

The Postcolonial and the Cosmopolitan: Trends in Modern Indian English Fiction

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Abstract: *Postcolonialism has replaced Commonwealth and Third World literature in literary criticism with a more complex and compelling concept. The discourse began as a reactionary movement against colonial Europe. Many famous critics have influenced postcolonial philosophy. It has been convincingly established that creative writing, particularly fiction, of resistance and subversion of Imperialism has evolved from well-defined geographical places throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Indigenous protests are repressed and disregarded. Postcolonial writers have primarily opposed the Eurocentric hegemonic power structure and celebrated their political identity, ethnicity, indigenous culture, myths, rituals, and oral traditions. Their imagination is historically rooted. After conquering India, the British called the Indians an inferior class of stupid, mad, superstitious snake-charmers, savage duckaits, and usurpers of little nations. In reaction to the White man's perceived responsibility to civilize the other, Indian fiction authors use Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, pluralism, heterogeneity, and multiculturalism from their socio-cultural systems and philosophical and spiritual history. This lets them provide a more realistic counterview of Earthly existence. Modern and historical Indian English literature explores globalization, peaceful coexistence, and cultural reclamation...*

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the same time, our identity is multiple and incomplete. Notwithstanding how ambiguous and shifting the terrain may be, it is not an unproductive place for a writer to be. Sometimes we feel like we are between two stools, and other times we feel like we are straddling two civilizations (Rushdie, 18).

In regard to Indian English literature, Rushdie seems to be voicing his concerns about cultural hybridity and rejecting the supreme thinking of the West. First, it may be concluded that by resisting European appropriation, rejection, and dominance, the well-known Indian trinity of Mukherjee Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan has reclaimed Indian identity. Similarly, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, and others have deliberately elevated Indian culture above Western values by using historical personalities, tales, and themes. Decolonization is, in fact, one of the primary objectives of postcolonial studies. English was formerly a weapon of tyranny and marginalization, but local writers quickly transformed it into a weapon of emancipation. Raja Rao's description of his work as an Indian author of English fiction is not wholly inaccurate.

It is essential to speak one's own language in order to convey one's own essence. I use the word "alien" because, to us, English is not really an alien language; rather, one must convey the many nuances and emotions of a particular thought-movement that seems to be inadequately handled in an alien tongue. It is the language of our minds, not the language of our emotions, as Sanskrit or Persian were before it. We are all bilingual by nature, as many of us write in both English and our original language. We don't write in the English manner. We shouldn't do it. As Indians, we are not restricted to writing. (Rao)

Fiction, culture, and history are all interconnected. In reality, dialectical historical processes are what shape culture, and fiction deals with questions of cultural identity. The individual's life remains the central theme of Western canonical fiction; Indian subcontinental literature, on the other hand, emphasizes family or community life more, where individual identity blends with collective cultural identity. Postcoloniality undoubtedly affects every type of literature

created by Indian writers, including those from the diaspora, from a historical perspective. There are two aspects to this study: The concerns of representation, location, and cultural identity revival are covered in the first part. First, the postcolonial context may have been related to the assertion of Indian/cultural identity in the subcontinental concept of the fiction genre. The second portion addresses the problems that give rise to the ongoing debate over which is preferable: multiculturalism or indigenous identity via cultural diversity. In this case, postcolonialism seems to be extinct. Postcolonial studies are torn on whether to support resistance to the idea of hybrid modernity, which upends the existing cultural coordinates and provides fresh opportunities for a global culture in perpetual flux.

Indian culture never gave rise to the book as a genre; instead, English-language novels from the West were introduced to India. Although they began writing in Indian languages before switching to English, Indians were the first to be introduced to the English form. One cannot read about imperialism or the book genre without the other since they have reinforced one other so much. Priya Joshi notes that novels contributed to advance the cultural and ideological aims of empire by reinforcing the Euro-centric hegemonic control to its readers, both European and colonial, after discussing the link between imperialism and novels. To sum up, the book aided in the process of colonization. Bengal was experiencing a strong upsurge in new nationalism, and these informal literary manifestations resisted the colonial regime's attempts to erode indigenous culture. The novel's early inception in India first in regional languages, then in English as well as its later indigenization, were acts of resistance against imperialism.

Indigenous writers were able to communicate their own ideas of cultural location and experience by the manner they indigenized this important genre into Indian languages. The literary standards and discourses of the colonists functioned as a vehicle for the expression of anti-colonial sentiments, while resistance and rebuilding via the medium allowed for self-expression. Similarly, experiments in vernacular intended to overcome deficiencies in oneself served as the model for the first English book produced by a native speaker. The tales the writers narrate become iconic texts of cultural identification since they are all members of distinct ethnic groups. The book's creators, who are Indian, had anti-colonial ideas from the beginning. It perverted the form to serve nationalist objectives.

Western novels have their roots in individualist mythology, and individualism has had a significant influence on the evolution of the book as a narrative form. All postcolonial narrative genres in India, however, may be said to have a general tendency to concentrate on cultural groupings; epics were seen successful in the great Indian tradition if they anchored their networks on extended families. The Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Puranic literature all hold that every deed must be linked to the widely accepted Indian notion of a family *vasudhev kutumbkam*. English-language books set in India are grafted onto historical narrative frameworks that depict the same events in a distinct manner, allowing readers to get a sense of the customs and way of life of an Indian community. The notion of the Indian novel in English seems to contradict the idea of the Western novel itself, with its evident focus on capturing individual lives and consciousness. Edward Said believes that novels are important tools for self-acculturation and social integration. The development of the Indian novel, in all of its forms, does not go through discrete stages. The social matrix, however, takes center stage as Indian book subgenres concentrate on topics like family, village, community, and more.

Postcolonial literature not only reconstructs the past in a fundamental way, but it is also guided by a conscious comprehension of the past. That kind of fiction seeks to provide new metaphors for the cultural context. We come across home tales that convey fear about quickly changing lifestyles and family dynamics where the preceding generations' contributions surpass the imaginary boundaries. Postcolonial literature seems to be made up of family connections and generations coexisting, fighting, and painfully aware of the loss of a common iconography in a divided world. This sort of issue is intimately tied to the growth of a nation. A long-standing criticism of postcolonial books is their failure to go beyond the distant picture of the white world, a criticism made by many critics. Aijaz Ahmed challenges Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity, arguing that advanced capital shapes the post-colonial environment in which the fusion of European and non-European cultures takes place. In situations like this, non-Europeans seldom interact with one another, and when they do, European modulation is essential. Ashish Nandi provides criticism on the West and its pervasiveness in a similar spirit. He said that the West existed both within and outside of the West, implying that it existed in structures and thought.

The backgrounds of the authors restricted the subject matter of English novels published in India. Because the writers used time and energy attempting to explain a reality that only served to confirm their own inadequacies, they were

forced to live with dislocation when they emulated Europeans. They were taught the merits of English literature and Western reasoning systems, and they were also forced to own up to their own flaws. Because of this, the colonial writers were bilingual, able to draw from a wide range of traditions, and experienced a multitude of cultural situations. The native written and oral storytelling traditions were significant inspirations, even if the English novel clearly had an impact on the creation of Indian novels in English. They were aware of a dynamic history different from the stolid projections seen in the English book. As a consequence, in an attempt to maintain a nationalist identity, this colonial/hybrid literature began to extensively explore oral history. Authors of sincere fiction went to great lengths to refute the idea that they were just copies of the European social realism movement. Priya Joshi asserts that Indian novels were one of the most effective mediums for articulating nationalist and colonial demands in India throughout the colonial period of the preceding century. In addition to postcolonial subversion and appropriation, Ashcraft et al. claim that a fundamental dismantling of European traditions was a part of the literary decolonization process.

According to postcolonial studies, the loss of identity or the depiction of new identities is one of the key issues with modern ICT and global labor force and wealth mobility. Authors like as Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharti Mukherjee, and Kiran Desai have enlarged the metaphor of imagined community in their works by questioning the concept of nations and borders. The diaspora of Indians is actively working to solve political, social, cultural, and ethnic issues in order to alter both the East and the West. Exile, relocation, dislocation, local people and identity myths, travel as a vital metaphor, migration, and immigration are some of its primary topics. The Indian diaspora writes back to the Indian core, and the Empire writes back to it, to borrow Rushdie's words. The author's geographic location lends credibility to the depiction of cultural identity. *Midnight's Children* is a piece of historiographic meta-fiction that uses fantasy to narrate history in order to convey a feeling of national consciousness.

Think about this: August 15, 1947, is considered to be the start of a new era in one interpretation of history, but in another, the same date only signifies a single, fleeting moment in the Kali Yuga, an Age of Darkness, in which the moral cow is reduced to standing, shakily, on one leg! On Friday, February 18, 3102 B.C., the Kali Yuga period started, and it is anticipated to continue for a mere 432,000 years! I should note, however, that the Age of Darkness is just the fourth stage of the present Maha-Yuga cycle, which covers ten times as long time altogether (MC, 194), even if I already feel a bit tiny in comparison.

Jhumpa Lahiri's highly regarded first novel, *The Namesake*, which was released in 2003, delves into the intricacies of the Indian minority living in the United States. Bharati Mukherjee's book *Desirable Daughters* highlights the unmet need for a malleable identity that arises from a passionate attachment to one's own nation. If ethnocentric cultural identities are still celebrated by postcolonialism, it will be a self-destructive death.

Postcolonial literature such as *God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, *Salman Rushdie*, and *R. K. Narayan*, and *Swami and Friends* by R. K. Narayan, add to the growing awareness of the country. Furthermore, in his books *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *In an Antique Land* (1992), and *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), Amitav Ghosh is committed to establishing a diachronic realm in which Indian identity is constructed through history, mythology, memory, and the present. Ghosh is a reliable source of information and tells his story in the third person. Ghosh's best work is driven by both collective history and individual memory. Rajkumar lifts the burden of starting a family in the absence of one with his 2000 book *The Glass Palace*. Gurcharan Das and Rohinton Mistry both eloquently portray family and community in their literary works. Mistry and Nayantara Sehgal portray the life of a community in the face of adversity. On the other hand, postcoloniality and post-national globalization, as well as the shifts between indigeneity and hybridity, are the main subjects of Chitra Banerjee's art. Furthermore, Bharti Mukherjee's assertion that her characters are survivors highlights the sense of alienation and apprehension that diaspora individuals have about the capacity of their own culture to rescue them.

Cultural diversity is now seen as a security concern in many countries, most notably the United States, which is often referred to as the "Melting Pot." In terms of social performance, adoption of a cultural identity is feasible, but not essentially. Rushdie claims that the situation Marathi Manush and other linguistic groups find themselves in is one of self-adopted marginalization, which entails putting oneself in a box within a sociocultural context and defying social norms. The writers whose writings are affected by diaspora recognize the multiculturalism of the contemporary

metropolis. Thus, writers celebrate the differences that the hegemonic power aims to erase in order to elude the expectations of efficacy, objectivity, and correctness that are expected in globalized surroundings. The joys of these writers should be examined since their voices are documenting a mental attack. These writers have a well-established global readership, yet their writings are rooted in a multitude of competing cultures.

II. CONCLUSION

Indian English fiction has evolved significantly since the postcolonial era, transcending its initial focus on themes of independence, identity, and cultural conflict. In the postcolonial period, Indian authors grappled with the complexities of a newly independent nation, exploring the lingering impacts of colonial rule, the struggle for cultural self-definition, and the intersections of tradition and modernity. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Jhumpa Lahiri brought international attention to Indian English literature, blending local narratives with global perspectives. Moving beyond postcolonialism, contemporary Indian English fiction delves into a broader array of themes, including globalization, migration, gender issues, and social justice, reflecting the dynamic and diverse experiences of modern India. The genre continues to innovate and expand, embracing new voices and experimental forms, solidifying its place in the global literary landscape.

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