



ISSN: 2395-7852



International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

Volume 11, Issue 2, March 2024



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.583

| www.ijarasem.com | ijarasem@gmail.com | +91-9940572462 |



Post Colonial Study in Vikram Seth's *The Suitable boy* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

Lakshita Vohra, Dr. Tanu Kashyap

Student, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Noida,

Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes the post-colonial study aims to deepen our understanding of the long-lasting impacts of colonialism and the ways in which individuals and communities navigate the challenges of a post-colonial world. The

author explores the post-colonial themes depicted in both novels. They delve into the impact of colonialism and its aftermath on the characters and societies portrayed in the stories.

KEYWORDS: Post-colonial study, Power dynamics, British colonial rule, Interconnections, Navigating the challenges of a post-colonial world, Individuals and communities

I. INTRODUCTION

Aiming at the truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations. The portrayal of reality involves highlighting the important problems of the people and new aspect of life. Life and reality are intertwined and it is the task of a successful writer to disentangle them to chart out a viable creative spirit out of it. A novel of Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh are commonly regarded as a realistic portrayal of life.

In addition, postcolonialism frequently discusses reactions to imperial European discourses in the fields of history, philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics as well as experiences like enslavement, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, and place. Because art is a social phenomenon in and of itself, it is impossible to ignore the connection between art and society. A writer must choose between openly supporting exploitation and injustice or taking on the responsibility of defending truth, justice, and humanity. The important issues that people face as well as new aspects of life are highlighted in the depiction of reality. The realism addresses the man's and society's current issues. The authors, who are focusing on a specific time in history, frequently experiment with the reality of the time to create their own timeless reality. Life and reality are intertwined, and it is the job of a successful writer to separate them and create a creative spirit that can work. A perspective on life is presented in every piece of fiction, whether it is a novel, drama, or short story. The entire social milieu, including political and social life, is encompassed by time and place of action. The novel's reputation often depends on how well it depicts the life and manners of a certain class, social group, or location.

Amitav Ghosh was born on July 11, 1956, in Calcutta. He was a pioneer of English literature and one of the most famous writers of the subaltern, diasporic, and post-colonial era. The 54th Jnanpith award went to him. In 2007, he received one of India's highest honors, the Padma Shri, from the country's president. He has four honorary doctorates in addition to two lifetime achievement awards. Amitav Ghosh is the author of the novels *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Circle of Reason* (1995), and *The Shadow Lines* (1995). His first volume of the Ibis trilogy, published prior to the Opium War in the 1830s, recounts East Asian colonial history.

His novels accurately depicted contemporary society. In both his fiction and nonfiction, he explores sociopolitical and historical, geographical, and geographic issues. He stated in an interview with Mahmood Kooria: Sometimes things happen without being planned, but they were not planned. In hindsight, I realize that what always interested me most was: It was never planned as a conscious project. the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean, as well as their interconnections and cross-connections. His 2019 novel, *Gun Island*, is about migration and climate change.

The Glass Palace tells the story of Burmese families and the history of Burma (Myanmar), a country that was ravaged by war for more than fifty years and only became a complex new democracy in 2015. Three generations of multi-ethnic, multi-class families in southeast Asia must be taken into account. Modernity is both criticized and celebrated in this book. It looks at how India and Burma's economic perspectives have changed over time.



The greatest novelist and poet, Vikram Seth, who was born on June 20, 1952, in Calcutta, won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his book *The Golden Gate*. His mother, Leila Seth, was the first Indian woman to become chief justice of a state high court. His father, Prem Nath Seth, was an executive at Bata Shoe. In his novel, he serves as a great example of a realistic representation of contemporary society. He identified a person's various arenas in terms of race, culture, class, gender, and other factors.

The novels written by Vikram Seth are excellent examples of realism in all of its guises. His masterpiece, *A Suitable Boy*, is followed by *The Golden Gate*, which is written in verse. *An Equal Music* is a masterful, realist exploration of western classical music. Seth, a true classical realist, places a strong emphasis on the sensibilities of middle-class characters and the lower-class and working-class sections of those in appropriate positions in the story. In his masterpiece, Seth uses his own brand of realism to portray the politically servile, economically disadvantaged, and socially constrained post-independence Indian society.

II. MAJOR DISCUSSION

ANALYSIS OF A SUITABLE BOY

The 1993 publication of "*A Suitable Boy*" by Vikram Seth made history in Indian English literature. The book has 1349 pages, making it the longest book ever written. The novel *A Suitable Boy* was distinctly Indian; The novel should be first published in India, according to Seth. *A Suitable Boy* was entirely set in India. Like "*The Golden Gate*" (1986), "*A Suitable Boy's*" main plot revolves around the search for a suitable partner. The novel's greatest strength is not the process of matchmaking but rather the depiction of the social environment in the decade following India's independence. All of the larger themes of political, social, and religious conflict are artificially connected by Seth. Seth captures the real-life characters' everyday, human emotions.

Novels are the age's mirror, reflecting not only its external characteristics but also its inner face. The important issues that people face as well as new aspects of life are highlighted in the depiction of reality. Life and reality are intertwined, and it is the job of a successful writer to separate them and create a creative spirit that can work. Most people think that Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh's novels are true to life.

Vikram Seth attributes the subtle, unobtrusive style of writing in *A Suitable Boy* to his personal taste and beliefs. The political hotbed of India in the 1950s, following independence and partition, is the setting for this novel. The Kapoors, the Mehras, the Chatterjis (Hindus), and the Khans (Muslims) are the four families that are the focus of this narrative. Mrs. Rupa Mehra and Lata, her youngest daughter who is eligible for marriage but is a rebel, are the story's two main characters. Seth calls his vibrant Mrs. Mehra "the muse of the project" (Bemrose), who is based in part on Seth's grandmother, also known as Rupa Mehra. Throughout the novel, Rupa Mehra, a widow, focuses on taking care of her family and, more specifically, finding Lata a Hindu-themed husband. Lata, on the other hand, is torn between her own love for a Muslim boy and her mother's wishes.

The underlying Hindu-Muslim conflict that dominated the period immediately following India and Pakistan's independence and continues to wreak havoc on the South Asian subcontinent today can be seen in the background. Conflict between Hindus and Muslims takes place in the fictional city of Brahmpur, where the majority of the story takes place, in the novel. Seth considers *A Reasonable Kid* to be a request for strict resistance, in addition to other things. According to him, "It is an insult to Hinduism that these people have hijacked

what it means to be Hindu." It's about tolerance and understanding, not trying to slap your Muslim neighbor in the face. These things must be stated, "Robinson states.

A Suitable Boy depicts the emerging polity of Post-Colonial India in the form of a political fable and roman a clef. Seth has shown how the people's mood changed from euphoria to despondency in the first ten years of independence through a variety of characters. Seth briefly discusses his central idea as he debates the political participation of students, stating: A volatile combination of their post-independence romanticism and disillusionment emerged. His diagnosis is that communism as an election tool and vote-bank politics have corroded the soul of Indian democracy. There are three types of political characters Vikram Seth uses. Some national figures, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Rajrishi Purushottam Das Tandon, appear in the first group under their real names. Vikram Seth carefully examines their role in Indian politics and identifies their shaky foundation. Some of the leaders in the second category appear under different names, but their personalities are clear.



In *A Suitable Boy*, another interesting political persona is Purva Pradesh Chief Minister S.S. Sharma, who is Mahesh Kapoor's patron. He is depicted as a fictionalized version of the former Chief Minister of the Uttar Pradesh, Pt. Pant Govind Ballabh:

Sharmaji was a rather massive individual who had a noticeable limp as well as an unconscious and slight head vibration, which was made worse when, as now, he had a long day. He led the state with benevolence, charisma, and guile. His legislative and administrative fief hardly piqued Delhi's interest because Delhi was so far away. 17) He is an effective administrator; sincere and objective, with flawless secular credentials. However, following the General Elections, he is summoned to Delhi and kicked upstairs. L.N. Agarwal, a rank political opportunist who plays the Hindu-Muslim card for political gains, is his successor, despite the fact that he appears to be preparing Mahesh Kapoor for the position. However, in the world of realpolitik, all of this clamor is pointless, and at the book's conclusion, L.N. Aggarwal is all set to take over as Chief Minister of Purva Pradesh.

The significance of *A Suitable Boy* as a postcolonial fairy tale lies in Agarwal. The emerging Indian political system is moving toward communalism and lumpenization, according to Seth. In this novel, the conflict between a mosque and a temple serves as an objectification of the shadow of communal politics. A fictional representation of the Kashi Visvanath- Gyanvapi Mosque dispute in Varanasi with echoes of the Babri Masjid cacophony in the background, the Alamgiri Mosque stands cheek to cheek near an ancient Shiva Temple. Seth gives his readers an overview of the explosive situation in Brahmipur. Brahmipur bursts into flames as the resurgent Hindus attempt to rebuild the temple in order to re-consecrate the

sacred linga. The city is engulfed in a massive riot that is fueled by rumors and exacerbated by the poor management of the security forces.

The piece's villain is L. N. Aggarwal, a controversial Home Minister. Sadly, that year, Dussehra and Moharram coincide in the lunar calendar, so events reach their boiling point. When the route of a Tazia procession crosses that of the Bharat Milap procession, all hell breaks loose. The altercation results in the injury of the actor playing Rama, causing the audience to explode. In *A Suitable Boy*, the climax of the temple-mosque debate is typical of Vikram Seth's flippant irreverence. A cartful of laborers drag the enormous linga out of the Ganga bed and up the stairs of a ghat, but it rolls back to lie in the river bed.

The meteoric rise of Waris Khan in electoral politics emphasizes the threat of lumpenization in Indian politics. Waris is an uncultured and uneducated villager. To cover up the possibility that Mahesh Kapoor won't get the Congress ticket, the Nawab of Baitar puts him up as a bogus candidate in his area during the Assembly elections. Mahesh Kapoor's son gets into a violent fight as the elections get closer, hurting the Nawab's son. Waris decides to defeat Mahesh Kapoor by any means necessary because he sees him as a threat to his Nawab. He won't back down in his favor. In the end, he defeats Mahesh Kapoor by a hair's breadth. The Munshi, Waris Khan's former boss, kneels at his feet as the newly elected MLA visits the Baitar Fort, pleading for forgiveness for the countless insults and vulgarities he may have hurled at Waris during his time as a slave. Waris shows kindness: Okay, you filthy sister, God bless you (p. 1281). Waris, as Mahesh Kapoor portrays him, is more of a fool than a rogue. He would make an excellent servant but an awful master. He is not evil in and of himself; rather, he is ignorant of everything that is noble and good about human nature, social values, and political culture.

Vikram Seth is concerned that if individuals like Wars are to take control of Post-Colonial India, she won't need any enemies to ruin her. Vikram Seth argues that putting blame on a single person is pointless because the problem lies in the way India has chosen to govern its people. In India, a large number of Waris Khans have emerged, eliminating promising idealistic youngsters like Abdur Rasheed. Rasheed, a secular and educated Muslim boy who fights for the rights of landless laborers in a feudal society, is the only truly tragic character in the book. He is pursued by his people, rejected by his family, and motivated to kill himself. The scene in which he dies evokes genuine sorrow and a tragic sense of loss.

Abdur Rasheed's suicide and Waris's victory are objective correlatives that indicate the dead ends of Post-Colonial politics as it developed in the 1950s. The novel's fable serves as an illustration of the black comedy genre in all of its facets. *A Suitable Boy* depicts the

developing polity of Post-Colonial India in the form of a political fable and roman a clef. Seth has shown how the people's mood changed from euphoria to despondency in the first ten years of independence through a variety of characters. Seth briefly discusses his central idea as he debates the political participation of students, stating:

"Their post-independence romanticism and disillusionment formed a volatile mixture," the author writes.



Through realistic and symbolic narratives (of the process of creating a nation), A Suitable Boy offers a convincing perspective on India after independence. The 1950s are crucial to the formation of modern India and its union. Seth approaches India after independence from a secular perspective that is heavily influenced by Nehruvian ideology. An all-encompassing concept of nation and nationhood, complete with all of its diversity, difficulties, and flaws, is presented by the numerous themes and episodes.

Through the Nawab Sahib of Baitar, a zamindar, and Mahesh Kapoor, the novel demonstrates the social ramifications of the zamindarisystem, its impact, and the manner in which the agrarian structure developed in post-Independence India. Those associated with the zamindar's position are shown to be opposed by Mahesh Kapoor. Even though Begum Abida Khan, the Nawab's sister-in-law strongly opposes the revolutionary Bill on the abolition of the zamindari system, Nawab's active participation in the historic discussion is an example of how "Not all of them tie their friendship to their land." Seth uses Hindu and Muslim characters in pairs, such as Kapoor and the Nawab, Man and Rasheed, and Kabir and Haresh. Man is a contrast to Rasheed, who is very sensitive, because he is witty and carefree.

In the novel, men's company always brings joy, but Rasheed seems to counteract life.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE GLASS PALACE

The Glass Palace is an adventure around three ages of two firmly connected families in Burma, India and Malaya from 1885 to 1956. Additionally, it is a historical novel about Burma's British colonization. The characters in the novel easily cross national and family boundaries through friendship and marriage, making it difficult to determine whether a character is exclusively Indian, Burmese, Chinese, or Malay as imperialism divides and partitions freedom. More than just a revisionist retelling of a portion of British empire history from the perspective of a colonized subaltern, this novel is more than that.

The Anglo-Burmese War of 1865 serves as the novel's foreground. Kinwun Mingyi and Taingda Mingyi, both senior ministers in Burma, are overly eager to guard the Royal family because they anticipate receiving substantial compensation from the English for handing over the royal couple, king Thebaw and queen Supayalat, and their family. The Burmese people, who had previously stood in fear, now move quickly into the palace as the royal family gets ready to hand over the looters. The British soldiers who were in charge of transporting the king's valuable ornaments and jewels from the palace to the ship that was waiting to transport the royal family into exile also stole these items. Ghosh here peels the shroud off human instinct to uncover the unrefined and merciless voracity that drives individuals at different levels.

In a single stunning scene, unscrupulous greed is shown to be the driving force that cuts across financial status, racial differences, caste, creed, and national boundaries. The opening scene's plunder transcends its literal meaning to become a metaphor for the colonizer's raw and blatant greed and sets the tone for the book.

The novel demonstrates the tactful manner in which the British subjugated entire populations and exiled kings in order to completely erase them from public memory at home. The Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar's generation-old deportation to Rangoon after killing the two princes in public and the Burmese king Thebaw and queen Supayalat's exile to Ratnagiri in India were both shrewd decisions made by the conquering Britain. They freely looted the natural resources of Burma, such as petroleum, teak, and ivory, having driven the rulers into obscurity.

They also come to the realization that the majority of the Indians in the British army were not British. Rajkumar, an eleven-year-old Indian boy, falls prey to the hostility of the Burmese populace toward the Indians at this point, making him an easy target for their ire. At the point when he was beaten beat up by the group, he must be safeguarded by the Chinese Saya John. Indians serving in the British Indian army under British rule are the ruler's weapons. Without a heart or a head, they are just tools. Saya John provides additional information regarding the phenomenon of Indian soldiers serving in the British army. Saya John was working as an orderly in a hospital in Singapore when he came across a number of wounded Indian soldiers, most of whom were young village peasants. They chose this profession because of the money. They only got a few annas a day, about the same as a dockyard coolie. "Chinese peasants would never allow themselves to be used to fight other people's war with so little profit for themselves," he is certain. TGP.29). Ghosh looks into the difficulties faced by the British Indian Army during the Second World War when they were fighting the Japanese in Malaysia. Arjun is asked by some students and the leader of the congress, "From whom are you defending us?" from within us? from different Indians? The nation needs to be protected from your masters. TGP. 288) The author's criticism of the position of a colonized subject can be seen in these remarks.



We have individuals like collector Beni Prasad Dey at one extreme and Uma at the other. Between the two extremes are people with varying degrees. These individuals face the challenge of breaking free from the cloak of British influence and seeing past the hypocrisy of their master's intentions toward the colonized people.

The struggle for survival during the turmoil of the colonial era is the focus of Rajkumar's life story. He becomes a colonizer in Burma as a Bengali subject who transports South Indian indentured laborers to other colonial regions. He has even sexually abused a female plantation worker. The conflict in his postcolonial consciousness is apparent. Matthew, Rajkumar, and Saya John are working on the project of colonizing people and land for money.

In his novels, Amitav Ghosh reconstructs Indian history using the term "Post-colonial." Literature written after colonialism presents an extraordinarily diverse nationalistic scenario. We tend to enter a new phase of Post-colonial perplexity, such as diaspora, rootlessness, Post-colonial depression, and cultural conflict, with the emergence of great writers like Ghosh. Amitav Ghosh's interest in history and the lives of people is the focus of his novel *The Glass Palace*. Ghosh presents a variety of perspectives on people of various ethnic groups who are isolated and their yearning for their nationalities. We can say that Ghosh is the first Indian essayist to accurately portray the suffering of aliens from post-colonial perspectives because of these national concerns. The novel's characters all overcome a variety of obstacles, and British colonization alters their origins and paths. As a result, the major issues in his fiction are immigration, imitation, hybridity, insecurity, separation, rootlessness, unsettlement, loss of identities, and identity crisis.

The Glass Palace demonstrates how the commercial exploitation of wilderness followed the colonization of people who were thought to be wild. Ghosh cites this British colonialist commodification of nature as an example. In *The Glass Palace*, a historical fact that is relatively unknown is that British colonization was motivated by teak. Ghosh points out that the British invasion was motivated by a tree that had decimated dynasties, led to invasions, made fortunes, and established a new way of life. "(71). In addition to altering the sociocultural fabric of the societies that were colonized, colonialism had a cascading effect on the entire environment of the bioregions that were annexed.

The Glass Palace also makes a point of the harm that wars have done to the environment, as well as the destruction and displacement that they have caused. The philosophy of Ahimsa, which is deeply ingrained in Hinduism and Buddhism, stands in stark contrast to Europeans' propensity for war in the once-peaceful region and whites' propensity for war.

IV. CONCLUSION

Both "*The Glass Palace*" by Amitav Ghosh and "*A Suitable Boy*" by Vikram Seth are postcolonial novels that explore the complexities and challenges of life in postcolonial India. Both novels are set in the aftermath of British colonial rule and offer a rich and nuanced portrait of the social, cultural, and political changes that accompanied India's transition to independence.

One of the key themes that both novels address is the legacy of British colonialism and its impact on Indian society. In "*The Glass Palace*," Ghosh explores the ways in which colonialism shaped the lives of his characters, from the exploitation of Burma's natural resources to the economic and social dislocation that accompanied the British Raj. Similarly, in "*A Suitable Boy*," Seth examines the ways in which colonialism has shaped India's social, economic, and political landscape, including the unequal distribution of wealth and limited opportunities available to Indians.

Another theme that both novels address is the tension between tradition and modernity in postcolonial India. India is a country with a rich cultural heritage, and both novels explore the challenges that arise when traditional values and practices clash with the forces of modernity. In "*A Suitable Boy*," Seth explores the tension between tradition and modernity through the character of Lata Mehra, who is torn between her desire for independence and her loyalty to her family and their traditional values. In "*The Glass Palace*," Ghosh explores the tension between tradition and modernity through the character of Rajkumar, who must navigate the rapidly changing economic and political landscape of postcolonial Burma.

Religion is also a theme that both novels address, reflecting the complex religious landscape of postcolonial India. In "*A Suitable Boy*," Seth explores the role of religion in the lives of his characters, highlighting the tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the aftermath of independence. Similarly, in "*The Glass Palace*," Ghosh explores the role of religion through the character of Uma, a devout Buddhist who must navigate the religious tensions and conflicts that arise in postcolonial Burma.

Both novels are also notable for their richly drawn characters, who come from diverse social, economic, and religious backgrounds. Through their characters, both Ghosh and Seth offer a multifaceted portrait of postcolonial India,



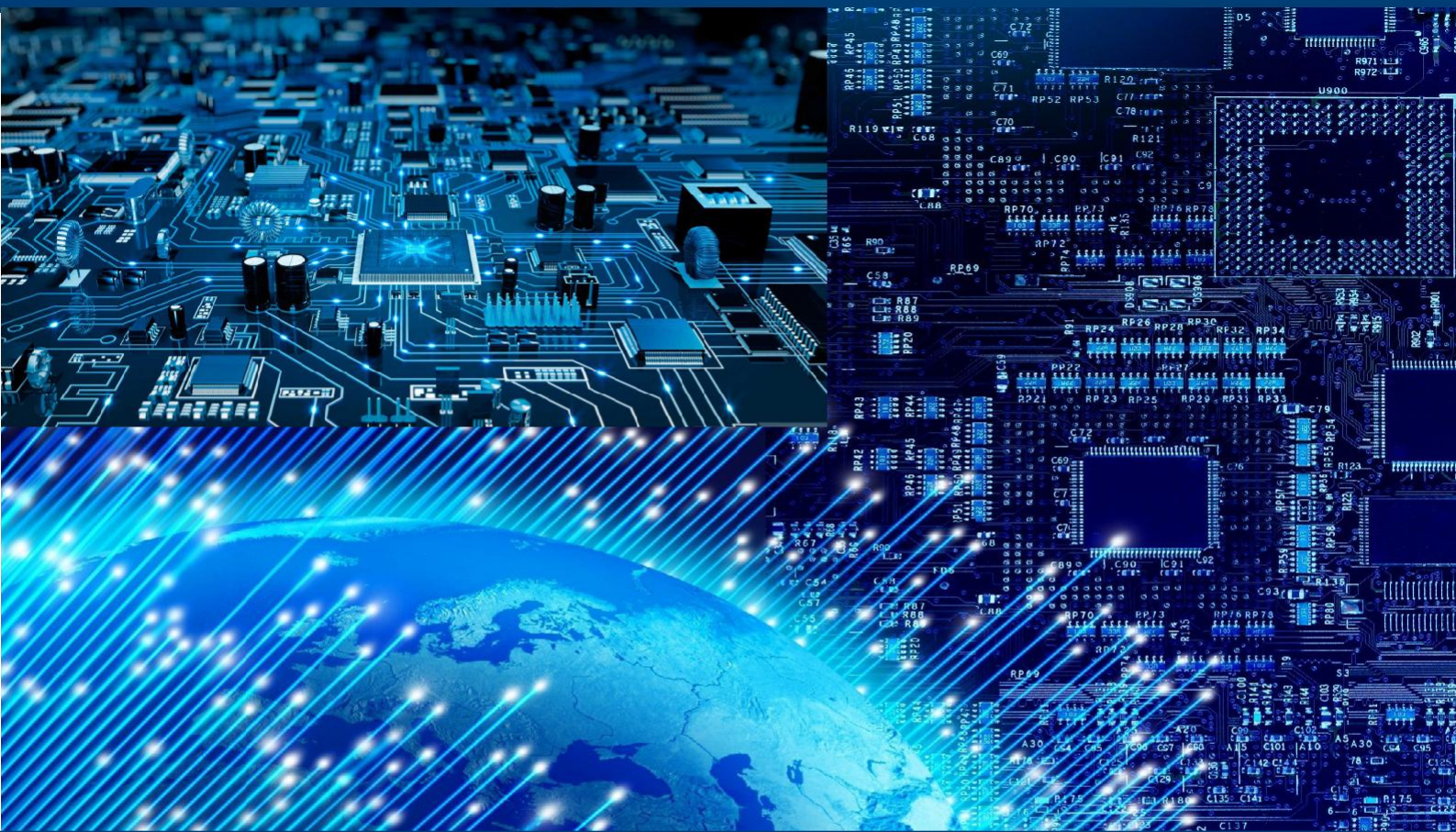
highlighting the diversity of experiences and perspectives that emerged in the wake of colonialism. Both novels also feature strong and complex female characters, including Uma in "The Glass Palace" and Lata Mehra in "A Suitable Boy," who challenge traditional gender roles and expectations.

Finally, both novels are distinguished by their attention to historical detail and accuracy. Both Ghosh and Seth are known for their meticulous research, and their novels offer rich and detailed portraits of life in postcolonial India. Through their detailed descriptions of everyday life, both novels bring the world of postcolonial India to life in vivid detail, immersing readers in the social, political, and cultural realities of the time.

In conclusion, "The Glass Palace" by Amitav Ghosh and "A Suitable Boy" by Vikram Seth are two powerful and thought-provoking postcolonial novels that offer rich and nuanced portraits of life in postcolonial India. Through their exploration of the legacy of British colonialism, the tension between tradition and modernity, the role of religion, and their diverse and richly drawn characters, both novels provide valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities that arose in the wake of colonialism. By delving deeply into the personal and political dimensions of postcolonial India, both "The Glass Palace" and "A Suitable Boy" offer important insights into the complexities of life in a postcolonial society.

REFERENCES

1. A Suitable Boy, Vikram Seth, published in Penguin Books 1994; published by the Penguin Group, New Delhi, India.
2. Bijay Kumar Das, Postmodernism Indian English Literature
3. Ahmed, Rashmee, Z. 2001. "Speaking in Tongues Stones from within a Glass Place", The Times of India, April, 21
4. Bose, Brinda, 2003. Ed. Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives. Delhi: Pencraft.
5. Ghosh, Amitav. 2000 The Glass Palace. Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publishers.
6. Kapadia, Novy. 1999. The Novels of Amitav Ghosh. Ed. R.K. Dhawan, New Delhi: Prestige.
7. Soueif, Ahdaf. 2000. Review of The Glass Palace, Indian Review of Books
8. Tiwari, Shubha, 2003. Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
9. Arun Joshi: The Apprentice (Delhi, Orient, 1980)
10. N. Ezekiel: Collected Poems (Delhi, O.U.P., 1998)
11. Peter Morey, Fiction of India: Narrative and Power Edinburg University Press, 1988 K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Indian Writings in English (Sterling (P) Private LTD., 1962)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA



International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

| Mobile No: +91-9940572462 | Whatsapp: +91-9940572462 | ijarasem@gmail.com |

www.ijarasem.com