The novel is properly structured and has viable plot, which is balanced in its episodes. There is rapid pace in the narrative. The use of the present tense lends a sense of immediacy to the story. The action in the novel begins in September and ends around November the following year and as such the period is about a year and two/three months. A yearly calendar is presented by portraying the passing seasons, which are typical of the Bay Area in California. It presents a very different world and "the ethos of the Yuppies of San Francisco", which is located in the epicentre of San Andrea's Fault, and the inhabitants are constantly under the danger of destruction and devastation from sudden earthquakes. The young and ambitious professionals are working in San Francisco who have sound financial position but in their lives there are serious differences, discontentment and restlessness and their lives are deprived of real happiness and pleasure though their lives appear rather materialistically comfortable and cosy.

Vikram Seth presents contemporary society of U.S.A. with its economics, culture, science, technology, history, philosophy, religions, morals, politics and sexual behaviour with peculiar conditions of hypermodermainism, which is in fact "a direct product of modern high technology". The prevailing conditions "are devoted to the design of technologically sophisticated and glamorously unreal universe". It has resulted in hyperactivity, which has produced nerve restlessness. The life of people appear to be successful but it is under tremendous pulling forces of family, culture and religion. All these are insubordinated to the pursuit of life materialistically successful and as such this hyperactive society creates dislocations. Media advertising propagates the social trends of 'sullenness' and passiveness and there is a cancerous growth of the video, television and advertisement
culture. It is a critique of the seductive, material vitality of hypermodern society. It can be classified as a novel of manners with unsentimental mediation on morality and the nuclear abyss. It dramatises existential anguish of the characters forcefully and the writer advocates for strong family bond and need of person to person contact and communal cohesiveness to combat the perils of Hyper-individualism.

It portrays realistically Californian life-style and social realities objectively as “an insider” sympathetically. There is plethora of details from trivial to serious social issues such as contemporary sexual mores. It also mirrors realistically the exclusive and very cordial relationship of characters with their pets, a Siamese cat named Charlemagne and an iguana called Schwarzenegger and the other two cats Cuff and Link. There is also mention of pastimes from children’s addiction to the Star War, to art exhibitions and classical symphonies and also performances of a raucous punk rock musical band called Liquid Sheep.

It exclusively mirrors the icons of pop culture and advertising world. Janet Hawakaya is one of Japanese descendant, John’s former girlfriend. The story is set in motion when she takes the initiative to place a personal advertisement in a newspaper for John’s sake. Every major character “is defined within the parameters of profession, personal ethics, eccentricity, family and social connections”. The interactions with each other and between them are presented. John Brown, 26 years old, is a graduate of Berkeley, who leads a successful life but he is extremely lonely. He is an executive employed in the high-tech computer and electronics industry with specialisation in nuclear research. A workaholic, he “kneels bareheaded and
unshod/before the Chip, a jealous God”. He is a follower of conservative politics and is vocal about his opposition to the Anti-Nuclear War Movement. He does not realise fully the implications of the work he is involved in until the end of the novel when he develops self-doubt. He does not question his ideological belief that constructs his consciousness, along-with the other nuclear plant employees. “Those who devised these weapons, decent/Adjusted, family-minded folk”, he is an ideal co-opted subject. / “He chooses to ignore can’t hurt him;/ some things are his concern, some not. / His politics have strongly, slowly, Rigidified” (31)

However, there are some other aspects of John’s psychical history. John phones Phil but there is no response. Later, he phones Janet and reflects how they led their lives now. The love affair between John and Janet is broken. Now there is no strong passion and warmth in their friendship. Hayawaka is a sculpture by profession and her ambition is to become famous. She is fond of music and plays a drummer in a musical band. She keeps two pet cats “Cuff” and “Link”, who are companions in her loneliness. This is a bitter reality of hypermodern American Society that men and women prefer to have the company of pets (animals or birds) instead of human beings! She gives her pet cats “Love, food and intelligence”.

John stands behind the phone and visualises Janet’s warm beauty, her calm smile, dark eyes, high boned features, her black falling hair———pony tail. She appears before his eyes. He rings her again but in vain. Later he keeps himself engage in reading literary books full of philosophy of pessimism and as such lives in gloomy mood. The novelist says that:
“Life’s Little checkit by Hardy,
The gloomier sermons of John Donne,
The Zibaldone of Leopardi,
The Queen of Spades. At ten to one,
From the crevasse of melancholy
In which he now is buried wholly,” (12)

Then the phone rings and Janet invites him for a lunch next day at the Shu Jing. Next day, he dresses smartly “cologne, scented, hyper-immaculate” then he goes and waits there but Janet reaches rather late. John first inquires about Janet’s pet cats and her musical band. Then she says, “I came here to hear your song” He replies that:

I’m young, employed, healthy, ambitious,
Sound, solvent, self-made, self-possessed.
But all my symptoms are pernicious.
The Dow-Jones of my heart’s depressed.
The sunflower of my youth is wilting.
The tower of my dreams is tilting.
The zoom lens of my zest is blurred.
The drama of my life’s absurd. (14)

Janet desires to know the root cause of his neurosis but he wants to know her diagnosis. He pathetically exclaims. “I die! I faint! I fail! I sink!” On hearing John’s remarks, she says “You need a lover, John, I think”. And her suggestion is to place an advertisement in a paper for a life partner. She also advises him that life is short and youth’s span is very brief. Now he is nearly thirty and as such it is proper time to choose a companion. She further says that it is better to select a loving life partner now, who might love him otherwise with the advancement of age, he would repent and the loneliness in his soul would make him weep in the silent nights in the end. Later on she drafts an advertisement for John and types it, which reads as under:
“Young handsome yuppie, 26,
Straight, forward, sociable, but lonely,
Cannot believe that he’s the only
Well-rounded and well-meaning square
Lusting for love. If you, out there,
Are friendly, female, under 30,
Impulsive, fit and fun, let’s meet.
Be rash. Box ______ (25)

The advertisement is dispatched to a newspaper for publication. It is published in the newspaper and in response to advertisement, Jane receives as many as 82 letters! She reads the newspaper and glances at the other news such as

“The President is a lesbian spy.”

“Nuke the nukes,” “Fan of David Bowie”

Or “Here today—and gone to Maui,”

“I ♠ winos,” “I ♥ L.A.”

Or “Have you hugged your whale today?”

“Bartenders do it with more spirit.”(30)

John reminisces his childhood days when he was a small boy, he used “to chafe against the fate” (31) and he never had “mother’s love”. Later he walked off free way in search of company, love and oblivion. He was alone and he led bleak life. John is in his flat and there is bunch of letters which he has not read so far. Out of these he selects letters of three women and “he begs the pleasure on three successive Saturdays (If they should chance to have the leisure). John’s meeting with the first woman is described:

Of the three women at three plays
Followed by dinner. Wasp Bluestocking
Accepts, and turns up with a shocking
Pink parasol. They see Macbeth,
Where John’s bored to an inch of death
By her insistent exegesis:
Appearance and reality themes
And the significance of dreams
And darkness, and the singular thesis
That the Third Murderer is in fact
The central figure of each act.(33)

The second woman is Belinda Beale. He meets her and they see American playwright’s drama Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. He describes his encounter with Belinda truly. John is free exactly a week later and as such:

He goes with her to the theatre
To see that interesting play
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Halfway
Through the third act, her dextrous digits,
With small attempt at camouflage,
Engage in passionate petrissage
Along his thigh. John squirms and fidgets.
He darts her a swift glance. She stops,
But not for long. The curtain drops.(34)

John further tells his experience with her in detail. The meeting is realistically portrayed:

At dinner amorous Belinda
Stares deep, deep, with her peerless eyes
And tries to spark John’s dampered tinder
With coos and flutings. “Ah,” she sighs,
“You’re such a fox!” John frowns and flushes.
Immune to his beleaguered blushes,
With “Oh, your accent is so cute!”
She strikes her helpless victim mute,
While underneath the elegant table
Of coq au vin, to John’s disgust,
Discomfiture, and rising lust,
She ... John gets up, concocts a fable,
"Ten-thirty!—got to go—my wife"
Leaves fifty bucks, and flees for life.(35)

The name Belinda is symbolic and it reminds the beautiful and fashionable coquette from London, who is the heroine, Belinda of Alexander Pope’s famous mock-epic poem, The Rape of the Lock. Later, he reads the letter of third woman, who addresses him “Dear Yuppie” and it reads as under.

"Dear Yuppie, I am wary
of answering personal ad.
...
I’m friendly, female 27
well-rounded too, and somewhat square.
I’ve not yet known romantic heaven,
But harbour hope of getting there
I’m fit at least, I am not conclusive;
And fun, I hope, though not impulsive.
To match the handsomeness, you flaunt
...
I am good looking
With all good wishes. Yours sincerely,
Elisabeth Dorati (Liz.”)(37)

It is a letter from Elisabeth Dorati, who is 27, ex-Stanford Law School attorney. She is vivacious, blue-eyed and ‘well rounded’ blonde from the family of an Italian immigrant vine-grower. The novelist mirrors very realistically the first meeting between John and Liz in the Cafe Trieste. John finds her lovely and Liz finds him quite attractive. There is a long conversation between them. It is late cold November night and in the end of their meeting, “Liz turns. They kiss, they are/caught in a panic of
embracing./They cannot hold each other tight/Enough against the chill of night". (49)

John and Liz meet next time outside a theatre near the Tree of Heaven to see a movie and "The loving pair make love again./The loving pair has bit the apple of mortal knowledge. (51)

With the passage of time their friendship and love deepen. In fact their love blossoms. The novelist rightly remarks "Love is the friction/Of two skins"? (52). Liz addresses John as "honey" and she responds to him with "funny bunny" He tells about them as "the blessed yuppies and happy as a pair of puppies. He further remarks "Love is not blind but, rather, dumb."(52)

John and Liz decide to live together and as such they move in an apartment and live happily. It was a winter Saturday. They are together in the bed. When it is a morning, John gets up from his sleep but Liz is still in the bed. John is happy in their new house with Liz. John thinks about life and man's basic needs of life such as house, wealth, well paid employment, i.e. and above all, of course, someone to love.

Philip-Weiss is a computer wizard, who is John's friend and college days' roommate. He has resigned from his job of a nuclear engineer in Dataronic. His "self accepting psychic bound" and 'moral visions' compels him to be out of "the rat race" that John is caught up and he devotes to Anti-Nuclear Missile Movement as a 'Peace-nik'. He is a Jew by faith but married to Claire Cabot, a Christian and is recovering from the traumatic
experience of his wife, Claire deserts him with another man and returns to East Coast. Claire’s Christian family had never approved of her marriage to Phil, a Jew. Now, it is desire of Phil to live without the present emptiness and loneliness and wishes to have a “little love” and in return to get a little love from a woman. They have a six years old son called Paul. She is ever present in the lives of her former husband, her son, Paul and her friend Janet Hawakaya. Their married life lasted for only six years.

There is a conversation at length between Liz and John about the pet cat named Charlemagne. Then they change the topic. Later John asks. “Oh, Jesus, Phil—what do you find/ In—What do two men do together” (199)

Phil admits: “Had an affair! But John, now quaking/With anger barely in his rein/Blurs before Liz can speak again:” (201) Liz is aware of the homosexual affair between Phil and her brother Ed. Liz and Phil continue their conversation.

Ed says: “I hope/You two are suited for each other.” (208) Phil tells: “Oh, Liz—I love the bastard, but he is so in accessible” Liz replies “Phil, give Ed a chance/He’s young; I’m sure he’ll change his stance”. (209) Liz and Phil go together for a walk and there is a talk between them. Liz admits that: “---that she’s almost betraying/Lover, and brothers?” (212). It means that by marrying Phil, she is betraying John. At the same time she is also betraying her brother Ed, who had homosexual relation with Phil. Liz is attracted towards Phil and it is evident that Liz has turned away from John and with the passage of time affection between Liz and Phil developed. Mrs. Dorati tells her son Ed who is now 23 about his marriage. Ed suggests her mother
to think about her sisters Liz and Sue. She wants that her son should marry. Sue informs the mother that she has won the scholarship to go to Paris. Later John is aware of the reality that Liz has come to know that Phil and Ed’s affair had come to an end.

All the Doratis, their neighbours including the labours go to Church for Thanks Giving Ceremony. It is a pious day of the vineyard year. In the attic of the house, Sue and her boy-friend are busy in love making before the T.V. Mrs. Dorati requests the guests to join “Pruning Vine”. They are in the vineyard and extraction of the wine is in progress. There is good pruning---fine grapes, people from far and near come to taste the red wine. The daily routine is completed. It is a dusk time. In the house there are large number of unused stamps from Liechtenstein, bills for sacramental wine and two statutes of Buddha. It seems that John makes a proposal to Liz and but she replies that she wants some time to take decision because there is more in life than love.

Liz is reading a book and her parents are also in the room. Her mother says John is polite, well-dressed and bright. Liz closes the book and walks straight out of the room because she becomes emotional and is upset on hearing about marriage with John. Mrs. Dorati is now busy in the vineyard. They are talking with Liz. Father tells her not to be upset because the storm is over!

It is a morning time, John feels that today the world is at peace and thinks about Liz and has a strong feeling: “That Lizzie didn’t yield so
easily./Anticipation’s rather nice./This waiting adds a certain /spice. . .
./Inaction’s made me quite insightful! (229)

Elsewhere, John thinks that: “Life, liberty, and the pursuit/Of laziness. It’s quite delightful!”. (229) It is a social reality of the modern society of U.S.A. Americans’ principle of life today is ... “Maximum work in minimum time and maximum wages and maximum leisure time” to enjoy and they desire to lead a cozy and comfortable life full of material pleasures. Americans life story is “business success” for which they work hard. It is a well-known saying that White Americans have three qualities---which are Shrewdness, Cupidity and Bussiness mentality.

John notices change in Liz’s behaviour and attitude. He sees a letter for Liz on the table in the Hall. ‘Liz comes but does not open the letter, which is from Phil. It appears that Liz has decided to drop John as Claire has dropped Phil. He tells her to open the letter but she replies not now. Liz is rather in an angry mood and she says: “I love you—don’t abuse me—/John, I can’t take it—don’t accuse me(Of having an affair with Phil—/Don’t drive me to it—or I will.”(232) But the fact is that Liz has decided to severe relations with John. She starts weeping.

John packs his files and dresses then he leaves the flat where he was living with Liz. He leaves the house forever, as he understands the reality. He starts the car! It is a final separation of Liz and John. She decided in favour of Phil and deserted John. She selected Phil as a life partner though she was in love with John. Liz is a worldly-wise woman. She defends the case for Phil in the court. Father O’Hare was sentenced earlier but the judge
acquitted Phil. Later, they had lunch together. During conversation Liz says she will never marry John.

Then Phil makes a proposal “Liz, try me instead”. She asks:

“Is that wise?” and continues.
“Wise?” Sure, Phil—we don’t love each other
To borrow wisdom from my mother,
It’s love that makes the world round” (246)

On hearing her answer Phil replies that:

‘I’ve found
That love’s a pretty poor forecaster.
I love a woman—and was dropped.
I loved a man—and that too flopped.
Passion’s a prelude to disaster.
It’s something else that makes me sure.
Our bond can last five decades more. (246).

Liz accepts the proposal and decides to get married. She tells Phil:

... I like you too---
You’re stimulating, unimperious....
... you’ve opened up my view.
To the whole world... And I’d far rather
Marry a man who’s a good father
Than someone... I too don’t feel sure
I can trust passion any more”. (249).

Now they decided that their marriage would take place two weeks later. John received the invitation of Liz’s wedding which “burnt his heart to frost”. John writes a short note to Liz that he received her letter, it has been destroyed unread. He also informs her to decide about their furniture,
clothing etc. and if any other business remained, his lawyers would meet her and clear up the things for good. Phil sends a note but John does not read it because he feels that the marriage is “breach of trust”.

There is realistic portrait of marriage party. It is a scene outside the Church, where Liz and Phil got married. Both “The bride and groom—who’ve left the church/And vanished, some suggest, in search/Of a spot where, without inspection/By the lewd crowd, a private kiss/May sanctify their nuptial bliss”. (235). Mrs. Dorati is very happy on the occasion of marriage of her eldest daughter. She thinks ‘I never thought I’d see the sight/of Liz Dorati dressed in white” (235) Paul and Chuck are ready to cut the tall-tired ‘Wedding Cake’. Mrs. Weiss, the mother of Phil came down from Florida to attend the marriage ceremony of her son. There are large numbers of guests.

Among the guests at the Wedding Party hosted by Phil and Liz, there is a young man, Kim Tarvesh. He seems to be an Indian. This minor character is anagram of the novelist’s name. It is a caricature of Indian Research Student. Kim Tarvesh and Prof. Pratt is a representative of superficial academicians and they reveal the hollowness of empty academics. There is fine portrait of this guest at the Wedding Party. The novelist gives a real picture in words:

...Kim Tarvesh,
A joyless guest amid the jollity,
Dreams of this thesis—that dense mesh,
That spongy marsh of curly delta.
In which all year he waste and walters.

91
Kim Tarvesh mumbles “In all likelihood
An n-dimensional matrix could
Succinctly summarise society...
(Poor Kim Tarvesh-------we must recall
He’s an economist after all.) (239).

It is in fact a very fine self-portrait of the novelist. The party is in progress, and the guests are drinking Champagne. Liz too drinks champagne and tells her father Mr. Dorati. “I like Phil, and he likes and needs me./And then, there’s Paul too...and that leads me/To wonder about Charlemagne./We’ve married with such haste. I couldn’t/Hope for a better better half:/A good kind man who makes me laugh.” (240). Mrs. Dorati is ill. Liz talks with Phil.

John is lonely but in a gloomy and depressed mood. He is busy in his work during the daytime but as the night falls, his heart is full of grief and his mind is full of wavering thoughts. He remembers Janet again. Time passes on. It is a winter season in San Francisco. Liz and Phil send their New Year’s gift of “Italian Alabaster Dove” to John. It is mailed back without response, with words “Thanks Love”. Liz sends his Valentine Card but John feels that she has tried to mock at his grief. Throughout the season his mind was tormented and was always in a depressed mood and he used to visit frequently Mixed Single Bar, The Winking Owl. Here, John meets Bjorn, the Swedish sprinter, whom he had met at his House-Warming Party, and had gazed him lasciviously at Rose but his response was cold. John seduced and lured to sleep Lucinda of the Liquid Sheep. Later on John used to date her “for a change of bliss”. One night Bjorn finds John with little “doe-eyed lass”. He talks with a lithe nymphet dressed in red. Next day
Bjorn tells Lucinda and Jan comes to know and in turn she talks to Sue but in vain.

Jan comes to see John at The Winking Owl and from there they go to Café Trieste. Jan thinks about John that: “He’s forever riling/Me—why don’t I dislike this man?/Politically he’s close to Nero. For tolerance he scores a zero” (255) She is aware of the fact that John lacks tolerance. She talks with John. She laughs and says “We’re both fools, I guess.” John says: “If I was rude,” she is thinking continuously about John. She feels “I know why I adored him. Not for his looks . . . well, that’s half true . . . It’s simply that he loved me too.” On next Sunday they go together on picnic. Later, next weekend also they go together by the seaside. Again John and Jan with the passage of time come close. The Sunday is dark and drizzling and they thought that they would be wet through and both would come down with flue. John adds “And die”. They feel that they are doomed. They would be dead. Jane talks of Death and says “Drizzled to death, and in our prime—/With not a soul to care a dime . . .” (36)

John’s nights and Jan’s days are free and their weekend afternoon meeting are rare. He is in a gloomy mood and always brooding. In his eyes there is no trace of compromise or reconciliation to talk or mention of his erstwhile friends makes his spirit burn. There is a talk between John and Jan. Jan says: “That first love’s best by definition/Love’s mere word. Though it’s a blast/To screen old reels, the past’s the past./If it intrudes, it makes him queasy./Signed once, he will not yield again/Words that might cause him future pain”. (40)
John's love relationship with Jan is revived and he finds himself into unknown arms of love. In reality, John's love for Jan is rekindled and they sleep together and his cheek is against her breast and unagitated more at rest. John and Jan are busy in tender lovemaking. They pass their time together and dance at night. So the days pass. They see a Hitchcock matinee and the other day they go for kitch hunting. They move into a sexual relationship when there is true communication between them.

On, June, 10th begins Jan's exhibition of Sculpture of Bronzes, Plaster, Wood and Stone in Marcus Ladd Hall is held and she is glad and full of pride The art critic of The Clarion bitterly criticised her works and called them bland, themeless, unsettled, vacuous, inbred, cold, marrowless, unethenic, dead, formal, immature, schemeless and feeble. Jan has ambition for fame... Next day, Liz with Phil pay visit to the exhibition and has talk with Jan. Liz informs her that Paul dubs her 'Doubly Lovely' and she is in her sixth month. Jan invites them to the party, which she has arranged on Friday at 8 p.m. at her residence.

The exhibition is a great success. And Jan wants to reach the venue of her Get Together Party in time. Jan was in the car driven by Lamonts. On Friday night, there is traffic mess. Jan, the host is absent and the get together party at her residence is in full swing. Phil and Liz are also present but nobody seems to care about Jan's absence. John receives a phone from police----John is stunned and repeats the words "Next of Kin?" and sinks.

In freak highway, she met with an accident and she was seriously injured and taken to hospital. Later, she died. It was on Friday night that Jan
was killed like Jesus Christ. Two other persons, Mat and Joan Lamont were also killed. It is a symbol of Crucifixtion of Jesus Christ. As Phil and Liz arrive at the party and there was a possibility of reconciliation of John with them but he receives the news of death of Jan and as such he retreats again into loneliness. Jan is dead. A month has passed. The car driver was a high school boy. He was tried in the court and he pleaded guilty. His licence was suspended for a year because the judge thought “The dead are dead; and why destroy/The youth—of a boy?”

John is in a gloomy mood. The reminiscences of the past life, which he passed with Janet, haunted him. Large number of people flock to the Janet’s exhibition at Marcus Ladd. Her works of art is praised. The critic of ‘Clarion’ now praises her work of Art and wrote his judgement. He remarks that in Hayakawa’s work there is a classic leanness and strength. The critic also applauded her work for startling sureness, maturity and sense of form. He pronounces the judgement that: Hayakawa will rank with Moore and Kurosawa, /Or even—/With Pollock, Ashbery, and Cage. (298)

A baby is born to Liz in Sept. Then Liz sends a letter to John. She addresses:

“Dear John,

We have a son
We hope that you’ll be his godfather.
We’ve called him John. We would for rather
Have you than any other friend.
Please speak to us, John. In the end,
We’ll all be old or dead or dying.
My mother died two weeks ago.
We thought perhaps you might not know.
Phil and I send our love.

Liz

(306)
On reading the letter, John feels that his heart revisits dead. Depleted by his pain, he slowly walks to Jan’s desk. What didn’t loss lost her voice, can almost hear her saying:

“I’m with you, John, You’re not alone.  
Trust me, my friend; there is the phone.  
It isn’t me you are obeying.  
Pay what are your own heart’s arrears.  
Now clear your throat; and dry these tears.” (309)

John’s redemption is effected by Jan, who is ever present in his life as she has played a significant role in the past. After Jan’s death, John’s mind is tormented by the fact that he never articulated his love for her. He is unable to come to terms with her death and therefore with his own life. By chance he comes to know that it was Jan, who had awakened his interest even then and that she had always loved him. It is this realisation alongwith the awakening in his heart that prods him to friends for loving them again. Therefore, it is finally Jan’s death that enables him to discover the love in his own heart and to overcome the differences and barriers he had erected against all those who loved him. Angelie Multani remarks that:

In many ways, the new family is based on more traditional values than the ‘old’ family represented in the text. Mrs. Dorati believes that it is ‘love which makes the world go round’ [11.20] but Liz and Phil find that romantic love is simply not enough for an enduring relationship. Family values-companionship, brother-hood, parental love is far more desirable for a steady life.

Eventually then, the metrosexual reaffirms the traditional, even if it reframes the discourse. The older set values are re-articulated in a modern
vocabulary and re-emphasised through the simple technique of show, rather than tell. The happy ending of Phil and Liz, the unhappy end of Ed and the tragic (?) end of Jan, which paves the way for the redemption offered to John. The values embodied by Mrs. Dorati are upheld and Mrs. Craven, the ‘modern’ mother-figure goes flying off into the sunset...."4

Vikram Seth’s novel presents a range of the diverse and possible kinds of love and sex between Man and Woman and Man and Man that exist in a modern American Society. And their passions, feelings and emotions and experiences evoked by those loves depicted realistically and range of love and sex which are in practice in ‘modern’ U.S.A. society. The American metropolis has its own unique culture and lifestyle. There are various choices made by the different characters in respect of love and sex are presented. It portrays their capability and ability or incapability and inability to lead contended, happy or fulfilling lives. The landscapes of the locations, the social settings, the values, politics and customs, food, traditions, weather, atmosphere and pets (animals) play significant roles in the lives of the characters. From the beginning to the end of novel there is a premium placed on friendship and companionship rather than love and passion. Almost every relationship is doomed to be a failure, only that relationship which is based on mutual respect, understanding, adjustment, liking, companionship and even with a spirit of compromise that come to fruition and survive.

Edward Dorati is a younger brother of Liz and Sue. He is 23, warm-hearted, full of fun, energetic and has homosexual relations with Phil. Ed is
caught in a dilemma between his religious faith and his natural homosexual preference. He shares a tender relationship with Phil, but is unable to grapple with his inner consciousness, as consequence of his Roman Catholic Christian upbringing.

In modern American society sexual relationship between Man and Man as well as Woman and Woman has become a cult and it is a social reality and even the marriage between Man and Man is recognised and legalised by law. It is perhaps the first English novel on homo-sexuality where Vikram Seth very frankly in a bold manner and realistically portrays the homosexual relation between Phil and Ed. “They lie, unspeaking. Phil thinks,” Why/Be so uptight? He’s a great guy./I’ve never bothered with convention./God! It’s a year that I’ve been chaste . . .”/And puts his arm around Ed’s waist./Now, just as things were getting tenser,/And Ed and Phil were making love./Ed yawns and half gets out of bed,/Returns and nuzzles Philip’s shoulder,/Puts on his jeans, and goes to get”. (88,89).

Phil had sex with Ed and the novelist mirrors homosexual relationship: “They sleep. (There is no other option.)/Their ectothermic chaperone,/Taking to this in-house adoption,/Sinks into slumber like a stone.” (90). Later Ed goes to the Church and makes confession of his sin. It is evident that he is a man of conscience and also a sensitive man. He is aware of the fact that homosexuality is a sin according to religion and he knows that sexual relation between Man and Man is not permissible in Christianity and homosexuality is unnatural. Ed says that:
“Love’s only true voice, Jesus Christ,  
Who came to earth and sacrificed  
His life for me . . . for me, a sinner.”  
“The night is generous and warm.  
Phil looks at his good-looking lover’s  
Face as he prays: its casque of peace  
Cleansed of all turbulent caprice  
And guilt, and as they pull the covers  
Over themselves” (94-95)

Again that night Phil and Ed had sex. In the end, Phil says,” Ed, I’m glad for these three evenings that we’ve had . . ..” Homosexuality is a trait in the personality of Phil before marriage and even after marriage, Phil used to have sex with a guy at college once or twice. Even after his marriage with Claire, he used to have sex with other men. Phil recollects that Ed fell into his trap of homosexuality speedily and vulnerable young man had always attracted him. Phil was eager, confused, intent, abstracted but passionate both in speech and bed. Ed was restless but he was calm and lies in Phil’s arms. Then Phil questions about sex relation between Man and Man and asks Ed “What’s wrong with sex? . . .” Ed ponders over homosexuality and Christian morals and he tells Phil that

“The Bible says, if a man lie  
With a man, he must surely die.  
It’s in Leviticus, chapter 20,  
Verse 13—which means it’s as true  
For me, a Christian, as for you.” (97).

On hearing his arguments Phil laughs and contemptuously remarks that The Bible is an old Book. It is evident that Phil has no faith in religious morals though he is a Jew by faith. He continues his arguments. He tells Phil that his body is not his alone but it is God’s instrument and His Bliss is in
His Will and its perfection resides in love and the chief purpose is to procreate human race, all other uses fall short, it is an abuse. Phil asks him what is he proving that two men or two women can’t have sexual relation. They continue their discussion. In the end of their talk, he tells Phil to invite him down to his place and Phil replies positively. Then there is complete silence and the friends shake hands and turn away.

Then on the other day Phil and Ed meet and had free talk with him on homosexuality. Ed says: “That I just like your body?” “Yes.” replies Phil and adds “I like it, sure.” And he further tells that “You’re a nice guy as well. Don’t smile/But all this talk—let’s do without it./This vivisection hurts my head./I say we ought to go to bed.” (120). Again they sleep together and had a sex that night. Next morning, Ed attends Latin Mass in St. Ann Chapel. His soul is sick and he thinks about sin and concentrate “On unoriginal thoughts of sin/Confession helps to ease the pricking/Of his relentless conscience”. (122) Phil requests Ed to stay and he stays that night and had sex with him and next day Ed leaves the house with his bag and pet.

When Phil and Ed meet, they start talking. Phil remarks: “The affairs of men rest still incertain”. (177) Phil recollects his previous loves, especially his former wife Claire. Then they want to sleep. Ed says that:

“I love you, Phil—but my desire
Goes beyond sex. Lovers indeed
Must shed more than their clothes. They need
To shed their bodies. Flesh and fire
Can meet but can’t merge. It’s a state
Only our souls can consummate”.
“If lovers cannot cease caressing,
Isn't it that they long to find
Their bodies' unity expressing
A truer unison of mind?
For us this oneness is reality” (182).

Ed frowns and says “I can strive for maturity of heart”/Phil tells Ed that “While in its sweet maturity/your lovely body dries unused?/Your sell---
and God’s gift/ --- --- / Does earthly beauty just exist/For contemplation?
Why unduly,/Would God create a perfect form/If not to make our lives more
warm? (186) On hearing his arguments on Love, Phil replies: “That you
should need forgiveness. None/Of those stock yarns of explanation/About
the Fall of Man will do./What have done? And I mean you”. (182) And Phil
further says: “You can confess: your soul is sick” (187) Ed replies: “Is that
the best you can distil/About religious feeling, Phil?” (188) Phil replies that
“No, Ed. It's that you act/Like some god damned religious tract./One day
we're lovers, and the next/I'm gagged with sacramental text.” (188)

Ed is a young man with germs of goodness in his heart. He is a man of
conscience and the dormant goodness in his heart awakens. And now he is
fully resolved that homosexuality is a sin and he returns to the fold of
religion. He says: “I just can't, Phil If I'd/Not tried to keep our love
platonic, / I'd have debased myself, and been /False to my reason, and
unclean”. (189) On hearing his arguments, Phil replies that “The body's
turbulence and lust/Must yield to reason's interventions./Chrysostom,
following Plato, mentions-”/“Fuck Chrysostom. Fuck all the fools/Who play
the game by others’ rules . . ./Do you remember our first night?” (189). Phil
and Ed are in bed and they stop their discussion. There is change of heart in
respect of Ed. “They change unsleeping/On the same bed they lie apart---
/Ed falls asleep at last, but Phil,/At two, at three, is wakeful will/Wakeful by
the loved body-/-untouched apart".\textit{(191)} At dawn, Phil sleeps and when he wakes up, Ed had gone. Ed and Phil are separated and their homosexual relationship comes to an end! Angelie Multani rightly remarks:

"Ed constantly posits as an ‘other’: When he first argues with Phil he says to himself, “Fall for a Bi, and you’ll get burned” [5.10]. Separating himself through labels from the person he has fallen in love with, Ed wallows in his loneliness and in his belief that he is doomed to be alone. He cannot adapt himself with any group, with the heterosexual, (since he is homosexual), with the bisexuals, or even with the homosexuals:

\begin{quote}
I’ve been around gay bars-that scene
Where if you’re handsome, people paw you
I guess you’ve never had claw you
As if you were a hunk of meat ...(5.18)
\end{quote}

\textit{(109)}

On the theme of homosexuality as presented in the novel, Angela Atkins rightly points out that:

\begin{quote}
All of Seth’s novels feature a homosexual relationship, but sexual orientation forms only part of a wider discussion about the place of sex in society and in the lives of individuals."
\end{quote}

\textit{6}

If a friendship is based on mutual trust, tolerance, adjustment and understanding then it becomes a reliable principle of lasting relationship. The search for a family or group to replace the traditional family is something which most of the characters have in common. Again, it is their ability and capability to find a place within a ‘family group’, which either supports their ability to function effectively, or displays the inability. John
strongly feels the need of friendship or a loving partner, or a family to support him as he succumbs to his loneliness at the beginning of the novel. His renewing ties with Janet represents his basic need but at the same time points out his lack of proper understanding of other persons, his intolerance and insensitivity. Unless John overcomes his shortcoming, he is unable to find a place within any group and family.

Ed too suffers from the loneliness of an individual, who is unable to reconcile his personal beliefs with a practical functionality in society. He is a devout Catholic with homosexual tendencies. However, his inability to see the other side of homosexuality in the light of religious beliefs, or to reconcile his sexual desires and religious convictions drive him outside every fulfilling relationship, and leaves him alone in the end. He is rather a shy man and hesitates to talk with anyone. It is Ed, who asks to be introduced to Phil at Liz and John’s House Warming Party but once the introduction is done he is “reduced to numbness”.

Ed’s religious belief draws him apart from his partner, Phil. Ed is unable to give up either his homosexual preferences or his faith and as such he flounders between the two extremes of his life. Phil finds it strange that a loving God would object to sex between two Men but it is this very inability of Ed to see other persons as simply human beings that form the harshest indictment of his character. Ed has neither the commitment to hold his religious faith nor the will to give up his homosexual desires. In fact, time and again Ed returns to Phil to have sex only to burn in self-flagellation and hate afterwards. Finally, his religious conviction emerges victorious over sin.
Americans as well as Europeans have given social status to GAY, LESBIAN, HOMOSEXUAL, BISEXUAL, TRANS’S GENDER instep of the religious negations barring such activities for fear that such relations would shamble the family institution. The writer seems to drive at this point to preserve the tender thread of male-female relationships and heterosexual relations sanctity by nature and by religion as well the only way to feel the pulse of Western society locating oneself, possessing oneself as an antenna or a satellite.

All these characters are descendants of immigrants from different countries settled permanently in U.S.A. John Brown is an Englishman, whose father lives in Kent, England. Phil Weiss, a Jew, Janet Hawakaya, a third generation Japanese immigrant, Elisabeth and Edward Dorati are Italian immigrants. No character has a personal hangover of displacement but has overwhelming loneliness, the strong sense of a loss of companionship, lack of adjustment, tolerance and understanding. They chose their careers, paths, or chose to reject the conventional profession. They suffer from no angst about their insecurity in America. John develops a strong sense of anguish and has earnest desire for deep companionship, friendship and true love. Each character is rather a symbol of one particular aspect of love, of friendship and companionship.

John represents indictment of United States of America’s Capitalist and Consumerist life. The modern American life is deeply entrenched in conservative politics and has no flexibility in understanding other’s point of view and lack of tolerance and adjustment with another person’s opinion and point of view. It is in fact a cautionary tale of the dangers of rigidity and lack
of respect in understanding and tolerance in day to day life. Americans have
to follow the principles of adjustment, understanding and flexibility in
discussion with society and community and dealing with others individuals
if they desire to pass their lives happily and smoothly. They have to put into
practice the principle of “give and take” in their lives. John is a successful
young man, who has ‘everything except love and true companion’. However, when John does find a true companion and someone who loves
him it seems to come fairly low in the list of his priorities. John is an
example of young American, who is in need of other persons more as a foil
for his loneliness and to add to his list of possessions than as friends or
lovers to cherish and grow with.

Phil’s marriage with Claire Cabot, a Christian is one such relationship
that is doomed as a failure right from the beginning. Claire like in her son’s
(Paul) life; she “remains absent” physically in the novel but she is ever
present in Phil’s mind. Phil, a Jew and Claire, a Christian started out as a
couple in love, when he was 20 years and she was 21 years respectively.
Their marriage was unconventional in most ways, going against Claire’s,
religion as well as her family’s background.

The break-up of marriage of Phil and Claire foreshadows that of John
and Liz even before the latter couple has formally become one. When John
and Liz embark on their relationship, they are giddy and overwhelmingly in
love. The novelist seems to says that such a romantic passion in love ends in
failure and “modern romance” is also some kind of factor, “something”
which destroys reason and sense in long run of life.
Phil and Liz hastily get married because of their practical, realistic outlook towards life, enduring relationship, friendship, understanding and adjustment and perpetuate the family rather than passion. They have in their family, Phil’s son, Paul and Chuck, Jan’s cats, Link and Cuff and Liz’s cat Charlmagane, all living together in amity.

The novelist believes that only such love relationship between man and woman survives which is based on understanding, adjustment, compromise and even sacrifice. The relationship that begins on the ‘modern’ note of sexual or romantic passion is sooner or later disintegrated, whether it is that of Claire and Phil, Phil and Ed or Liz and John. Liz marries Phil because she feels that she owes it to her mother, who has a terminal disease to perpetuate the family and she chooses Phil because “Marry a man who’s a good father”. She comes to conclusion unlike the flower-selling girl in George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion*. She desires to marry ‘a father like figure’, who has experience of marriage as well as he is a man who had sexual relation with women and men and has married previously and fathered a son. He should be an active man who has the capacity to control and satisfy a man and woman. Phil is a worldly wise man and he is sure that his marriage with Liz will endure for five decades or more because it is not based on passion but on reason and worldly wisdom, smooth functionality of life and successful working of married life.

The novel also portrays another reality of modern American society that Man and Woman keep pets (animals and birds) and love them. In fact, these pets (animals) fulfil the vacuum of a true “human companion” or “loving partner” or “real friend” in their lives. These pets have peculiar and
special relation with Man and Woman and they give great significance for loving treatment of these pets. There are five major characters in the novel, out of which three have their pets. Only John Brown and Philip Weiss have no pets. There is an elaborate description of the movements and actions of these pets and their relationship with them. In reality, the interactions between the characters and pets too are also mirrored.

Janet Hawakaya has two cats, one is called **Cuff** and the other is named **Link**. Lizabeth Dorati has a disgruntled puss, **Charlemagne**, is a Siamese cat. Her brother Edward Dorati has a pet, a green iguana. In fact, these pets are like characters and they play a significant role in the lonely, discontented, and companionless lives of the human beings!

The lives of major characters are full of loneliness, companionlessness and vacuity and as such these pets are just like companion or partner and they are in fact substitutes of human beings. In the hypermodern, high-tech society of U.S.A., they apparently lead a cosy and materialistically comfortable life full of pleasures and joys but inwardly they lead a discontented life deprived of spiritual happiness and real joy in absence of any human companion or perfect mate or a loving partner. In their lives there is vacuum which is partly filled up by these pets. When John Brown meets his former lady-love, Janet Hawakaya at the **Shu JIng** after a long period, he first enquires: “How are the Cats? And what about her? And the sculpture!”(14)

Elisabeth Dorati keeps a Siamese cat called **Charlemagne**. Liz is little lonely in her city flat with only “the trusty Charlemagne, her cat, a fearsome
tabby as companion”. John meets Liz “And soon, despite the
drastic/Dissonances of Charlemagne, the loving pair make love again.” (74) John has no liking for the cat. He says to Liz “your cat pissed on my
tux”...Poor Charlemagne...Nonsense. That cat should be castrated...John
thinks, “Drat/that mangy misbegotten cat./I hate the beast, and I can’t fake
it...” (While Charlemagne, from the back room,/yowls out symmetric spell
of doom.) Charlemagne in his guts and sinews/Detests John still...And
mutter “It’s cat or me/...Liz Lizzie, darling, cant you see”. (192). Liz says:
“John, darling, try to understand him, he’s a brave, fine and useful cat.”
(193) But John wants to get rid of the cat and he remarks that “Your cat
freaks are quite simply, crazy;/ You’d weep more tears for one lost pet.
/Than for a flood in Sulawesi” (193).

John tells the truth to Phil that “---more than me ---Liz loves that cat”. Liz says:“I know you never loved that cat, John”.(196) The reality is that Liz
loves the cat deeply and John hates the cat from the core of his heart. This
pet in reality is a member of the family like a human being!

In Section Nine, the novelist remarks that “Liz looks about cats and
iguana/Lie sunk in somolent Nirvana/In sun light”. (227) Liz’s cat
Charlemagne, is intensely jealous and an ageing cat. He feels insecure by
John’s intrusion into the house of Liz. The writer says that “How does John
dare, the loathed intruder,/The breach the bounds of his domain/Usurp his
realm, or to be cruder,/To rape his solitary reign/Inviolate since when, as a
kitten/Lost, ear-torn orphan—he had smitten/Liz’s soft schoolgirl heart with
love?”. (132) John is troubled by Charlemagne because the cat scratches
his trousers, rips an official report and urinates near his head. John suggests
to Liz that “However, Liz, you’ve got to take him/To see a cat psychiatrist/I know a good one, and she’ll make him/No, don’t look stunned—such things exist/I should explain this. My apologies!/Well, cats, like humans, have psychologies/And so—.” (138) In fact, John suggests Liz to take Charlemagne to a cat psychiatrist for treatment!

After Phil’s marriage with Liz, he becomes very busy and his responsibilities and liabilities also increase. Later, after the death of Janet, the number of his family members also increases. His diurnal work of household leaves little leisure time. He compares man’s life with the pet and even Phil “looks with envious admiration/At the immobile Charlemagne.”

Ed happened to procure a green Iguana from a store which is a large tree climbing Lizard of tropical America. He calls his pet Schwarzeneggar and its diet is “Salads, a larvae---and bone meal.”----- Iguana is five feet long from tail to snout. When Ed and Phil want to sleep, Phil enquires about Iguana “Where he will sleep?” Ed replies “Beneath Our bed.” (94). Ed takes great care of his pet Iguana: “He goes to nurture his iguana/ ‘With three persimmons, a sultana,/Some lettuce and an unripe yam/ (A favourite, with dab of jam)” (96). The warty beast observes Ed coldly and finally his pet obtains his avocado and ready to walk. The writer uses “Iguana” as a phallic symbol for Ed. He frequently feels guilty of committing the sin of homosexuality.

In the end “Since Jan is dead----/Survived by nothing but two mournful/Cats,...”(296) What a pathetic condition of Jan, a modern American woman that on her death there is no one i.e. is a relative or friend to mourn her death except her two pet cats!
After the death of Jan, her two pet cats Link and Cuff are looked after Liz and Phil. "And Liquid Sheep have a new drummer;/And Cuff and Link have a new home/And the Poor Cuff and Link find a meagre Peace/From Chuck’s assaults and Paul’s caprice. (296) And in the end, Phil thinks that "It’s abrupt, its numbing./Last Angst, it was Paul and me.../And now it’s two, plus two, plus three./Seven! And soon an eight is coming". (297) Phil’s family members which includes pets also increase to seven! "An even Charlemagne’s less scrappy./Since Cuff and Link moved in. That’s strange/I thought cats....odd how things can change.". (296) All the cats—Link and Cuff, haughty and Charlemagne, a lowly winery cat, live together harmoniously in the same house! Mala Pandurang comments on this aspect of the novel.

“There are a number of tongue-in-cheek comments in his description of the relationships that the characters share with their respective pets.” Phil’s reaction to Ed’s Iguana, with its parallel in John’s dislike of Liz’s cat, as a symptom of intolerance. The equal insistent need in Liz and Ed to cling on to their pets become a symbol of their fear of letting go. ---discusses the ‘human-animal connection’ that lies in the battle of conflicting emotions of jealously and kindness in the parallel world of cats, and reads the problematic inter-cat relationships in term of questions of class conflict. The royal Charlemagne is ultimately usurped and downgraded to a lower perch in the restructured Weiss household after Liz marries Phil. Jan’s cats (Cuff and Link) are equally pedigreed and manage to bring out a harmonious settlement between the haughty Charlemagne and a lowly winery cat!”

110
The other major motif of the novel is World Peace. There is discussion among the characters in Chapters Four, Six and Seven. In Chapter Seven the members of Anti-Nuclear War Movement organise a Peaceful Protest March. In the Chapter Fourth, the theme of Anti-Nuclear War is introduced; Phil says “That mankind with crazy ways/—Bach, Rembrandt, Socrates, and Jesus—/Will burn to ash and swivelling haze?/That Red Square, like our children’s creche,/Will soon be charred or ulcerous flash?/And then, when the soft radiation/Descends on—/Trees, whales, birds, wolves—the birthless void—/Think how the crown of earth’s creation/Will murder that which gave him birth./Ripping out the slow womb of earth (82). The Anti-Nuclear, non-violent protesters are celebrating. “Fall’s Sombre equinoctial entry” (150) which suggests that is perhaps Hiroshima Day. There is carnival atmosphere. The war is a ‘disgrace’ says John, he further remarks that U.S.A. is “the high priest of humanity.” (143)

Next Sunday Phil visits John and Liz and they discuss about the Anti-Nuclear Protest March. The members of Anti-Nuclear War Movement organise Protest March at the Lungless Labs, the American Centre for Defence Research where Nuclear weapons are manufactured. There is heated discussion on nuclear weapons between Phil and John. John is strong supporter of United States of America and its nuclear armament policy. John points great ills of the Soviet Union’s Communist Bloc... i.e. totalitarianism, lack of individual’s freedom, liberty and democracy and suppression of human rights. John, a staunch nationalist, defends America’s Nuclear Armament policy. It is a kind of apologia of U.S.A. on the behalf of so called “Free World.” The discussion between John and Phil on nuclear
weapons is in fact political. It is based on the values of humanity rather than politics. When this novel was written there were two super powers viz. U.S.A. and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Russia) and there was rivalry between the Capitalist Bloc and Communist Bloc for superiority and leadership of the world.

Philip points out that in Soviet Russia there is no freedom for expression in case of writer, poet, press and individual too have no freedom. There is dreaded Soviet Russia Govt. Secret Agency, K.G.B. like America’s Secret Agency, C.I.A. On the other hand in America there is freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom of religion freedom of work etc. Phil says... “As for the apocalypse: I’d call this/Not theirs or ours. Humankind/Extends beyond our grim theocracies/Or constitutional plutocracies./This world of our, this atmosphere/All of us breathe.../...March upon that place, /That hearted of the missile race Named Lungless.” (140). The novelist calls the factories “Lungless Labs” where Nuclear Missiles are produced. He further remarks that “And stain our waking with more sorrow.” “The night of hate covers earth,” and “That night of hate grows dense around us.” Phil asks the question: “What, after all, is earth’s creation?/A virus in the morgue of space.” After the Nuclear War, the condition of the earth will be disastrous and the entire humanity will be annihilated.

Americans “Lungless Labs” i.e. Missile with Nuclear-heads manufacturing factories are well guarded by the security forces. On the day of protest march more than two thousand persons from all walks of life join it. The writer realistically portrays the scene. Like a painter, he portrays the
people in the procession with banners, placards, flags etc. He gives true picture:

"Fatigues, down jackets, and bandannas,  
Handicapped veterans in wheelchairs,  
American flags and rainbow banners,  
A band for Sousa, priests for prayers,  
A replica of the grim reaper,  
Placards—"I am my brother’s keeper,”  
"Nice folks don’t use nukes,” “work for life,  
Not death,” and a huge “Strive with strife”—(152)

The media covers the event and T.V. crew shoots the March of Protesters and there is ‘live coverage’ by T.V. The protesters give the pamphlets entitled “Common sense About Our Common Fate” to T.V. Reporters. The March continues and on both the sides of road. Large number of people witness the march and among the onlookers Liz is also present with her pet, Charlemagne. The Protest March reaches the destination where a stage with the microphones is ready and the assembled people are to be addressed by the leaders of the movement. The leader, Father O’Hare, is sixty years old and he runs a newspaper Truth. His speech consists of 24 pages. He delivers that speech which is in fact a passionate appeal and fine piece of oratory. Father O’Hare, the priest, who is the spokesperson for the Anti-Nuclear protesters, makes a convincing and very effective appeal. There is no contradiction in Father’s faith and loves all human beings and has value for all relationships, irrespective of political conviction, country colour or race. The Father sticks to that commitment and stands up for what he believes in. He appeals the people to transcend their differences and to
unite in the movement against a possible nuclear abyss which will annihilate human race from this planet. He says Americans’ Will in Life is:

“To race/As lemming-like, mankind is racing
To liquidation or to face
With what small strength we have, the massive
Oil by inertia and by Hate
And the smooth silver of the state?” (157)

And there is hate among the Capitalists and Communist Blocs. He warns that “Hate is a subtle weed; vagaries/Of soil and time give it new growth.” He calls all Christians of different sects Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists and Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Atheists to raise their voice of protest against the use of Nuclear Weapons in War. Father O’Hare says “On nuclear arms demands a freeze.” Father points out that some people says:

“We wish to abrogate
The constitutional hiatus
Between religion and the state.
The scripture for their vision is
‘Give unto Caesar what is his.’” (159 and 160)

He further continues his arguments and says that “Things that are God’s to God, as well/As stocking Caesar’s citadel.” (160). Then the Father asks that:

“What Caesar, battling for democracy,
Unasked, relinquished his regime?
What cotton king decried slavery?
Judgement from Congress, from our vested
Arms gluttons—from the White House down—
We’re living in cloud-cuckoo-town.
We cannot wait for legislation.
There is no shame in following
Thoreau and Anthony and King,
The old traditions of a nation
That once, two hundred years before,
In its own birth resisted law." (161)

Father O’Hare gives a realistic picture of prevailing rivalry between the Capitalist Bloc led by U.S.A. and Communist Bloc with its leader, Soviet Russia. Father O’ Hare says:

“Ten hostages is terrorism;
“A million, and it’s strategy.
To ban books is fanaticism;
To threaten in totality
All culture and all civilization,
All humankind and all creation,
This is a task of decorous skill
And needs high statesmanship and will.
It takes a deal of moral clarity
To see that it is right to blitz”

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“Each Russian family to bits
Because their leaders’ muscularity
--Quite like our own—on foreign soil
Threatens our vanity or ‘our’ oil.” (163,161).

The root cause of rivalry between America and Russia is not only economical but also for control over the petrol producing countries. Both the blocks want to have friendship of the petrol producing countries. Beside rubber, tin, oil is the most essential article for War. Even in peace time for the modern “dazzling” Western Civilisation and cultured nations, oil, petrol and its products are must for these so called economically advanced countries! The petrol and other oil products are most essential to keep their supremacy in military, economics, politics and culture. The devastating
effects of radioactive fallout in the Nuclear War will seep through the entire earth and all living things will perish. Human race will be completely annihilated from this planet. As such, Father O’Hare calls for ‘moral clarity to counteract the mechanisation country, which is solely responsible for the nuclear armament race in the world. Father O’Hare like a great orator very wisely in the name of religion puts up a question to the audience:

“Quo warranto? By what authority, 
I ask you in the wounds of Christ, 
Does strength confer superiority 
Over God’s earth?” (194).

He says in the name of patriotism, superiority and vanity, Americans want to wipe out human race from this planet. Father recalls that in autumn 1962, when Soviet Russia deployed its Naval War Fleet fully equipped with Nuclear Weapons to Cuba, a small Communist Nation near U.S.A. sea. There was possibility of Third World War i.e. Nuclear War between Soviet Russia and U.S.A. but the Russia’s Naval War Fleet halted in sea before the American’s sea “to cut off Cuba”, otherwise Father O’Hare rightly remarks that:

“And our own Manly President would 
Have finished off mankind for good.” (164).

Later, he puts up another question: “Is not wise, let me ask, ‘How dieth/The wise man’. He gives the answer ‘As the fool’.” Then he says two hundred years ago there was a war i.e. American Civil War (1851-54) between Southern States Forces and “Union Forces” of United States of America on the question of giving freedom to Negro Slaves. He says that:

“From history” -------/“We may learn two lessons:
How slowly—and how fast—things change. 
Whether the permanent quiescence
Of fear—or life—occurs, it’s strange” (168).

Concluding his speech Father O’Hare asks emphatically the American people:

“Life and death... therefore choose life.’
Or, ... ‘Strive with strife.’” (169).

Father O’Hare’s speech is applauded and the audience gives him standing ovation and the demonstrators cross the line of demarcation and lay themselves down in a row. They are arrested by the police and taken away in the buses. They loudly sing **Give Peace a Chance**.

After Father’s speech, a protester speaks about “Nuclear Witness”, other on “Crime—or Sin” and a doctor on “Fallout and Fitness” and many other persons present their views on why they decided to protest today? Liz talks with Phil and tells realistically that if half the Nuclear bombs will be exploded then the overload of Nitrogen Oxide will gobble half of the Ozone and it will bring vast destruction of birds, animals living objects, all the species and mankind. Phil says that: “We humans, that is—it may serve us/Right for our silliness and hate/But what we cannot vindicate/Is killing all the other fauna/That have developed, on the earth/On field or floe, in every corner/From Maine to Thule, from Minsk to Perth./They’ll die” (177). It was evening time. Phil and Ed talks about the Protest March. The protesters are arrested and they were presented in the court, the judge sentenced them 10 days imprisonment and they were taken to **Lungless Country Jail** where
they passed ten days. They found the prison a “Paradise” where they met like-minded people and worked out plans with equanimity, consensusly and they coined a new verb “to consensue”.

Philip Weiss does not criticise openly about the ambition of United States of America to retain its hegemony in the nuclear power game as well as world’s political game of superiority and leadership. He does not condemn America’s colonialism, apartheid, slavery and ethnic cleansing as well as America’s invention of germ warfare, weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons etc. Americans have plundered many small and weak countries, snuffed out civilisations and exterminated entire population. Today, Americans have more money, more grains, more military power, more natural resources except oil and petrol. These Americans and Western countries are totally dependent on oil producing nations even for the oil required for their domestic purpose and but they are proud of the fact that they have more arms and armaments and they can wipe out human race from the face of this planet in a day! In reality, it reveals Americans’ arrogance and vanity. Mala Pandurang rightly comments:

“In the heated debate between Phil and John, Seth demonstrates how the nuclear weapons doctrine has woven itself into the fabric of John’s nationalism, and has established its own legitimacy. John stoutly defends the United States’ policy of nuclear armament. He presents as apologia of the United States on behalf of the ‘free world’. While Phil argues passionately against John’s position, and for disarmament, his stance is apolitical. He speaks in general terms of mankind’s failure to take responsibility for the destiny of the
universe and to understand the implications of nuclear warfare. Phil calls for peace and human compassion, but fails to critique the attempts of the United States to retain hegemonic control either in the nuclear arms race or in today's 'global' culture based on capital, especially in the brave new world of the Silicon Valley that are mushrooming worldwide.”

Vikram Seth is a writer of Postmodern Age and as such there are elements of postmodernism in his work. He is a genius writer. The history of every literature is a witness to the fact that rebellion always resurrects itself in every age and in every country. The rebellion rises phoenix-like from the ashes of repression and mundane to manifest itself in all Fine Arts including literature. In fact that rebellion manifests itself particularly in his first novel. The Golden Gate is prime illustration of subversive rebellion in Indian English fiction of the nineties. Though "Professor, Publisher and Critic each voiced their doubts". He is in fact one of the successful challengers of established and prevailing literary traditions. Interestingly enough tradition itself is used as a model method to challenge tradition. In form, he uses the broader base of novel merely as a stepping stone to unite the two genres of novel and poetry. There is innovation in the traditional stanzaic sonnet form for fiction. He presents an imaginative and creative union of the two genres. He contributes to the "blurring of the genre theory" one of the controversial obsessions of postmodernism.

Vikram Seth is puissant promoter of postmodernism. He has a rather un-nerving experience because he carries his subversive rebellion to nearly every aspect of his book. In terms of plot it is unexpected in the norm. The
trials, tribulations, agonies and mental tormentations of John as he comes to
terms with his beloved Liz marrying his best friend Philip, who has had a
homosexual affair with his future wife’s younger brother Ed, are the most
unusual twists and unexpected turns of the story. The novel, therefore,
resists narrative closure in the best postmodernist tradition.

The thematic revolt is also worth noting, it traces the bitter
experiences of the hero, John Brown as he comes to terms with his own
loneliness and the sexual aberrations of his friends and acquaintances. It can
be considered as a “b/ildingsroman” or a novel dealing with the coming
of age of the protagonist. It is the first English novel to deal with
homosexuality in an open, frank, candid and bold manner revealing all the
aspects connected to it, emotional, religious, physical, sexual and
psychological.

Rebellious irony becomes a mode of perception rather than a
structural device. The writer has adopted the parodic nature of the tone and
attitude. He creates a complex web of sense and sensibility on various levels
that ultimately results in extremely sophisticated parody. Parody is thus
present in choice and elaboration of form, theme, style, treatment, language
and technique. The parody operates at the structural level. “Hail Muse. Dear
Reader, once upon a time, say, circa, 1980. There lived a man. His name
was John.” “Hail the epistolary origin of the early eighteenth century novel
and “once upon a time” follows the oral folk traditions. Thus in the novel
parody goes on to create inter-textuality. Infact Inter-textuality is not only of
cross-referential culture connotations but there is also subtle inter-textuality
of literary style and forms.
In respect of characterisation and relationship, rebellion is certainly rampant here. The hero, John Brown is totally unlike conventional hero of a novel. Professionally, he is successful but emotionally and psychologically he is rather crippled. The female characters are not half-hearted caricatures but they are full-blooded, able-bodied, talented, creative, professionally successful and psychologically stronger and maturer than the complexes and guilt-ridden male characters like Ed, Philip and John. There is a high level of complexity in the homosexual relationship between Philip and Edward. There is a complex simplicity in Philip’s relationship with Liz. There is effortless ease and mastery over diction. In the novel rhyme and meter are valued and wielded with confidence and ease. The Acknowledgements, Dedication and Contents or Titles of chapters in the book are also in sonnet form in tetrameter.

Vikram Seth is fond of introducing a narrator, who consciously interacts with the text and the reader as in the eighteenth century fiction, such as “A week ago, when I had finished writing the chapter you’ve just read,” and “the poet speaks to the reader about writing the book.” In the beginning, the writer addresses Dear Reader of the novel and says that:

“To make a start more swift than weighty,
Hail Muse. Dear Reader, (3).

In Part two of the novel, he again addresses Dear Reader:

“The loving pair has bit the apple
Of mortal knowledge. As we see
The rosy half-light of love’s chapel  
Halo their ardent heads, should we  
Hymn them in accents hushed and holy?  
Forbear, O Gentle Reader. Slowly,...” (51).

In Chapter Three again he addresses the reader and says:

As Liz and John move out of focus  
Into an amorous mist, let’s shift  
Our lens, Dear Reader, to a locus  
An hour south along that rift  
That unnerves half of California” (53)

He describes homosexual relationship but requests the readers to forgive him. He says that:

“Now, just as things were getting tenser,  
And Ed and Phil were making love,  
The imperial official censor  
--Officious and imperious—dove  
His undiscriminating panzer  
Straight through the middle of my stanza.  
Now, Gentle Reader, is it right  
This swine should put my Muse to flight,  
Rooting about among my pearly  
Wisdom till he finds ors that he  
Can gobble down with grunting glee?  
Forgive me, Reader, if I’m surly  
At having to replace the bliss  
I’d hoped I could portray, with this.” (89).

In the novel’s Chapter Five he narrates the background of writing the novel in verse and use of feminine rhymes. He says that:
“A week ago, when I had finished
Writing the chapter you’ve just read
And with avidity undiminished
Was charting out the course ahead,
An editor—at a plush party
(Well-wined, provisioned, speechy, hearty)
Hosted by (long live!) Thomas Cook
Where my Tibetan travel book
Was honoured—seized my arm: “Dear fellow,
What’s your next work?” “A novel . . .” “Great!
We hope that you, dear Mr. Seth—"
“. . . In verse,” I added. He turned yellow.
“How marvelously quaint,” he said,
And subsequently cut me dead.” (100).

In the novel’s present chapter (Eleven), it is essential for the author to link it with the John departure in the earlier chapter (Five). Hence the novelist points out the necessity to use a flashback technique he addresses the **Dear Reader** and says that:

“To link this chapter of the novel
To John’s departure, sketched before,
Requires a flashback. (I should grovel
At this cheap stratagem, and, more,
My bard card should be burned.) **Dear Reader,**
In mitigation, let me plead a
Drainage of brain. Perhaps you’ll wait
Till it’s recharged? . . . You indicate
I must continue with the story?
“. . . Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride. . . .”
Well, dinna fidge—I willna bore ye.
(A safe bet: if you’ve read till here,
You must posses an iron ear.)” (241).
In this respect, the novel proves to be metafiction as the novelist writes about writing the written. He is also indicative of the authorial involvement with the readers and the text as opposed to the earlier trends in modernism where the focus was on objectivity. Stylistically speaking, Vikram Seth is a very conscious craftsman, with a purpose. He invokes Muse and subverts the socio-political, religious, literary and cultural myths thereby deconstructing and dismantling the underlying traditional assumptions. He also makes the European generic form the target of his parody. This provides him the pretext to interrogate the socio-cultural-political assumptions in the sonnet form. He deconstructs the canonical models with a view to question, expose and dismantle the underlying structures and question the imperialist assumptions. Reviewing and rewriting the mythic structures and assumptions are therefore Vikram Seth’s greatest contribution to the new discourse in Indian English literature.

“The game” is both a mode of perception and the decisive narrative strategy as well. In spite of his subversive rebellion, he basically remains Indian and even more important is that, he is a traditional writer. In his attempt to subvert tradition he has unconsciously used a traditional mode of perception, that of “The Game.” His playful pranks disguise his intense and inspired pursuit to attain perfection. In this era of terrorism, assassinations and natural calamities, earthquakes, T-Tsunami, floods, instability, insecurity and flux. Vikram Seth challenges the very system but actually infuse it with new life with vitality and vigour.

There are references to other literary texts also in it. There is cultural hybridity. Today in literature “no text is without inter-texts.” One finds
intertextuality, which is an aspect of postmodernity in this novel. Vikram Seth says: (careless of time) "How can I use the dusty bread mould of Onegin/In the brave bakery of Reagan?" (101). The Golden Gate Bridge is a testimony to the permanence of artefact over life. There is similarity of subject matter of the fictional worlds of Alexander Pushkin and Vikram Seth. Both present love, infidelity, suffering, loss, death, love-triangle of a woman and two men, social interactions in various parties as social habits.

In George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss, John loses Maggie Tullivers to Stephen Guest. In Vikram Seth's The Golden Gate, John loses Liz to Phil. Death and loss are presented in both the novels. In The Mill on the Floss—Maggie and Tom die as in The Golden Gate, Janet dies in the end.

There are various references to The Bible. When Liz and John make love, Vikram Seth narrates that:

"The loving pair has bit the apple of moral knowledge." (51).

Finally, Edward discontinues homosexual relationship with Philips on the moral principles given in The Bible.

Father O’Hare in his anti-nuclear speech too mentions teaching of The Bible and says that:

"By Christ’s own sacrifice and passion. We cannot flinch, we must not mute." (158)
There are references to William John Shakespeare’s plays. John takes wasp Bluestocking to see the play Macbeth- Bluestocking tells that:

“Appearance and reality themes
And the significance of dreams
And darkness, and the singular thesis
That the third Murderer is in fact
The central figure of each act.” (33)

The major characters of the novel explore realities. There is another reference to Shakespeare’s play King Lear when John receives a letter from Anne T. Friese (Janet) he thinks that: “The king’s third daughter,”. (35-36) It refers to King Lear’s “Youngest daughter, Cordelia”, a symbol of womanhood, which is not found in modern age. Janet remains a modern girlfriend only. The present world is prosaic—in fact postmodernism foregrounds America’s “Consumer Culture”. There is reference to American novelist, Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind. John says that: “She’s just a name brought by all the mail, ...Gone with the Wind” (36). Margaret’s novel portrays the torments, agonies, anxieties and tribulations in the lives of characters. The pet cats play a significant role in the life of the characters. Seth mentions about “‘Garfield, that egregious cat, /Grows daily lazier and more fat” (43). Garfield is a popular cartoon cat. Phil and Liz discusses other cartoon characters such as “Tintins, Asterx ...of Haddock, Gorgonzola, Wagg,”/Moon rockets, grog, Red Rack ham’s swag”, (204-5)

The other non-literary intertextual references are to Western classical musicians such as Mozart, Bach, Brahms, Rossini, Puccini, Parvrotti and works of arts of Van Gogh, El Grecc, Holbein and Goya. There is mention
of film *Tootsie* and *Kurosawa, Alfred Hitchcock* and *Buster Keaton*. The elements of passionate love, revenge, mystery associated with these films heightens the thematic concerns in the present novel. There is reference to the *Beatles*, and the titles of their songs of 1960’s are given...” “He goes home, seeking consolation/Among the Old Beatles.../“Girl”- - - “Money”/

“Taste of Honey”- - - “Ticket to Ride”—and soon Across the Dark Side of the Moon/It highlights the aspiration of “Yuppies”. (7)

The popular pop music co-exists with sonnet in the novel. In respect of postmodern elements Rita Joshi rightly comments that:

“The inter-textuality of *The Golden Gate* places the discourse of the novel in a broader framework, opposing and questioning its particular grounding in a specific socio-historic context.” 7

Vikram Seth’s novel is eulogised by large number of critics. D.J. Enright remarks:

*The Golden Gate* is a technical triumph, unparalleled (I would hazard) in English. We may not have scorned the sonnet, but we shall hardly have thought it capable of this sustained sequentially, speed, elegance, wit and depth of insight.” 10

Tabish Khair, an eminent poet and contemporary novelist rightly remarks that:
The Golden Gate...has a “kind of brilliance” and “the glittering gates” of Indian English Poetry is “unlocked by the poet like Vikram Seth”.

A contemporary famous Indian English novelist, Khushwant Singh comments that:

‘...a new star in the literary firmament...it outshines in brilliance anything that I have seen in half-a-century of star-spotting...Seth has the stuff that Nobel Laureates are made of.’

Mala Pandurang is of the opinion that:

The Golden Gate got by and large generous reviews. But there was one school of thought, which said that stylistically speaking it was deliciously avant-garde and another school which said it was dreadfully reactionary because it goes back to Pushkin and rhyming meter. As far as content went, some people said it was wonderful; it talks about gay rights and women’s right and the anti-Nuclear movement. And yet, another school said it had the happy families of the typical, antiquated, silly Victorian novel.

On the other hand, a noted critic C.D. Narasimhaiah is of opinion that:

“---Alan Hollinghurst speaks of Seth’s virtuosity in The Golden Gate lacking a soul and purpose and concludes what one thinks of this book expect that such sharp-eyed and sophisticated talent can go on to do something even more extraordinary perhaps something which strikes more unhesitantly to the heart of matter.”
In reality the publication of Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* (1986) is a milestone in the postmodern era of Indian English Fiction. It is hailed rightly for its technical excellence as after a period of 150 years a novel is written in verse. Probably it is the first English novel written in verse. There are large number of postmodern elements embedded in it. Stylistically speaking it is avant-garde and postmodern novel.

Technique gives real colour to a novel. In the present novel, the technique is unique and style is extraordinary. In reality the central theme is World Peace. But there are other motifs too such as significance of marriage, sex and set of moral values in life, the negative effects of high-technology on human life, society and human relations particularly between individual and individual, individual and family and also individual and community. There is a great need of person to person contact in a family, society etc. though high technology has given many means of contacts such as mobile, phone, fax etc., the significance of person to person contact cannot be undervalued and replaced by any other means.

The need of a loving life-long companion with virtues of tolerance, adjustment, understanding and even sacrifices in both life partners are essential to pass the life happily. One may not agree with Vikram Seth’s philosophy of ‘mistrust of passion in life’ and his view that in respect of love, one must give preference to reason over passion! It can not be denied that most significant decisions in one’s life is taken by heart and not by mind. One must trust in the *Wisdom of Heart*!

Vikram Seth seems to say that the most important institution in human society is a “family” that cannot be replaced by any other such “loose
organisation” without moral principles, liabilities, duties and responsibilities. In reality, there cannot be any other alternative to age-old “Family Institution” in a civilized society.

It is a fact that due to scientific and technological advancement there is immense material progress and social changes are taking place in every country. But due to these fast changing world there are rifts and cracks which are appearing in human relationship and particularly family, friendship, society, community etc. It cannot be denied that due to unrestrained and unrestricted freedom enjoyed by an individual and the individual’s disregard for any set of moral values and also the loosening hold of a head of a family have created large number of new social problems. Vikram Seth seems to say that in an individual of Modern World there is need for tolerance, strong bond of family and respect for other’s point of view or opinion to lead a happy, contented and peaceful life.
Chapter-III

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