CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Vikram Seth was the eldest child born to Leila Seth. Leila Seth was born to parents who were ahead of their time. Leila Seth’s father worked with Imperial Railway service. Leila Seth’s father gave the biggest gift to his three children, including Leila, a good education. In those times Leila Seth’s father had declared that he did not intend to give his daughter a dowry on her marriage but that she would be standing on her own feet. Eventually Leila Seth’s father’s dream got fulfilled when Leila Seth’s husband Premo Seth chose her without demanding a dowry, and also gave full freedom to her to become the first woman judge to top the Bar Examination in London. Later, she became the first woman Judge of Delhi High Court and Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court respectively. Vikram Seth's father Premo Seth, a self made man, was a graduate from St. Stephen's College, New Delhi who after having done a course in Boot and Shoe Manufacture from London and by dint of hard labour and determination rose to become Bata shoe company Executive. His tenacity and perseverance always inspired his children to bare the problems and hurdles in life.

Vikram Seth's mother had stayed largely in and around Calcutta. Hence, she was familiar with Bengali Language This bilingual influence shows clearly in A Suitable Boy where Seth seems to feel at ease with this language and cultures as well as the English culture that her family was exposed to, together with various other Hindu (Benares) and Muslim (Lucknow) cultural ethos that he sketches to perfection.
He was barely two and a half years old when he underwent training in Indian Classical Music. At the age of three, he could rhyme "cat" with "mat". At Doon Public School he was a part of the school choir. While he was researching the nuances of Indian Classical Music for the novel *A Suitable Boy* he thus expressed his feel for music.

In the evening when I wanted to be myself, I found that the moment I started playing an Indian musical instrument or singing an Indian song, I was drawn back into the world of my novel. It wasn't a form of relaxation but work by other means. That's when I began singing shubert songs .... (www.randomhouse.com)

This was when *An Equal Music*, a book showing Seth's intense love for music was conceived against the backdrop of European musicians. In fact, all his works show this obsession with music.

White at Doon Public School, Dehradun, other than being a singer he is also referred to as "the model school boy." (Singh 35) There he also excelled in creating writing in English. His inherent skill for music is very well evidenced in the creation of umpteen number of sonnets that pervade his introduction to different works; e.g. the acknowledgements in *The Golden Gate* is a fourteen line sonnet. Even his prose bears ample mark of the poet in him.

Vikram was admitted in Doon School that was believed to incorporate that was best in Indian and Western culture. He from the start, was a bright student and took part in
painting, chess, carpentry, debating and swimming. A report from Vikram's headmaster Mr. Gurdial Singh is worth quoting:

Masters Teaching Vikram have sent in the most glowing reports about him. He has a keen and incisive mind, and is very quick in getting to the heart of any matter. He has an accurate ear for music, and is a delightful companion, in every way. He has been working on a monumental quiz book in partnership with a friend of his. (Seth, *On Balance* 27)

In his I.C.S.E. examination, he emerged as the first five pointer in his school; i.e., getting A’s in all the five subjects, a distinction that is rare to get. On the basis of his exceptionally brilliant result, he was offered an OPOS Scholarship by Mr. Mc Crum to study at Ton Bridge School in Kent that could take of tuition, boarding and lodging. Later, by clearing the SAT exam he also obtained a full scholarship to Harvard. On the strength of this scholarship, Mr. Mc Crum convinced Corpus Christi College, Oxford to cover his expenses and fees if he passed their selection process. For that he took another exam, which he got through. He studied Philosophy, Economics and Politics. He further enrolled at Stanford University, California intending to earn a Ph.D degree in Economics. In between he went to China for two years to undergo study of Demography on birth control in contemporary China and Economic research. While at Stanford, Seth was also a Stagner Fellow at Creative Writing from 1977-78 and from 1980-82 during his field research on his thesis – ‘The Economic Demography of seven Chinese Villages’, he studied Classical Chinese poetry and different languages. These varied experiences and
influences are to be found in his writings. It is indeed ironical that Seth could never complete his Ph.D but today his unprecedented adulation and fame has made him a subject of Ph.D for others.

Seth's first published work was *Mappings* (1982), a collection of mostly personal poems, which are largely pensive and thoughtful as they were written when he was a student in his twenties. He sent his manuscript to publishers but after repeated rejections, he decided to typeset and publish it himself. The book was dedicated to two of his professors at Stanford University. It was printed in 1980 but there were hardly any takers. After his return journey from China, he went to Calcutta and met Professor R Lal, who published it in 1981 in an elegant orange sari-clad version under the imprint of the Writers' Workshop. Ten years passed and the book was not noticed much until 1991 when the second edition was launched by Writers' Workshop again, unfortunately, peppered with misprints. Penguin India next sought his permission to republish *Mappings* independently in 1994 and later also along with his other collection of poems in *The Collected Poems* in the year 1995.

Seth however, was not very confident of his collection, *Mappings* as some of the poems struck him "as embarrassingly callow." (Seth 17) But on one of his friend's suggestions, who had appreciated some of his poems in *Mappings*, the book was finally released. Most of the poems in Seth's first anthology *Mappings* (1981) were written in the 1970s while Seth was a student first in England, and then in California. In the introduction to the 1994 Viking edition, Seth describes how after a number of painful rejections, he typeset and
published the poems himself in 1980. Then, in 1981, Professor P. Lal of the Writers' Workshop, Calcutta, brought out an edition of Mappings. In fact, the very few poems by Seth that reflect some of the influences of his stay in England are in this collection. There are a number of poems in Seth's Mappings, wherein the poet is trying to come to terms with an attachment to his Indian identity on the one hand, and a sense of growing restlessness and feelings of ambivalence towards his family on the other hand. In the opening poem "Panipat", the narrator who is "back home from Inglistan" after studying abroad for a number of years, expresses his nostalgia for the India of his childhood. The poet draws attention to the complex combination of identifiers and spatial connectors that are responsible for the migrant's state of a multivalent identity. He relates to familiar spatial connectors ("Punjab, pandits, panir/Panipat and pan./Family, music, faces/Food, land, everything/Drew me back"). He hears the song of the Koyal and simultaneously, the natural landscape of England encroaches upon his consciousness. It brings to memory the notes of other birds: "The nightingale, the wren/the blackbird; and my heart's barometer turns down." The poet gradually accepts that he must come to term with his state of in-betweenness and ambiguous relationship with 'home': "My cousin slices a mango/And offers it to me./I choose the slice with the seed/And learn from the sweet taste./Well-known and alien,/I must be home at last" (2).

"Rakhi", is addressed to Seth's sister Aradhana. The 'rakhi', tied by a sister on her brother's wrist is symbolic of the bond of deep affection between the two siblings. It is 'Raksha Bandhan' time and there is a strong note of regret in the poet's musing of an inevitable distance between brother and sister that grows with space and time. The poet is
in the USA and receives his sister's rakhi by mail. In her absence, he has to tie the rakhi on, himself. For the immigrant, culture specific customs become a means of retaining nostalgic familial and community bonds between the individual and the home culture.

The central thematic focus of "Divali" is cultural displacement of different degrees. There is a strong autobiographical note as Seth reflects on his being at home for the traditional festival of lights and family togetherness, after "Three years of neurotic/Guy Fawkes Days—I recall/That lonely hankering ~/But I am home after all". Seth's family figures quite frequently in several of his poems. A photograph of him with his parents, brother and sister keeps surfacing in From Heaven Lake from time to time. Seth's central preoccupation in "Divali" is with his own class background, and the process wherein a particular class of Indians were co-opted by the British for the purpose of governance. Tracing his family history, the poet describes how his father's family (who were farmers for generations) "... send a son to school/To gain the conqueror's/Authoritarian seal:/English! Six-armed god,/Key to a job, to power,/Snobbery, the good life,/This separateness, this fear." (64)

Seth is aware that he belongs to a particular class of economically privileged Indians who are already alienated to some degree even prior to migration outside the Indian subcontinent, and he succinctly captures the 'nowhereness' of this class of Indians who will suffer some extent of deracination where ever they are. He also interrogates his 'romanticised' bonding to India which operates on much different terms than the bonding
of the poor starving farmer to the land, exploited for centuries by landlords and at the mercy of the vagrancy of nature.

There are poems in Mappings that are located in either an airport arrival or departure lounges ("Departure Lounge", "Switching Off" etc). In "To a Fellow Traveller", the poet addresses himself to a co-passenger who is, like himself, is in perpetual transition. Also included in the collection, are translations of Faiz Ahmed Faiz from Urdu and the Hindi poet Nirula, reflecting Seth's own multi-lingualism. In "Close of Play", Seth touches upon the dangers of a nuclear war, a thematic preoccupation that find elaboration in The Golden Gate. Another topic that recurs in Seth's poetry, and which is expanded upon in The Golden Gate, is that of homosexuality.

In 1982, Seth returned to Delhi from China through hitchhike. His father insisted that he must write the account as well as express his unbiased viewpoint as an Indian traveller. The travel book, From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet, published in 1983 was appreciated and earned him the Thomas Cook Award. Regarding the author's tryst with what he termed as 'a more interesting route' (Seth, On Balance 281) an interesting incident followed. When he returned home to Teen Murti Lane, the official residence of his mother, the staff barred his entry, for he had darkened from trekking, thin from eating only raisins, unshaven, and like a peddler-carrying a jute sack on his back with all his belongings in it. Only on closer examination, could their gardener recognize him and let him in.
This travel book was the first prose work attempted by Seth and readers could expect that there would be more such prose writings replete with unusual crispness, witty detailing and the unusual poetic diction in the use of the language.

Meanwhile, the poet in him had begun taking full shape and Seth shuttling between California, China, U.K. and India was full of spirits composing poems. As a Stagner Fellow in creative writing at Stanford, he had met Donald Davie who helped him in getting this collection published by Carcanet, entitled as *The Humble Administrator's Garden* in 1985. The collection is divided in three sections; 'Wutong', 'Neem and 'Live-Oak', symbolically representing his association with China, India and California as well as the poet's sense of rootlessness as he is away from his home.

In the collection, *The Humble Administrator's Garden*, the poet cannot help admiring the natural beauty that China is abounded with but the scenes of destruction caused during the Cultural Revolution filled him with pain and disenchantment. He is pained to see the natural splendour being stripped of its charm and appeal. The poems on the whole, are remarkable for the irony, the intense emotions of pain, solitude and delight. They are striking, and rich in ramifications and interpretations.

*The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985) was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Asian Region in 1985. This slim collection of individual lyrical and satiric poems describes Seth experience of four diverse cultural milieus— Indian, English, Chinese and Californian. The collection is divided into three sections, each with the title
of a tree symbolic of different parts of the world in which Seth has lived: Wutong (China), Neem (India), and Live Oak (California). Seth mingles memory and nostalgia with agreeable detail and it is these qualities that make the poems primarily visual and reflective. Seth dedicates the anthology to his family, pictured within. As in Mappings, "Homeless" in the Neem section describes strong feelings of having left home and being uprooted, and the alienation that comes with constantly being on the move.

Seth presents the mundane details of the life of an anglicized well-to-do family in Delhi, very much akin to the Chatterjis of A Suitable Boy in the "The Comfortable Classes as Work and Play". The poem is a gentle satire on upper middle class life in post independent India of the 1980s. The autobiographical references are evident. Within the family, the mother is a judge who wrestles with the legal jargon of a judgment "of Justice Krishna lyer of the Supreme Court" while the musically inclined eldest son spends his time with a 'surpeti'. The college-going second son suffers an ideological lacuna typical of students of his generation. He is either leftist or feminist as per what is currently politically fashionable. Seth is able to encapsulate comments on contemporary politics, corruption, academic practices, personal ideology, as also a changing social system wherein the grandmother expresses feelings of neglect and loneliness.

Poems in the Californian section, Live Oak, cover a variety of themes, ranging from descriptions of the Californian landscape to personal relationships. In "Unclaimed", the poet opts for an uncomplicated short-term relationship. In Ceasing Upon", the dejected protagonist seeks escape in alcohol, instead of wishing to die like a romantic poet in a moment of ecstasy. Seth returns to the dilemma of long term relationships/commitment
and the finality of settling down and questions of sexuality (bi- and gay). The Wutong section becomes more engaging when read as a companion piece to Seth's account of his stay in China in From Heaven Lake while researching towards his Ph.D. in economic demographics. Along with descriptive poems on the landscape or monuments of cultural and historical import, Seth also includes his personal interactions as a doctoral student. "Research in Jiangsu Province" is presented in the form of a tape-recorded interview and is an account of Chinese life under the communist regime. Seth uses the question and answer format of the economist researcher to pit academic statistics against the realities of life and history. One is reminded that in the processing of recording history is the inevitable omission/selection of facts. Academic research too, is constructed, and need not necessarily be the 'truth'.

Meanwhile, the relatively faster but melancholic life of California had caught the poet's attention. Seth could now fully exploit the spontaneous overflow of emotions in longer verses. He got inspired to compose a novel in verse after reading Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. The result was *The Golden Gate* (1885) that won him some literary acclaim in the form of Sahitya Akademy Award in 1989. However, it was not easy to find a publisher as the novel was in verse. At the same time, he was hopeful that it would be liked so he decided to take up a job as an editor at Stanford University Press so that he could later self-publish, if need be. However, a distant acquaintance sent the manuscript to Random House, where it had been rejected at first; this time it was not only accepted, but also, it created a literary storm.
It was the first work that brought him fame and the work was heralded for its European connections and America-centred theme. A born poet, carrying the rich tradition of immemorable Indian epics, fables and folklores as well as the sonnets in English literature; all seem to unify in the making of this masterpiece. He was noticed not just for the concise and ingenious treatment of the theme i.e., the existential anguish of the main protagonist but also for the dexterity with which he adhered to the tough tetrameter versification. A significant review was that of Seattle Times :

The reader comes away feeling subtly reassured that something shapes our ends – a something that may be a divinity or that may be simply a very competent poet.

(Seth cover page)

Seth had not simply introduced a different literary genre and shown his versatility, he had appealed to the soul of readers as a writer of stature does. They were approximating the novel's conclusion with 'divinity'.

Seth, meanwhile was witnessing something else on the domestic front. His brother Shantum, on the footsteps of his father was pursuing study of ‘Boot and Technology’ from London but had lately taken to a protest against a nuclear hazard and was being tried for obstructing Queen's Highway. Shantum's fearless tirade against Nuclear Disarmament inspired the author, which set the stage for a similar cause undertaken by two main characters, Liz and Phil in the novel, 'The Golden Gate'. 
Regarding the efficacy of the rich cultural tradition of India, it is important to mention what Jawaharlal Nehru said while discussing the age-old ancient monuments and the Kumbh Mela held at Haridwar or Allahabad and several other realities that gave India a cultural stability:

There seemed to be something unique about the continuity of a cultural tradition through five thousand years of history, of invasion and upheaval, a tradition which was widespread among the masses and powerfully influenced them. Only China has had such a continuity of tradition and cultural life. (Tiwary 11)

Seth seems to be well aware of the richness of India as well as China, which must have inspired him to attempt the translation of three Chinese poets in 1991. Three Chinese Poets (1992) is a collection of translations by Seth of the poetry of Wang Wei, Li Bai and Du Fu, three recognised literary figures of China who lived during the reign of the Emperor Ming Huang of the Tang dynasty, in the 8th century A.D. The selection is largely on the apolitical responses of these poets to their common times in terms of appreciation of music, perception of nature, bonds of loyalty and friendship. In his introduction, Seth explains how works in translation have always had as deep an influence on his own writing as works he has read in the original. In fact, Seth's attributes his interest in China to the translations of Wang Wei, the 8th century Chinese poet. Seth was motivated enough to study the language and was eventually was able to read Wang Wei in the original. Yin Chuang, Seth's Chinese language professor at Stanford, describes Seth as a 'fantastic' student (Leslie 5). Seth's dedication in Three Chinese Poets
is to Yin Chuang. The book is a 'dual offering' of thanks to three translators-David Hawkes, Pauline We, and Xianggang Guangzhi Shuji.

Seth’s poetry *The Humble Administrator’s Garden* (1985) and *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1992) both dealing with Seth's association with America, China in addition to India show signs of his maturity. *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990) is a collection of miscellaneous lyric poems and brief narratives in rhymed, unrhymed and free verse and translations and epigrams that once again bring to our attention Seth's exposure to different cultural milieus. However, unlike in the two anthologies mentioned above, the poet's 'Indian' voice has become diluted. The poet has strayed away from family so present in his early work, and the only mention of fleeting memories of 'home' is in "How Rarely these Few Years". The anthology is divided into five sections. In the first section entitled "Romanic Residues", there are formal poems wherein the poet is dealing with relationships that have ended. He speaks of loss and of remembrance. The idea of love posited in friendship as more durable in human relationships than physical attraction is a recurrent suggestion in Seth's work and is taken up in greater depth in his novels. In "A Style of Loving", the narrator is happier to sustain a platonic relationship. The poet refers to the dilemma of homosexual relationships. In the poem "Soon", the narrator describes his impending death from a disease that has no hope or cure. The poem could perhaps be read as referring to the scourge of AIDS. The narrative poems on the ironies of Auschwitz ("Work and Freedom") and the horrors of Hiroshima ("A Doctor's Journal Entry for August 6, 1945") in the section In Other Voices are directly inspired by passages from the Commandant of Auschwitz (Rudolf Hoess) and Hiroshima Diary
(Michihiko Hachiya). Both these narratives as also "Lithuania: Question and Answer" are written in the context of large human suffering and universal pain. "A Doctor's Journal Entry...." is the monologue of an eyewitness who suffers the horrendous aftermath of the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima. There are haunting images of survivors. Seth returns to elaborate on the inherent threat of a nuclear holocaust in The Golden Gate.

There are seven landscape poems out of his Cino-Tibetan and trans-Himalayan experiences in continuum to Seth's travelogue on China in the third section called In Other Places. The last two poems in this section deal with the California landscape. Particularly interesting is "On The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Golden Gate Bridge". The ode-like stanzas encapsulate the background history of the Golden Gate Bridge, which is a central motif of Seth's first novel, The Golden Gate. Notable in the anthology is Seth's attempt to experiment with a number of verse forms - ranging from couplets ("Round and Round") to the free verse ("A Style of Loving") and the use of long verse lines in his longer narrative poems. In the fourth section "Quatrains", Seth works with four line rhymed stanzas. Each stanza has an independent theme. In "Pendulum", the poet brings psychology into mundane activities. Adil Jussawala, in reviewing the collection in The Times of India, likens these poems to pop songs. According to Jussawala, "the lines easily remembered, easily rhymed are equally easily forgotten, until they are heard again, in other places, other contexts, recalling the first occasions they are associated with, is what pop songs do."(Bansiramani 105)
Seth has made it clear that his priority in writing poetry has always been readability. "Rhyme and metre are perversely liberating", he counteracts: "They can make many a funny passage funnier and a sad passage sadder". (Bharvani 87)

Seth responds to the oft-asked question as to why he writes so much of his work in rhyme and metre by explaining that perhaps it derives from musicality, from compression, and from necessary attentiveness. Because verse 'in form' is what he usually found himself reading or recalling and it is what he almost always found himself writing. Seth has been praised for his ability to combine "in a unique way the casual tone and movement usually associated with light verse with a profundity and controlled passion rarely equalled in contemporary writing". (Indian Review of Books) Seth concludes the volume (and the fifth section "Meditations of the Heart") with the title poem "All Who Sleep Tonight". Seth recognises that he is not alone in his feelings of ambivalence, and of being 'unhoused'. There are others who also share this condition. There is also an acceptance of the larger world as his home now.

In 1991 he attempted the Beastly Tales from Here and There and a libretto Arion and the Dolphin three years later. Both these works can be considered pertinent for children also; therefore they have been dealt within a separate chapter.

Seth's actual popularity came through his magnum opus A Suitable Boy, based on India in 1950s. Published in 1993, the novel made him a star in the literary firmament. It was an outright success. It made a history of its kind, just as the author had made in his
prolific career. However, this intense author had to face lots of difficulties especially with his hand which for some time had refused to function along with his laptop and printer which true to its nature would often not behave properly. Moreover, he had greatest difficulty with the foreign publishers who were dependent on Penguin India's typesetting and film and the unavoidable delay that was becoming difficult to control from India.

However, his hard work bore fruits. After this there has been no looking back for this author whose wide range definitely makes him incomparable till date.

His recent work *An Equal Music* (1999) has been compared to Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, since both books had a similar theme and were published at the same time. But this novel too was unique, being set in London and told in the voice of the second violinist (Michael) of a string quartet. The book was launched in London, as its story was set in and around this place. At Wigmore Hall, where the reading and concert was to take place, Seth had invited the deaf person he had interviewed while researching his book. But to his mother's surprise this man too was reading and appreciating the music (associated with string quartet) being played. She realized later that that the hall was equipped with a 'loop' to help hearing-aid users receive the sound clearly.

Seth's animal fables entitled *Beastly Tales from Here and There* become all the more significant as they add adequately to his list of varied genres and works and point to his
predilection for an ancient art of story-telling dating back to 200 B.C., when tales of *Panchatantra* originated in our country. Interestingly, these tales have had an all-encompassing influence over Asian as well as European tales.

In his introductory remarks to *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1991), Seth talks of how this collection of animal fables was written on a hot day in Delhi, when he could not concentrate on his work and so decided to write "a summer story involving mangoes and a river". Seth retells ten impish animal tales. These poems are "mostly reset in brightly rollicking tetrameter couplets" through a delightfully "flexible verbal imagination" (Perry 447-448) and are accompanied by delightful illustrations by well-known cartoonist Ravi Shankar. The genre of animal tales has a long literary history. The relevance of these tales lies in their expression of worldly folk wisdom and dramatisation of human vices and virtues through the exploits of shrewd animals. The verses may appear deceptively very light but there are ironic twists to the re-told Aesopian fables and Seth puts to good use his talent for rhyming wit (the famed 'Kakoli couplets' of *A Suitable Boy*) for the purpose of social satire. The mock-heroic deeds of Seth's animalised characters who wear modern garb and speak with a modern flavour are used to take sharp jabs at contemporary morality. In the very first tale "The Crocodile and the Monkey", Kuroop the be sotted crocodile gives in to his greedy and consumerist wife's insatiable desires when she demands the heart of his best friend, the monkey. The monkey, in turn, saves himself by professing an equal desire to please the pampered wife's appetite.
"The Hare and the Tortoise" is a satire on the working of the press which creates an event out of the personal challenge between the wise, down-to-earth, hardworking Teddy Tortoise who has been brought up on a traditional value system, and the rash, young, alluring, socialite Madam Hare. Seth takes jabs at the media. As in the traditional tale, it is the tortoise who wins the race. However, "... it is in fact the hare, /With a calm insouciant air/Like an unrepentant bounder, Who allured the pressmen round her". (40) Ms Hare uses her sex appeal to her advantage (pouting out her scarlet lips/Sweetly wiggling head and hips), and suddenly "stories of her quotes and capers/Made front page in all the papers". (40) Sensational journalism that thrives on glamour and oomph brings overnight fame to Ms Hare. The ten tales in the collection once again come from a mixed cultural milieu. The first two are drawn from Indian folklore. Then there are two more each from China, Greece and the Ukraine. "The Rat and the Ox" tells of the consequences and the repairing of the Chinese Zodiac, which has gone slightly off its usual course. The last two tales are Seth's original contributions with an original gallery of characters set in the "Land of Gup".

The longest tale in the collection ("The Elephant and the Tragopan") is intended for allegorical interpretation of Seth's ecological anxiety. The animals of 'Bingladesh' give voice to planet-threatening issues that are a consequence of mankind's greed and disregard for the environment. The "Tragedy of Bingle Vale" holds particular interest for the Indian reader in view of the controversial Sardar Sarovar dam/Narmada Valley power project. Complex issues on environmental issues are discussed in a twenty-five page long extended debate with the same fervour with which Seth expounds an anti-nuclear treatise.
in The Golden Gate. Seth attacks the contemporary Indian political scenario. "The Elephant and the Tragopan" lead a delegation of animals to lodge a protest with the crafty minister, "the great Bigshot number One, Shri Padma Bhushan Gobhardun". The conscientious minister's son recognises "the rape of Bingle" and intervenes on behalf of the animals. But he incurs the wrath of his 'socialist' father who accuses him. Negotiations fail, and the expedition ends in the tragic death of the Tragopan. This leads to violence on the part of the 'protesters', and this in turn becomes fodder for the human press. Seth concludes with a passionate appeal to the human world that the survival of Bingle world is the responsibility of society at large.

Seth's animal fables in verse have had a magical charm on young and old alike. The familiar characters are quirky, comical and always funny. Of the ten beastly tales, two have been taken from India, two from China, two from Greece, two from Ukraine and two as the author puts it, came directly to him from the 'Land of Gup' i.e. they seem to have been originated in his imagination. This clearly reveals the versatility of the poet and a proof that he can try on the most unusual clothes without in the least losing his unique poetic quality.

Seth not only chooses the Indian lexicons and characters for his Indian tales but for the American and European backdrop too, he succeeds in creating appropriate sensibilities. The central character in the Californian society in The Golden Gate is a solitary, melancholic character, much unlike the Indian protagonists in A Suitable Boy who are inextricably linked to the large community, the clan and the family tree they belong to.
Seth quite successfully appears to combine Chaucer's skill at depicting the variety of human nature along with his understanding of men of all ranks. In addition, he also seems to have inherited Chaucer's technical brilliance in the metrical handling of language. Chaucer had attempted an unfinished opus *The Canterbury Tales* that for all times remains a classic example of brilliant tales depicting a contemporary social scene. Seth accomplishes it more in *A Suitable Boy* and to some extent in *The Golden Gate*. Chaucer's characters meet at a pilgrimage while Seth's modern characters of different families and segments of society meet in a marriage or a party or the 'Pul Mela' scenes in *A Suitable Boy*. *The Golden Gate* too ends metaphorically with a family scene, which begins with the solitary life of the main protagonist.

Seth becomes a unique artist in the modern times whose versatility takes us back to the rich treasures of literature. Being an avid reader and scholar, he seems to be aware of different trends in writing viz, fable, ballad, translations, etc. Like literary giants Chaucer, Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot, Seth too has attempted translation of the fables and also of some Chinese poetry without losing the regional lexicon and flavour of the original poetry.

Seth tried another neglected genre, a libretto. In 1994, he was commissioned by the English National Opera to write a librettobased on the Greek legend of *'Arion and the Dolphin'*. The opera was shown in Australia, Canada, Iceland, Malta, and New Zealand and throughout the U.K. Libretto is defined by J. A. Cuddon as:
Libretto ("little book"): The text of an opera operatta or any fairly substantial vocal composition, like an oratorio, which involves dialogue and narrative. (Paniker 163)

This term was first used in England in 1742. Well known librettists include Quinault, Catzabigi da Powte, J.B.Priestley and W.H. Auden. Seth had already succeeded with the narration indialogue forms in fables and novel in verse; hence libretto was got going to be a difficult form.

Seth's novels nevertheless, present a cross section of cultures transcending linguistic and geographical boundaries articulating successfully on the global stage, whether it is the Californian or the European society or the North Indian in A Suitable Boy, he has achieved great success in portraying a large canvass of characters and their lives, creating significant works.

Seth's agitation at the apathy of his own countrymen is inevitable who while assessing The Golden Gate accused him of disguising himself as a Californian and therefore denounced him as being 'deracinated' owing to the fact that there was not a single Indian character in the novel and it lacked an Indian sensibility.

And after the launch of A Suitable Boy, The Times Magazine informed him that he had become the member of a movement, represented by the Empire-Writes-Back generation. He is decidedly piqued over the nonchalant attitude of these critics who are unable to
appreciate his versatility and his unusual merit of portraying dissimilar sensibilities with distinct vigour and ingenuity.

Other than bearing the influence of Chaucer and Shakespeare in the humane projection of characters, Seth also excels as a wonderful satirist and his art will be seen combining the wit, depth, tongue in cheek humour of Dryden and Pope of the seventeenth century and also of Jonathan Swift. Like these satirists, Seth satirizes the man who, in the words of Swift, "if not a rational creature in all his doings," was "at least 'rationis capax' i.e.; capable of reason, and it was therefore all the more tragic that he should allow his fancy to get astride of his reasons." (Daiches 606)

Seth uses the satire as a corrective measure to make man aware of his pride and knavishness and selfishness. The characters are warned of the consequences of their action well in time, if they amend themselves they are spared or they are left to face the consequences.

He also appears to be influenced by Jane Austen and George Eliot in the projection of moral vision, which Austen depicted through her "an inch of ivory" small world and what George Eliot revealed through the characters of different professions, forming a microcosm of man in the world. Seth uses Austen's small, compact world for The Golden Gate and later in An Equal Music and the bigger canvas of George Eliot for the big canvas of A Suitable Boy. Perhaps, very few authors would be so versatile to combine the style of Victorian Novelists and that too with such flexibility in all the three novels.
Vikram Seth is revealed as a votary of nature and simplicity, like Wordsworth. The association with simplicity, constancy and fidelity; inter-relationships emanating from the moral and spiritual presence of Nature too will be observed. If for Wordsworth, 'fundamental' comprised plain mundane life, for Seth fundamental life could be envisioned in simple happiness, blissful and contented life. Seth can be compared to Lawrence for the fact that like Lawrence, his belief in instinctive reactions appears to be motivated by morality and spirituality. Lawrence took refuge in passion, while Seth upholds it, but the guiding force is the same for both; both intend to show disregard for mechanized life. Moreover, the end result in Lawrence's novel was not the attainment of sexual love but spiritual as is evidenced in these words of Lawrence written to Frieda, his beloved, "I think when one loves, one's very sex passion, that nearly drives one mad, is far away from real love." (Moore 244)

Seth negates this very state of passion in all forms that destroys and cripples one's sanity. All of Seth's novels reveal the underlying theme i.e. rejection of passion. And just as Lawrence or O'Neill wrote on Oedipus Complex as they found many youths distraught with it, Seth too has incorporated homosexuality in his works; in some of the works he has simply referred to it, while in The Golden Gate he deals with it in great detail.

This negation of passion has been a popular belief among the Indian saints and great people. Mahatma Gandhi while talking of sexual act between a man and wife underlined:
I think it is the height of ignorance to believe that the sexual act is an independent function necessary like sleeping or eating. The world depends for its existence on the act of generation, and as the world is the playground of God and a reflections of His glory, the act of generation should be controlled for the ordered growth of the World. (Gandhi 170-71)

Gandhi underlined something similar to G.B. Shaw's contention that women should make a conscious choice of their partner so as to procreate supermen. Eventually, the emphasis of all such great people has been on control of passion, on its conscious and planned exercise, keeping in mind the end, the real purpose. This alone can result in a healthy and spiritual mankind.

Seth is an Indian and a Hindu and his Indianness and Hinduism seem to form the foundation of his thoughts. In India, the family has always played a pivotal role. In spite of the physical distance Seth's family has always managed to be together on birthdays, book-launches or holidays. From time immemorial family has been a source of great strength for Indians. Being rooted in a particular community, cohesiveness is built which fosters a strong sense of belonging. Hence, the marriage reinforcing this bonding is usually planned by collective choice rather than by individual preference. In fact, family connections are seldom lost even when the person leaves the village for city in pursuit of a higher education or better job prospects. A woman's importance is next to the man, who is the head of the family and together they carry forward the tradition of the family and their children further continue with it. The marriage ceremony and the birth of a child are
all sanctified through Vedic rituals. In fact, "the ritual practice too might vary in detail from region to region but the Vedic ritual itself has remained unchanged for more than 2,000 years. Hinduism, unlike many other faiths, 'does not have a founder nor it is based on any single scripture. Indians call it Sanatana Dharma i.e. the faith with no beginning and no end." (Srinivasan 62)

Different truths about life and righteous living are emphasized in the mythologies and folklores, through the lives of mythic heroes and heroines.

The world today, including our nation, is undergoing great turmoil and facing myriad challenges. We are becoming more and more materialistic, losing our connection with the past, with our ancient cultural heritage, with our role models. The great values of the past are getting fast eroded. It is the time to re-invent our future and ourselves and to restore the great values of the past. In trying to realize these objectives through their writings, writers like Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, etc. always leave an indelible imprint on our psyche. Their writings have a constructive effect on our minds.

The need of the hour is to fight against the powerful evil forces, which have misled us and taken us away from the right path, right ideals and truth. We need to change ourselves, to elevate ourselves to gain victory over evil forces. Speaking about the role of religion in the past, Swami Chinmayananda had said:
Religion's original task was to help us in gradually achieving this elevated vision. To lift the limited and selfish human being from the passion, greed and hatred to this loftier vision of the world was the essential ideal of religion. (Tejomayananda 7)

When seen in this light, religious ideals appear to be quite simple and attainable. But the pity is that man has made these complicated, scandalous and perverted for his own selfish gains, while a simple compliance with simple familial duties, respecting and trusting each other, having empathy and compassion for others can help us achieve the essential ideal of religion.

Women in India even today are a victim of apathy and ill-treatment, it is significant that Seth like G.B.Shaw gives a superior status to his heroines and women characters; they are more able-bodied and emotionally stronger than men characters. He sees more good in intelligent and wise women. He splits himself, varies and incarnates in more and more women and men; representing his views, they are spread throughout his works. His heroes have to be sensual, ascetic and artistic, practical men who are ready to adjust, make compromises and forge ahead with their head held high, unmindful of the possible hurdles and problems that may come in the way.

Seth's literary writings comprising ten books show his unparalleled versatility. He appears to fulfill the task as visualized by Swami Ranganathanda in the section entitled 'On Nationhood and Dharma':
A Gandhi comes or Vivekananda or Aurobindo, why? There is something higher. You have to go in that direction so that literature, art and other things not only just mirror but something is put before man, some human excellence is put before him, then something great will happen. Writers have a tremendous responsibility, not only just to ponder over other people's views but also to place before man certain human excellences coming through art, coming through literature. (Paniker 163)

Not only as a student of economics but also as translator poet and novelist Vikram Seth is an extremely versatile writer with a multifaceted career. He is a travel-writer children's with librarian, memoirist and biographed. Born on June 20, 1952 in Calcutta (Kolkata), Vikram Seth and his family lived in a number of cities such as Bhatanagar (Bata Shoe Company town) Patana and London. He could not spend his childhood days in proper Calcutta because he was sent to boarding school at the age of only five. He received his education from St. Xavier's High School, Patana, Welham Boy's School in Dehradun and The Doon School also in Dehradun where he once felt extremely lonely and isolated. As regards his parents, his father Mr. Prem migrated to India from west Punjab in Pakistan after partition. Before his marriage with Leila, Seth's mother, he had an unsuccessful affair with a Sikh girl Seth's mother, Leila had an honour of being the first woman judge in Delhi High court. Later she also became the chief justice of a State High Court at Simla. She was so studious that she completed her study of Law in London when she was pregnant with Seth's younger brother. It was due to her deep study and devotion to work that she stood first in her Bar examinations just a few weeks before the delivery of her second child. Seth's younger brother Shantum conducts and also manages Buddhist
meditational turns whenever and whenever necessary. His younger sister Aradhana, a film maker is married to a person who is an Austrian diplomat.

After completing his education in India Vikram Seth studied for two years at the university of Beijing and has lived in California and England. He is an anomalous individual who has often elicited negative reactions and unfavorable criticism for many reasons including his unconventional development as a writer and possibly also because he has written books which were extremely successful and made him a such man for many years he lived in London but now while living near satisbury, England he very often participates in local but notable literary and cultural events. As regards India he lives with his parents in Delhi were he keeps his extensive library and papers.

Seth very boldly acknowledges that many of his fictional personnel are drawn from life. According to him, it is only the dog cuddles in A suitable Boy who has his real name. Seth’s mother, justice Leila Seth declares in her memoir. On balance that other characters in A suitable Boy are composites but Haresh is portrait of her husband, Prem. Vikram Seth’s work over the years constitutes some of the most daring innovations and experiments with form in Indian writing in English. From the dazzling verse narrative of the Golden Gate through the extra ordinarily chiseled poetry in The Humble Administrators garden, Mappings, All you who sleep tonight the fables of Beastly Tales from here and there, the translations of the Chinese poets, the courageous Saturn to the saga form in A suitable Boy to the effective beautiful prose of an Equal Music. Seth is undoubtedly, one of the most important of India’s writers. It is believed that Seth’s poetry could not manage to achieve the kind of star status that his fiction possesses. But this belief still stands doubtful. Seth is actually very interesting poet in the
community of Indian poets writing in Elgilish. He has managed to strike a whole new one where other Indian poets in English have preferred verses of sorrows and tones of unremitting gloom on the traditional pattern – although Keki Daruwall, M.K. Naik Dam Moras, Shankar Mokashi Punckar and Nissim Ezekiel have occasionally tried their hands at crafty and light verse combining the acerbity of Daruwalla, structural form of MOkeshipunkekar and irony of Nissim Ezekiel Vrikram Seth is successful enough in composing some best humorous and casual verses as his contribution to the present world of Indian English poetry Seth’s range, crafts manship and preternatural felicity with descriptions make him one of the most important poets in English poets are concerned they concentrate only on deep sentiment or high seriousness, while Seth, along with the same, concentrates on a kind of delicious irony and pointed satire, especially when he has to convey to his readers an important message of life.

Of all the countries of the world, it is only great Britain where travel books are very popular and people read them with great interest and zeal. In 1983 Vikram Seth published from Heaven lake: Travels Though Sinkiang and Tibet which deals with a pleasant and interesting detail of his return home* from Beijing, across sinksiang and the Himalayan range. It was really a very adventures and eventful journey because Seth did not prefer to use the most common means of conveyance i.e. trains and planes, he traveled paying visits to the places situated in the most interior regions, especially the little known North-Western provinces where central Asian non-Han Muslims and the Uyghur’s inhabit. He also succeeded in fulfilling his long cherished desire to visit Tibet in the last. While touring round these places he got an opportunity of commenting on an intriguing period in the history of China which, after Mao’s death was experiencing the
timid reforms brought about by Deng Xiaoping who tried his utmost to import the poor economic state of China. Parallel with the situation in India Seth describes fully ell the problems and difficulties of the regime in China with his well equipped critical mind and makes his readdress fully aware of them. His thoughts and approaches are like that of a diasporic writer and thus can be termed as the a Chinese Diaspora Vikram Seth has interpreted the signs- buildings and topography – in terms of china’s communist setup that trivets’ and discourages any individual enterprise. Like wise he is amazed at the preponderance of Mao-icons in Tibet. He wonders at the absence of de-Maoificatin in Tibet and thus hints at Tibet’s in forced political legacy. Seth’s passage through Tibet and China is unconstrained by schedules, and he is almost a Baudlairean flamer. IN the eastern provinces of china there is today little space for solitude, Seth writes: “If I am willing to bicycle from the university, I can gain some sence of quiet, the wooded paths with acorns stream across the ground the layers of leaf mould, the sunlight spraying through the branches of the writing trees.”

One can not insist enough on the fact that Seth is a special writer, one who loves walking a tight rope, daring to be different, to discover or rediscover traditional paths paying little attention to fashionable critical Shibboleths. Thus in 1986, after having published an extremely sensitive book of poems The Humble Administrators Garden he writes The Golden Gate, a novel in verse, daring to challenge his readers in a clever, original way. The Golden Gate is an artistic and narrative triumph. Playing a gamble that few writers would take Seth wins hands-down. The novel-in-Verse is a veritable feast in, which Seth serves equally appetizing humour and sadness. ON the whole the golden Gate is a sad love story reflecting the concept of Californian diaspora. Seth opted for a very tight,
rigid structure, that a sonnet to explore the vagaries of love the complex interplay of human relationships against the dazzling background of contemporary California the epitome of fashionable modern life. It is paradoxically an innovative work of Vikram Seth in which he is successful energy in maintaining balance between a sympatric understanding of the human predicament people’s lack of communication, the anguish of loneliness, contentment and self realization the Golden Gate is in other words not only a brilliant portrayal of bright and articulate middle class people, a text in which the author can display his skill to manically describe the radical attitude of many intellectuals, the glib style of much criticism, which cuts to pieces the artists who do not confirm what is considered valid and fashionable, but it also several the deep humanity of its author who beyond a glittering surface perceives the pathos of human condition. Using several descriptions that qualify as the grotesque, Seth here criticizes the greatest killing machine that human beings have ever invented war and its newest toy the nuclear bomb. The Golden Gate is full of met fictional play in a “classic” post modern mode and the tale has several elements that intrigue the reader at first reading. As early as chapter two Seth introduces the strong narratorial voice that addresses the reader directly. He has effectively taken away the reliability of the narrator and leaves us to our own anxiety of interpretation- a typically postmodern more. Though post modern in its narrative technical que, The Golden Gate is also a sentimental novel. In this respect it can be compared with Possession written by A.S. Byatt and so, I am glad by A to Kennedy. There are also other features that make The Golden Gate a postmodern narrative reaches the point where Ed. And Phil have gone to bed, Seth’s narrator asserts his presence.
"The imperial official cursor-officious and imperious-drove his undiscriminating panzer straight through the middle of my stanza. now, Gentle Reader, is it right this swine should put my House to flight i'll above the manage to manana but under protest."

Another novel which Vikram Seth wrote is in prose fully steeped in the European tradition of Tolstoy and George Eliot. It is a family saga set in India in the early 50's shortly after independence and the drama of partition when the country was going through not the pangs of birth but the painful lessons of learning to adjust to a new political and social situation when epochal decisions had to be made in high places while families on a humbler level were deciding the future of their children. There are therefore two planes in the novel the public and the private ones, which often intertwine provoking different reactions. What one admires is the ample sweep of the book the writer's ability to create a group of solid rounded characters whose destinies are somehow interlocked.

The whole action is set in motion by a simple, well defined motif; a mothers wish to find a suitable boy for her daughter, a nice, well brought-up Hindu girl. All this makes the novel a novel of Indian diaspora. This novel is written in the third person narration about a cross section of individuals and families in around or connected with Brahampur and imaginary north Indian village. This novel under the title A Suitable Boy is novel of multilingualism a clear witness of India's diversity. Hindu, Muslim tension is the recurring theme of the novel. It also depicts the drama of the political struggles which took place before the general elections of 1952, in the explosion of communal riots due to fanatic elements both on the Muslim and the Hindu side in the pettly intrigues of university life. In a revealing passage Seth in the words of the young intellectual, Amit
Chatterji, defines his ideas about the composition of the novel, similar to performing a raag.

"...first you take one note and explore it for a while then another to discover its possibilities, then perhaps you get the demonant, and pause for the best and then the more brilliant improvisions and diversions begin, with the main theme returning from time to time, and finally it all speeds up, and the excitement increases to a climax”3

Despite the vast canvas of the novel, Seth manages not to lose the sight of his original theme and that to find a suitable boy for the marriage of a girl against the vast panorama of Indian life among the affluent middle class of the north-And he also manages to fuse in the crucial of his art, notify and topics already present in the fiction of other important writers of Indian subcontinent. Maan Kapoors infaturation for glamorous and charming Saeeda Bai is quite similar to that which we find in Ocean of Night written by Ahmed Ali. The miserable plight of the Dalits and landless people living the villages reminds us of Kamla Mar Kandaya. The seemses describing corruptions and intrigues of political life take us straight the fiction of Nayantara Sahgal. Almost all the important Indian fiction writers of the time such as V.S. Naipal, Anita Desai, Shobha De, Sheshi Tharoor Edward Said ever Salman Rushdie do have then share with the feelings of Vikram Seth in so far as the theme of the novel is concerned.

According to David Myers what Seth wanted to do in A suitable Boy was to emphasize the theme of the: “epic renunciation of the passions”4

Not only in amorous relations but also in politics and religion, on assumption already present in the Golden Gate but which returns more forcibly in this book. This becomes
quite clear when Lata, the heroine of the novel tills her friend, Malati in the following words:

“When I’m with Kabir, or even away from him but thinking about him, I become utterly useless for anything I feel I’m out of control like boat heading for the rocks and I don’t want to become a week”

This is why she does not hesitate in accepting the proposal of Haresh despite the snobbish perplexities of her brother that marriage is too serious an involvement risk following the dictates of the heart and the body. This is what we exactly find in the cases of many heroines of Shashi Deshpande. This state of affair can be compared to an historical novel of our times, although for some critics it is only.

“a technically proficient block buster novel that seeks (and inevitably fails) to encapsulate a deliberately exoticised India.” 6

The Indian journalist and novelist, Khushwant Singh his acid of the novel.

“I lived through that period and I couldn’t find a flow. It really is an authentic picture of Nehrus India”7

Involving only European characters in euql Musica (1999) I sanother love story set in Europe. The theme of the novel deals with the meetings partings, heart breaks promises and betrayals which are interturned on the special kind of music where melodies are played together hust to produce an equal music. This is exactly like the narrative experiment already under practice in the contemporary Indian novels. Here we find two sets of relationships –Michael Holne’s with Julia and Michael’s with the music group.

What Seth concentrates on here is making love and making music which ultimately is the
central theme of the novel. This is clearly found when Seth describes how Michael and Julia after making love are able to work together on music.

“One morning after making love, we tried making music together. It did not go well, we were both two nervous. Later in the week we gave it another try, and were taken a back by how naturally, how responsively—to each other to the music we were playing.”

The theme of the novel is mainly based on Backs Art of Fuge which strikes a note that more important than anything also is music-music which can transcend all human understanding.

In *An Equal Music* Seth also has acknowledged his ten-year relationship with his forncisco journalist, Sandip Roy has reported that Seth discussed the issue of his sexuality candidly in a television programme with his sister, Aradhana. In a book tour-radio interview, Roy probed further. Seth said that this was not something he had ever hidden, but that he just did not wish to be defined by it. In the other hand, he said that he was conscious of the fact that being open about his sexuality might help other bisexual or gay people and that he had given leave to his mother to write about it partially for that reason. Seth’s mother justice Leila Seth wrote in her memoir on Balance:

“At the time (of a dispute with seth over sleeping arrangements for a visiting frient) I didn’t realize that Vikram was bisexual. This understanding came to me much later and I found it hard to come to terms with his homosexuality, Premo found it even harder ............... But we loved him and accepted it without understading it.”

*An Equal Music* keeps a perfect balance between the details of the realistic world and the xysteious world of the human psyche. Being ever alert about the form, Vikram Seth delivers the nuances of the characters mostly through their expressions. All the
characters contribute to the specific tone required by the novel, Piers is a natural musician, very disciplined but not rigid. A homosexual Piers tries “to run a tight ship”. Billy is soft with a hard centre. Once he gets some idea into his head, it is difficult to dislodge it. Always late for everything, Billy prefers to rehearse than to perform. It is Billy who gives his ticket to Michael, as he has felt that Michael must see the performance by Julia. Helen is a wonderful player who is merged in music. Through the gestures shown by Helen when she feels that Michael is undergoing emotional troubles, Vikram Seth is able to draw her sketch, brief and clear. The minor characters too, are turned in the unique form Vikram Seth’s crafty depiction of characters, of ten through brilliant and witty conversations, changed with pathos, irony and humour, helps to make the structure of the novel perfect.

The novel Reveals Vikram Seth’s fondness for irony that Michael happens to be a butchers son is itself ironic. Ironically, again, it is Virginia’s, the most frustrations student Michael ever had, who in one of her non-ending telephonic conversations, gave him the information about Beethoven’s Opus 104 arranged into string quintet in C minor. Not knowing about Julia’s deafness Michael asks her whether she is still fond of the nightingale voice. Quoting from Luke’s shool brochure Julia says that her six-year-did son is”.

“growing daily in academic artistic, musical, social, spiritual, physical and moral structure.”

Vikram Seth’s approach to social reality helps the novel to set its foot in the real world of man. The description of Luke’s School brochure is an obvibous satire favourite with Vikram Seth. When Michael describes the changes in Rochdale, he serves his creator’s
role of a social critic. He is shocked to learn that the peripatetic music teachers provided by the local education authorities have been cut back:

"Then came the planning blight: the Replacement of human slums of inhuman Ones the marconing of churches in traffic islands the building of precincts where once there were shops, Finally two decades of garroting from the government in London and everything civic or social was choked of funds: school libraries. Hospitals, Transport." 11

A witty use of sarcasm in a narrative based on heightened passion displays Vkram Seth’s unique hold on his subject. Vikram Seth’s use of riddles as a way of diversion from the world of passion also adds charm to his style. During his conversation with Julia’s son Luke, Michael cannot satisfy Luke with the answer to his question.

“What is the difference between a dancer and a duck”. The right answer, according to Luke is: “One goes quick on her eggs.” 12

As regards Diaspora the opinion of Vijay Mishra is highly commendable. According to him,

“All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way” 13

In the late modern celebratory argument on behalf of Diasporas, diasporic communities are said to occupy a border Zone where the most vibrant Kinds of interactions take place and where ethnicity and nation are kept separate. In this argument, diasporas are fluid ideal, social formations happy to live whenever there is an international airport and stand for a longer much admired historical process. For many historians of Diaspora, Diaspora is a recent theoretical issue, because not too long ago the study of Diaspora and definition of the term itself, was relatively straight forward. This term is generally used in relation
to the people who are uprooted, aimless wanderer in search of home. A diasporic person, it is said was a kind of wanderer or wayfarer whom even god had rejected. As per the definition, Diaspora is considered as a very culture specific term just to make the connected clear. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as the dispersion. .. the whole body of few living dispersed among the gentiles after their captivity. This dictionary locates the first use of the term in Deuteronomy xxviii, 25 where we find, “Thank shall be a Diaspora (or dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth”. The recent interpretation of this word ‘dispora’ is just to signify the lives of any group of people living in displacement probably marking a postmodern move connecting the narratives and experiences of human affairs, their specific races and their origins:

“The recent opening up of the word to signify the lives of “any group living in displacement is a phenomenon move to dismantle a logo centric and linear view of human affairs that connected narratives and experiences to specific races and to origins; the model here was that of historical lexicography of which the sublime examples is the OED itself.” 14

The placement of Diaspora is a recent theoretical issue for many historians of diaspora. It is already supposed that not too long age the issue of the study of diaspora as well as its definition was relatively straight forward as its analysis and definition were connected with the ground narrative of the history of the Jewish people. Obviously, Diaspora is a term which is directly or indirectly related with the uprooted and aimless wanderers in search of shelter or home. It can be defined as a linear narrative of the dispersal and return of the original people.
Diasporas signify a Gesell shaft i.e. an alienated society without any organic laws against the nation-state’s own Gesell shaft i.e. traditionally, organically linked community. So for as the nation-state is concerned it sees in Diasporas reflections of its own past its own earlier migration patterns, its own transmute moments and its memories of settlement. It means say that it is none other than the absence of diasporic enjoyment of the Nation. Thing in the dominant group itself Vijay Mishra has ve3ry clearly expressed his view about it in the following words:

“The Musician Indian case on the face of it presents itself as an exception to the rule. Since the Indian Diaspora has governed He island state since its independence On March 12, 1968. However, in as much As the prior, colonial history of Mauritius created a cultural imaginary from which The Indian were largely excluded (a French- Creole Cultural hegemony was prevalent) the Indian “enjoyment” of the nation (as a new creative jouissance) fits into the patternI have outlined. An international conference of the Indian Diaspora organized by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute/Human service Trust Mauritius (21-23 August-1993) was made up of delegates almost-exclusively from India. The conference’s excessively genuflective treatment of things Indian indicated a new way of enjoying the nation through a celebration of the nations history of indenture past and its connections with homeland’ history” 15

It is the diasporic enjoyment of the Nation- Thing absent among the “proprietors” of the Nation that gives rise to the rance of responses, chief among than racist exclusion and cultural denigration that in some sense attenuate or even deflect a psychology that
underlies the "lost" enjoyment of the national by the dominant community Prof. Vijay Mishra avers again.

"I want to suggest that this psychology manifests itself in postmodern racism (or) metaracism, which of ten means that the demand for the diverse cultural that spaces and positions in a nation requires a poetics of absolute difference as a means of organizing nation side such a politics diasporas than become victims of an espite-mology of "otherness" in which exclusion principles and practices are put in place because it is argued that this is what diasporas want. The shor-hand shetoric of the post modern racist is the following:

"I am not a racist, intended, some of my best friends are south Asians, but they want to live their lives in that way so why should I not support their right to the different, this the point at which a critical diaspora". 16

Theory overlaps with a critical multiculturalism. Eventually in the case of the Diaspora the fantasy of the homeland is connected with that recollected trauma that stands for the sign of having been wrenched from one's mother father land. The sing of trauma may be the middle passage of solve trade or Indian indenture to thinking of Disporas's in terms of negation in terms of discrepant or varied understanding of the enjoyment of the Nation thing also stipulates a consciousness of our own beings, and the necessarily of intense self reflection and finally recognition Prof. Vijay Mishra further explains:

"what I believe is absolutely necessary for diasporas to do is to keep their own specters of slavery and Coolie-life (and latterly graveyard Shifts and work in sweatshops firmly in place. There is for the old Indian dispora, a plantation history a lived memory of the passage (chalo
jahajifare forward, fellow voyagers)” is the title of a book by the leading historian of Fiji-Indian indenture Brij Lal) that must be firmly kept in place the reflection demands that we constantly revisit our trauma as part of our ethical relationship to the ghosts of Diaspora. It also sends a clear signal that the idealist sciences endorsed by some Diaspora theorists needs to be tempered by individual Diaspora histories.” 17

Some of the strongest support for revitalized nation-states has come from diasporas. Even as the hyper mobility of post modern capital makes borders porous and ideas get immediately disseminated via websites and search engines, diasporic subjects have shown a remarkable anti-modern capacity for ethnic absolutism. In past, this is because diasporas can now create their own fantasy structures of homeland even as they live elsewhere. Amit S. Rai in his work on the construction of Hindu identity in 1995 explores the new public sphere that the Indian Diaspora now occupies as the Diaspora itself becomes a conduit through which the conservative polities of the homeland may be presented as the desirable norm. In his findings through internetRai discovers that many postings construct India in purist terms, Hindu in nature and in which an antinationlist secularism appeases minorities. In their invocations of important Indian religious and cultural figures:- Vivekanand R.C. Dutt and others- the subtext is a discourse of racial priority.

“We must go to the root of the disease and cleanse the blood of all impurities”18

This opinion of Vivekanand is also applicable to the social threat to Hindus posed by the Muslims in India, Mr. Amit S. Rai is very clear about this thing where he presents his point of view in the following manner:
"Finally this textual construction of the Diaspora can at the same time enable these diasporics to be 'affirmative action' in the United States and be against 'reservation' in India to lobby for a tolerasit pluralism in the west, and also support a narrow sectarianism in the East." 19

Vijay Mishra contradicts the above opinion of Amit S. Rai and adds:

"The postings need not lead to the correlation he discovers-it should be clear that diasporas construct homelands very differently from the way in which homeland peoples construct themselves. for an Indian in the Diaspora for example, India as a very different Kind of homeland " then for the Indian national" 20

This is seen that the nation State needs diasporas to remind it of what the idea of homeland is diasporic discourse of the homeland thus represents a return of the repressed for the nation-state itself its pre-symbolic (imaginary) narrative in which the nation sees its own primitive past. Thus historically two extreme instances of diaspora the Jewish and Gypsy diasporas have been threated by nation-states with particular disdain because they exemplify in varying degrees characteristics of a past that nation-states want to repudiate. If the Gypsies were read as the absolute instance of a nomadic tribe, the profound historicity of the Jewish people gave their Diaspora a privileged position in diasporic theory Diasporic theory then uses the Jewish example as the ethnic model for purpose of analysis or, at last, as its point of departure. But Jewish diasporas were never totally exclusivist, not isolation from Christians but insolation from Christianity. As a matter of fact, the real history of Diaspora is always contaminated by social processes and in the end, by nationalist forces that govern diasporic subjects' lives. Thus, diasporas
become more than just theoretical propositions. Vijay Mishra’s statement is quite apt here.

"Once a morally bankrupt-nation-state asks the question seen by Sartre as the nations racist solution; “what do we do with them now?” In the post-September,” world order that question is being asked about Muslims generally, diasporic or not. In that interrogative mood diasporas. two, may be asked to declare where they are “for us or against us.” For me Sartre’s question remains what may be called the ‘transcendental signified.” Against which we compose a Diaspora theory. To forget this fear is to ignore one of the principal lessons of modern history “21

In the lead essay in the foundation issue of the journal Disaspora in 1991 William Safran has writer only twelve lines in connection will Indian diaspora and given his brevity over simplifying the charactiristics of this Diaspora. Really speaking the Indian Diaspora is cooperatively a recent phono modern Indian Diaspora has a longer history that is fact connected with a older wanderlast i.e.e the ghummakar tradition which took fellow Indians to sentheast Asia and Sri Lanka as missionaries and conquerors and traders to the trading community around the Arabian Sea. Reason for this was only the poverty at home that pushed Indians across the ocean to Africa. M.G. Vassanji in his recent novel under the title, the In-Between world of Vikram Lall writes ............ surely there’s that wanderlust first that itoh in the sole that hankering in the soul that puffs out the sails for hourney into the totally unknown’22

Now the point is crystal clear that the Indian diaspora is a kind of complex social formation. It is obviously extra ordinary rich archive which lends itself to critical analysis and their. Indian Diaspora as a matter of fact can be designated by two terms —
old and new. The old Indian Diaspora includes in itself the rarely modern classic
capitalist so called the nineteenth century indenture and the new Indian Diaspora is that
of late modern or late capitalist. The old Diaspora interacts by and large with colonized
people with power and privilege living in Fizi-South African Malaysia, Mauritius,
Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam. The new Indian Diaspora consists of the people who
have entered metropolitan centers of compare or other white settler countries such as
Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the V.S. under the effect of global migration. Its
cultural dynamics are often examined within a multi cultural theory. There are, of course,
Indians, part corporation, part-indenture with long histories in many ports of Africa,
notably, East Africa, about whom Indian Canadian writer Vasanji M.R., has specially
written, As is clear from Vasanji treatment of Shamshi traders of Gujrat who migrated
to East Africa, the binary of the old and the new offered here is not meant to isolate
communities or to situate experiences within non-negotiable or exclusive frames. It
should be self evident that the old has who become the port of ‘new’ through
remigrations such Fiji-Indians to Vancouver or Trinidad who Indians to Toronto. Fury
one of Salman Rushdie’s novels is full of the pictures of the unhappy South Pacific isles
inhabited by the Indo-Lilly Vijay Mishra says:-

“I keep the distinction of the ‘old’ an the ‘new’ not because the binary has to b defended
or that the binary is incontestable it is made because Indian intellectuals of the diaspora
(Appadurai, Radhakrishan and Bhabha among many others) presume that the lives of th
Indian NRI’s (the ‘new’ Diaspora of ‘non-resident Indians’) constitute. The self
evidently legitimate archive with which to explore histories of diasporic subjectivities.
They have also tended to presume that the 'new' present itself as the "dominant (and indeed the more exciting) site for purposes of diasporic comment."23

The 'old' and the 'new' Indian diaspora reflect the very different historical conditions that produced than the old Diaspora presents us with a case history that has been documented more or less from its moment of inception, as the Emigration Pass of each labourer contained detailed personal historic caste, age, marital status, location and so on. The late modern diaspora has been seen as a powerful source for post colonial discourses of disarticulation cabandonment, displacement, dispersion etc. The new occupies a desired space, the dream world of health and western luxury and is referred to in India as N.R.I. (non resident Indians). But in this space a new form of racism (a metarecism) is on the ascendant and race and ethnicity get dragged into debates about multiculturalism. Writers and filmmakers of this Diaspora such as Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, M/G. Vassanji, Hanif Kureshi, Meera Nair, Deepa Mehta, Gurinder Chadha, Meera Syal and Srinivas Krishna among other, raise theoretical questions about ethimicity and often speak of a Diaspora whose overriding characteristic is mobility where the Diaspora of the exclusivism transplanted Indian icons of spirituality to the new land-finding holy ganges and odd lingam or other religious symbol in the new land, the Diaspora of the border kept in touch with India. Diaspora of the border in these western democracies are visible preserve. The Indian citizenship act 1955 has been amended to allow the Indian Diaspora in the United Kingdom the unite States, Canada, Australia, Finland, Iceland, Netherland and Italy to residential citizenship. In a thoroughly global world, the act of displacement now makes diasporic subjects travelers on move their
homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media where the ‘net’ constitutes the ‘self.’

A people without a homeland is not an aberration, but an already prefigured cultural text of late modernity. In other words the positive side of diaspora is a democratic ethos of equality that does not privilege any particular ethnic community in a nation; its negative side (which is a consequence of its millenarian ethos of return to a homeland) is a virtue virulent racism and endemic nativision. What the argument does however, is emphasize that the religious fossilization of the community undergoes is a process of social semiosis where by the the from a particular homeland interacts with other cultures over a long period of time to produce Diaspora. Against the fiction of the heroic past and a distant land, the real history of diaspora is always contaminated by the social processes that govern their lives. Addressing real diasporal does not mean that the discourses that have been part of diaspora mythology (homeland, ancient past return all so on) will disappear overnight. We need to read off a modernist ‘transcendental homelessness’ against lived experience and we need to critically think through diasporalas located in both white and non white nation states."". 24

Professor Vijay Mishra’s Book under the title, ‘The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary deals chiefly with a concise and incisive residing of the leading writers such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipal, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, Hanif Kureshi, Sudesh Mishra, Rama Bai Espinet, Shani Mooto, K.S. Marium, Shyam Selvadurai, Mira Nair, Sain Selvon, Bharati Mukherjee, M.G. Vassanji and subramani; This book of Professor Mishra is a kind of survey a which covers six continents and scores of countries where the Indian Diaspora numbering over
thirty million have spread over the last 175 years. The discussion about the writers made by Prof. Vijay Mishra in his book is very informative productive and viseful for the students of Indian English Literature.

To the mind and thought of Professor Mishra, V.S. Naipal is not only the foremost writer of Indian Diaspora but also an arehtypal one. The first two chapters of the book deal mainly with Naipal and other writers like him, According to Vijay Mishra, these writers are the pioneers of what the terms as the 'girmit diology' and very boldly, places them in the history of indenture. Actually the term 'Girmit' is the corrupt form of the term agreement- a kind of legal document bearing the signature of a impoverished farmer making him an approved slave:

"Naipal's impportance to any study of the Indian Diaspora cannot be over stated because his works allow us to understand how life-world in the old plantation, diaspora are mediated in the literary archieve." 25

Actually V.S. Naipal is not only a modernist and neo-colonialist. His works are haunted by the image and reflections of his indentured ancestors whom he never forgets. His works are living legends of nothing but of Diasporas. Naipal's book, A House for Mr. Biswas, according to Vijay Mishra is the absent epic of the diaspora and also a kind of 'bed raggled' epic of the Indian diaspora. Resides V.S. Baipal, Professor Mishra has also discussed in detail the Major texts of Salman Rushdie in his book. These true writers have a lion share in the book of Professor Mishra. Discussion about them is merely descriptive but also insightful and deep. The writer has illustrated the theory of Diaspora with the support of basically the texts of these two writers (V.S. Naipal and Salman
Rushdie) in detail. It would take several careful readings, therefore, the unpack the full significance of Mishra’s achievement.

“If at its most obvious level the book is a reading of the texts of the Indian Diaspora it is also, at a second somewhat deeper level, an astonishingly recondite engagement with diaspora theory. This indeed, is Mishra’s forte. Almost classical/Brahmanical in the complexity of analysis and erudition, this is clearly an account by and for an aficionado of theory; by the same token, for those somewhat familiar with both the primary and secondary archive, it is a real treat. What is perhaps Mishra’s strongest point in this regard is his total abrogation of obfuscation or jargon. Concepts are seldom invoked without redefinitions, Mishra has no use or need for careless name doping or presences cleverness. But, by the same token the book makes unusual demands on the reader, like an advanced-level course with formidable, prerequisites.”

Apart from Naipal and Rushdie, the heroes of the primary texts of the book the secondary is dealt with that of chiefly Freud. Mishra’s interpretation of Freud is the result of his deep study of Derrida or Lucan. He has made Freud his basic theoretical armory.

“Indeed, a special combination of Freudian ‘structuralism’ combined with Derridean ‘post-structuralism’ gives Mishra’s argument its peculiar inflection and purchase; the deep structure comes from Freud but its method of application is often drawn from critique of capitalism informs Mishra’s overall analysis, thus never allowing the book to deviate too much from a materialist culturalist reading of Diaspora. Yet what really moves Mishra is the more ‘spiritual’ idea of trauma, dislocation, and unending longing which comes from Freud. The wounds are, hence material, but the persistent
agon is spiritual, such theoretical layering makes for a complex, over unique sundering of the experience of the Indian Diaspora and its texts.”27

In his book, The Literature of the Indian Diaspora Professor Vijay Mishra has laid emphasis on making the idea of ‘impossible mourning’ a strong ground to which his reading of the diaspora narratives revolves round. He very clearly succeeds in differentiating melancholy from mourning and vice versa by the help of his thorough study of Freud via Devida:-

“The subject turns away from reality and clings on to the object of mourning even when reason dictates that the object can no longer be grasped and the work of mourning’ his to be completed before the ego can become free and unhindered again. In the context of diasporas we need to ask when is the subject cured want to suggest that the diasporic imaginary is a condition............. of impossible mourning that transforms mourning into melancholia.”28

Prof. Mishra’s earless writings on the subject of Diaspora are based on the approaches and views of the writers like Salman Rushdie’s concerning the problems of mordancy describing the condition of late capitalism and pool-modernism. But so far as this book is concerned it is the result of his maturity and mellowness making it a work of somber transformation. According to Professor Mishra, the diasporic imaginary is marked by never healing wound which ever remains in one generation after the other. To him, diaspora is like an ethnic enclave in a nation state or as a group that lives in diasplacement. Though mobile even affluent the diasporic subject can neither return to the motherland nor fully belong to the adopted country.
“Indeed Mishra tends to be some what skeptical of the label ‘Diaspora’ being applied to anyone who considers their dislocation in happier terms. Call them immigrants transnationals or global people he seems to suggest, but not diasporic that last term is reserved, for an unhappier breed whose growing fortunes cannot really compensate for the pain they continue to suffer, the never ending shock of severance from their object of love an object which no longer exists in reality and can therefore never be regained.”

Without any hesitation professor Mishra reveals the fact that the indentured laborers of the old Diaspora suffered very much the horrible dehumanizing almost fatal journey across the black water. They had to undergo the miserable state of slavery and victimhood of mercantile capitalism, the ship that carried them was the symbol of one way journey. The experience of the old Diaspora as Professor Mishra defines was of two events- passage and plantation. Quite contrary to it is the concept of new Diaspora which comprises not only the global capital but also is characterized by mobile and highly qualified professionals who don’t suffer the experience of loss unlike the old Diaspora= as a truest Prof. Mishra cannot accord the same status all the letter to the title of Diaspora:-

“All diasporas are unhappy, but every Diaspora is unhappy in its own way Disporas refer to people who do not feel compatible with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport....They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by specters, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irradiates or separatist movement.”
Last but not the least the talk about the Indian Diaspora cannot get completion unless one talks of the last part of the book i.e.e the Literature of the Indian Diaspora where Professor Vijay Mishra ends his discussion by asking following questions:

“(a) When do we die for a political party? (b) When do we die for a nation? (c) When do we die for a Cause? Diasporas of course refuse to die. And here in lies a question which may also be posed as a dilemma; can diasporas be anything else but travelers happy in their travel travail ...........” 31

These questions he has raised in connection with the tragedy of Fiji, the second displacement of the Indians from “paradise” because he knows fully well that no nations can own anybody without flowing blood for its noble cause. He further writes in the same book:

“In Suva or Sacramento in Trinidad or Toronto Muslims or Melbourne, Indian will remain a Diaspora became there are unable to die for a cause.” 32

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