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## A Suitable Boy: Arranged Marriages, Comparing that to the Phenomenon of Internet Match-Making in the Modern World

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**Abstract-** *A suitable boy* by Vikram Seth is the story of four families in India in the early 1950s after the British occupation has ended and the India/Pakistan partition has taken place. Though not an epic novel in the usual sense of the world, *A Suitable Boy* is certainly epic in scale, over 1400 pages in length. It is, in fact, the idea of arranged marriage that is implied in the title. A great deal of effort is put forth on the part of a family to find a 'suitable boy' for their unmarried daughters. As Indian girls gain more independence like going out shopping in small groups of friends and attending university classes, there arises a conflict between many girls and their families over the idea of an arranged marriage.

**Keywords:** occupation, partition, certainly, arranged marriage, independence

**Introduction-** Arguably the central character of the novel, Lata Mehra, questions how a woman could marry and live with a man she could not love because she knows nothing about him. Although the novel is not political, there is enough of the conflict between Hindu and Muslim to explain certain prejudices and it is in

one of those prejudices that Lata rushes headlong as she meets and eventually falls in love with Kabir Durrani, a Muslim and son of a prominent Mathematician at the university. To further complicate the plot, Maan Kapoor, Pran's younger brother, becomes infatuated with the notorious Muslim courtesan, Saeeda Bai. The plot contains a great many political intrigues that are difficult to follow and would be uninteresting were it not for the fact that various family members are involved in the action.

The plot continues throughout the novel centering mostly on the 'Suitable Boy' theme played out in sub-plots involving Maan Kapoor and Saeeda Bai, Ishaq Tasneem, and most especially Lata and Kabir and 'Suitable Boys' to whom she is introduced in Calcutta. In the end, Lata resolves to give up Kabir and marry a 'Suitable Boy' she likes but does not love. Aside from Lata's heart-breaking decision not to marry Kabir, there is little real ugliness in the novel outside of inter-and intra-family intrigues which Seth somehow manages to make interesting reading.

### **Indian Culture of Racial Castes, Arranged Marriages, and Love Marriages: –**

The social necessity of marriage is evident in *A Suitable Boy*. The novel starts with the wedding ceremony of Savita Mehra. It is arranged marriage and the bride has met Pran, her would-be husband, only for an hour, and this meeting is held in her mother's presence. In Indian society, it is not considered a desirable act to marry for love as such marriages are not regarded as successful. Mrs. Mehra feels that her burden has been lessened as she has married her elder daughter. Now she is considering the marriage prospects of Lata, her younger daughter. Though Lata detests the idea of arranged marriage, her mother reminds her that she has to marry the boy of her choice. She says, 'what is good enough for your sister is good enough for you.'

Certain sociological factors make the parents desperate and anxious to search for a suitable spouse for girls especially. As we see in the case of Mrs. Rupa Mehra, she belongs to the middle class and she wishes to marry her daughters to a well-off class to raise their social standings. In this way, she would not be troubled to raise dowry. As in Indian society, the bridegroom's family demands much dowry – from the bride's family.

Therefore, it is Mrs. Mehra's utmost attempt to get her daughters married to well-off families. She is also very much conscious of class and caste. In her eyes, Haresh Khanna comes up with the qualification of

the most suitable boy. One major reason for choosing him is that he is Khatri by caste. Secondly, he is well settled into the job, so he would not ask for a dowry. His financial position is sound. His caste matches with the family of Mehra. She gets excited when Kalpna assures her that Haresh Khanna is a different type of guy and he would never ask for a dowry. So, while keeping in mind, all the issues of class, caste, and religion, Mrs. Mehra finally casts her vote in favour of Haresh Khanna regardless of her daughter's liking or disliking. Mrs. Mehra represents a typical Indian society that is very much conscious of caste and class issues.

Lata is deeply in love with the handsome Kabir Durrani, who is also studying at Brahmpur University in the history department. He is a son of a professor. Their love affair does not reach the desired destination. Lata gets shocked to learn that Kabir Durrani is a Muslim. She is fully aware that her mother will never give her consent for her marriage with Kabir. When her mother comes to know about her affair with Kabir, she gets hysterical and says that she can never let Lata marry a Muslim. Therefore, Lata avoids marrying Kabir because it is regarded as a social taboo if a Hindu marries a Muslim.

The selection of Haresh, as the most suitable prospect for Lata, is done based on the compatibility of caste and his sound financial position. Amit Chatterjee wishes to marry Lata too. Here again, Mrs. Roopa Mehra does not consider him a suitable prospect as opines about Amit that he is only a poet. He is not able enough to earn properly and another reason for her not liking him is that he is a Bengali. Eventually, Lata gets ready to marry a man of her mother's choice and decides to give consent for companionate marriage. The question of inter-religious marriage is out of the question in the Indian setup. The concept of an economically independent woman is not desirable in the post-colonial society of India. This is the point where Vikram Seth has put a question mark on the outcome.

## **The Phenomenon of Internet Match – Making of the Modern World-**

Matchmaking is the process of introducing a couple as potential partners in marriage. People of diverse cultures, past and present, have sought assistance from matchmakers because they may have a deeper understanding of human character, a wide connection to acquaintances, and greater knowledge and experience to help someone choose a marriage partner. The increase in popularity of "love matches" based on romance

and physical attraction, together with a loosening of the restrictions on behaviour and decline in arranged marriages, led to a decline in the use of matchmakers with young people turning to various social situations to find prospective partners. Technological advances, however, have seen the re-emergence of the matchmaking process, as computers and the internet, became popular tools in the search for an ideal mate. Ultimately, though the involvement of more than technology is necessary to guide people to find a partner with whom they can build a harmonious relationship leading to a loving family based on not only the physical but also the spiritual aspects of their lives.

Matchmakers were used throughout history in many different cultures, for good reason. Finding a good marriage partner by oneself or for one's children is no simple task. In the past, young people had little chance of meeting others beyond their immediate neighbourhood and circle of family, acquaintances, hence matchmakers served the important function of bringing together people who would not otherwise have met. An internet relationship is a relationship between people who have met online and, in many cases, know each other only via the internet. Online relationships are similar in many ways to pen pal relationships. Internet or online relationship is generally sustained for a certain amount of time before being titled a relationship just as in personal relationships otherwise the term is quite broad and can include relationships based upon text, video, audio, or even virtual character. This relationship can be among people in different regions, different countries, different sides of the world, or even people who reside in the same area but do not communicate in person.

### **Conclusion: –**

Vikram Seth's novel is at its core a love story. Lata and her mother Mrs. Rupa Mehra, are both trying to find – through love or through exacting maternal appraisal—a suitable boy for Lata to marry. Set in the early 1950s, in an India newly independent and struggling through a time of crisis, *A Suitable Boy* takes us into the richly imagined world of four large extended families and spins a compulsively readable tale of their lives and loves. A sweeping panoramic portrait of a complex multi-ethnic society in flux, *A suitable boy* remains the story of ordinary people caught up in a web of love and ambition, humour and sadness, prejudice and reconciliation the most delicate social etiquette and the most appalling violence.

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