
Post colonialism and its Impact on Indian Novels

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Abstract: The literature landscape in India during the pre- and post-independence periods showcased a significant evolution in both content and style. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao were pioneers in addressing the social and national issues prevalent in their times, especially during the pre-independence era. Their novels reflected the changing socio-political dynamics of India under colonial rule. In the pre-independence phase, these authors delved into themes related to social injustices, the caste system, rural life, and the struggle for independence. Mulk Raj Anand, for instance, wrote extensively about the exploitation faced by various marginalized groups such as untouchables, landless peasants, and industrial laborers. Novels like "Untouchable," "Coolie," "Two Leaves and A Bud," and "The Village" shed light on these societal issues and served as catalysts for social reform. The post-independence period witnessed a paradigm shift in the themes and styles of Indian English fiction. Authors like Mulk Raj Anand continued their focus on social reform, emphasizing the need for addressing prevailing social evils. Additionally, writers like G.V. Desai and Bhavani Bhattacharya contributed works that explored the realms of social realism and the socio-economic impacts of events like the Bengal famine. The postcolonial era saw the emergence of many female novelists in Indian English

fiction who made significant contributions to the literary landscape. Writers such as Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shobha De, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, and Kiran Desai became known for their unique storytelling, exploring diverse themes ranging from familial relationships to societal changes and cultural complexities. These women novelists carved their niches by depicting varied facets of Indian society, their narratives often reflecting the struggles, aspirations, and identities of individuals within the context of a changing, post-independence India. Their works contributed immensely to the rich tapestry of Indian literature, showcasing the diverse voices and perspectives within the nation's literary canon.

Keywords: Postcolonial, oppression, nation, genre, novelists etc.

Postcolonial literature indeed encapsulates a significant phase in the history of nations that were formerly colonized. It represents a distinct body of literary work that shares commonalities despite emerging from various decolonized countries. This genre of literature examines the aftermath of colonialism, exploring

themes related to national identity, cultural conflicts, power dynamics, and the struggles for autonomy and self-determination. Several seminal works within postcolonial literature have made profound impacts. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" (1958) is a pivotal novel that explores the collision between traditional African society and colonial influences, addressing themes of cultural disintegration and the consequences of imperialism.

Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" (1981) delves into the complexities of post-independence India, intertwining personal stories with the nation's historical and political upheavals. It grapples with issues of identity, nationalism, and the legacy of colonialism. Michael Ondaatje's "The English Patient" (1992) and J.M. Coetzee's works like "Waiting for the Barbarians" (1980) and "Disgrace" (1999) also examine the impact of colonialism on individuals and societies, touching upon themes of power, domination, and cultural clashes. Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961) is a seminal work that discusses the psychological effects of colonization and the struggle for liberation. It delves into the socio-political aspects deeply ingrained in national and regional consciousness, emphasizing the need to reclaim dignity and agency after colonial rule. Isabel Allende's "The House of the Spirits" (1982) presents a multi-generational story intertwining personal lives with political turmoil, highlighting the complexities of power dynamics and social change. Derek Walcott's "Omeros" (1990) is an epic poem that explores Caribbean identity and history, drawing from both colonial and indigenous cultural influences.

Postcolonial literature, through its narratives, aims to reconstruct and re-envision history, offering alternative perspectives and reclaiming the dignity of nations and cultures that were previously subjugated. It highlights the cultural differences between native cultures and those of the imperial powers, aiming to restore pride, celebrate indigenous values, and address the complexities of cultural assimilation and resistance. Ultimately, it serves as a means to assert and preserve the distinct identities and narratives of formerly colonized nations. The issue of language and its connection to cultural expression and identity is a fundamental aspect of postcolonial literature. Raja Rao's insightful observation underscores the challenge faced by writers from colonized nations when using a foreign language, particularly English, to articulate their cultural and social heritage. Rao emphasizes the dilemma of expressing one's cultural essence authentically within the constraints of a language that belongs to the colonizers. Rao's statement reflects a sentiment shared by many postcolonial writers who grappled with the idea of writing in English, a language imposed by the colonizers. Rao suggests the need for a distinct form of expression, a dialect that evolves to encapsulate the rich nuances of Indian culture and thought, much like how Irish or American English developed unique identities.

Despite the challenges posed by using a colonial language, Indian English writers have embraced English as a versatile tool to explore the intricacies of Indian reality, incorporating native forms, sentiments, customs, and cultural aspects. They have managed to infuse English with

the essence of their own cultural experiences, creating a unique literary landscape that reflects the inner shift from the traditional English use of metaphor. The utilization of English by Indian writers, although seemingly a vestige of colonialism, has become a medium of cultural expression and assertion. These writers have contributed significantly to the plurality of Indian English literature by infusing the language with regional influences and diverse cultural elements. Salman Rushdie's comment underscores the necessity for decolonizing the language itself, reshaping it to reflect the cultures and perspectives of those outside the Anglo-Saxon dominance.

Rushdie's notion of "decolonizing" the language aligns with the endeavor of many postcolonial writers who strive to reshape English to represent their own identities and cultural landscapes authentically. This pursuit adds vitality and excitement to the literature of regions like Africa, the Caribbean, and India, infusing their narratives with a fresh, diverse, and inclusive perspective that breaks away from the colonial past and asserts their unique cultural identities.

In the realm of postcolonial literature in India, writers grappled with and portrayed numerous societal issues deeply entrenched in the fabric of Indian society. These issues included social evils such as Sati (the practice of widow burning), the caste system, restrictions on widow remarriage, religious and social hegemony, among others. The focus of many writers during this period, across various Indian vernaculars, was to raise awareness among the populace about the detrimental consequences of these entrenched evils.

Postcolonial literature, especially in colonized countries like India, placed a significant emphasis on portraying the processes and repercussions of colonization. Authors aimed to document the resistance against colonial powers while shedding light on the contemporary truths of life under and after colonial rule. These writings highlighted the injustices faced by lower-class individuals and communities, showcasing their struggles and resistance against oppression. This literary movement emerged historically after the process of decolonization, hence its focus on themes that emerged post-independence. Postcolonial writers were deeply involved in exploring new linguistic and narrative approaches, seeking to articulate a new way of perceiving the world. Their writings often encompassed universal themes such as national identity, hybridity, the partition of nations, cultural heritage, and contemporary realities.

The emphasis on themes related to national identity is particularly prominent in postcolonial literature, as it reflects the struggle to define and assert a distinct cultural and national identity following independence. Hybridity, another prevalent theme, delves into the blending of cultures and identities resulting from colonial encounters, portraying the complex amalgamation of various cultural elements. Additionally, issues like partition, which deeply impacted countries like India during its independence, were depicted in postcolonial literature to explore the traumatic repercussions and social ruptures caused by these historical events. The postcolonial literature in India and other colonized regions serves as a powerful

medium to not only document the struggles against colonialism but also to articulate the multifaceted aspects of societal, cultural, and national experiences in the aftermath of independence. These writings aim to capture the complexities of post-colonial realities while challenging established norms and narratives imposed during the colonial era. In the realm of postcolonial literature, several women novelists have made remarkable contributions, depicting a wide array of themes including emotions, human relationships, societal dynamics, and cultural intricacies. These authors have carved their unique niches within Indian English fiction, offering diverse perspectives and narratives that reflect the complexities of the human experience.

Arundhati Roy, through her groundbreaking novel "The God of Small Things," delves deeply into human emotions, familial relationships, societal norms, and the impact of historical and political forces on individuals. Her narrative intricately weaves together the personal and the political, exploring the intricacies of human connections amid a changing socio-political landscape. Jhumpa Lahiri, known for works such as "Interpreter of Maladies" and "The Namesake," eloquently portrays the immigrant experience, focusing on themes of displacement, identity, and the complexities of human relationships. Her writing beautifully captures the emotional nuances of characters navigating cultural transitions and familial bonds. Shobha De is recognized for her bold and provocative storytelling, often exploring contemporary social issues, relationships, and the lives of urban Indian women. Her novels delve into the complexities of modern life, offering a

candid portrayal of societal norms and cultural shifts. Nayantara Sahgal, a prominent literary figure, has contributed immensely to Indian English fiction. Her works often reflect on the socio-political landscape of India, while also exploring personal relationships and the human psyche in the context of larger societal changes. Kiran Desai, through her novel "The Inheritance of Loss," masterfully captures the intricacies of human emotions, the impact of globalization, and the complexities of identity within a postcolonial world. Her storytelling skillfully navigates between individual narratives and larger societal themes. These women novelists have excelled in portraying the multifaceted nature of human emotions, relationships, and societal challenges within the Indian context. Through their distinctive voices and narratives, they have enriched Indian English fiction, offering nuanced explorations of personal and collective experiences that resonate with readers globally. Their contributions have significantly expanded the literary landscape, showcasing the depth and diversity of perspectives within postcolonial literature.

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