



Research Paper - English

# The Postcolonial Perspectives In Indian English Novels

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## Definition

### - Colonialism

To define Post-Colonialism it's important to know about and to define colonialism. Colonialism is the expansion of a nation's sovereignty over foreign territories through forcible occupation. European colonialism began in the fifteenth century and reached its culmination point in the late 19th century. At the height of European colonialism, more than three quarters of the earth belonged to European nations (Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and Germany). These colonial powers were interested in increasing their own political power and in exploiting the colonies' resources. Most of the indigenous peoples of colonial territory were oppressed and enslaved by the occupying power. Sometimes they were even deported from fertile land or murdered to make room for new settlements. At the same time, they were forced to give up their cultural heritage and to assimilate to the colonizers' culture. This strategy, which is also known as culture colonization, was supposed to manipulate the colonized peoples' minds.

The colonial powers believed that a colonized nation which adopted and admired Western culture would no longer resist the colonizers' occupation. In British colonies, for example, the colonized population had to convert to the Christian religion and learn the English language and read English literature in school. As a result, they adopted Western values, and the colonizers were eventually able to rule by consent and not by violence. However, this assimilation could never be complete. Indigenous people who were "brainwashed" and wanted to be regarded as members of the "high culture" never got a chance to achieve their aim because of their ethnic background. They were always regarded as inferior. Colonial powers always argued that third world countries were inferior and needed the West's help and assistance in order to gain moral integrity and economic wealth. Indigenous people were presented as uncivilized "barbarians", who have to be subdued, or as childlike and naive savages, who have to be "domesticated" and educated. These racist stereotypes of colonial discourse can still be found in science, historical writing,

literature, and mass media.

## 1.2 Post-Colonialism

The list of former colonies of European powers is a long one. They are divided into settler (eg. Australia, Canada) and non-settler countries (eg. India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka). Countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe which were partially settled by colonial populations complicate even this simple division between settler and non-settler. In strictly definitional terms, for instance, the United States might also be described as a postcolonial country, but it is not perceived as such because of its position of power in world politics in the present, its displacement of native American populations, and its annexation of other parts of the world in what may be seen as a form of colonization. For that matter, other settler countries such as Canada and Australia are sometimes omitted from the category "post-colonial" because of their relatively shorter struggle for independence, their loyalist tendencies toward the mother country which colonized them, and the absence of problems of racism or of the imposition of a foreign language. The post-colonial direction was created as colonial countries became independent. Nowadays, aspects of post-colonialism can be found not only in history, literature and politics, but also in

approach to culture and identity of both the countries that were colonised and the former colonial powers. Post-colonialism can take the colonial time as well as the time after colonialism into consideration. In a literal sense, "post-colonial" is that which has been preceded by colonization. The second college edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as **"of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony"**. It deals with the cultural identity matters of colonised societies, the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule. Postcolonialism has increasingly become an object of scientific examination since 1950 when Western intellectuals began to get interested in the "Third World countries". In the 1970s, this interest led to an integration of discussions about post-colonialism in various study courses at American Universities.

Post-colonialism is a subject of ongoing debate in contemporary literary and critical studies. Colonialism, in a wider sense implies conquest or domination that controls other people's land and goods. It controls the political, economical, and cultural structures of another territory or nation. Hence, post-colonialism is a state after the formal end of colonialism. It is a counter discourse to western domination or hegemony. The prefix 'post' in post-colonialism has produced a range and

variety of implications in critical studies. The perspectives of 'post' in hyphenated "post-colonialism" or unhyphenated "post colonialism" evokes the sense of sequential next, beyond or above and takes a look back of time. Anne McClintock observes "colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance" (86). So it is not right to consider the works produced after the formal end of colonialism as postcolonial. Post colonialism is an organized perspective with some likeness of a coherent methodology came to originate in the European minds, though there have been some important examples when even natives attempted to point out the hegemony handled by colonial powers. The publication of Edward Said seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978 offers a radiant focus on the magnitude of postcolonial studies. Said believes with Foucault that 'knowledge' is not innocent but has the intimate tie with the operations of power. He emphasizes on the cultural texts that play an important role in the show line of colony, race and its deployment. In this context it is evident that the last two hundred years of European imperialism have to be understood vis-a-vis the cultural texts that lay within the structure of colonialism. Orientalism broods over the western representation of the non-western culture. European culture was able to influence the political, sociological,

ideological and imaginative status of the orient. Orientalism is a corporate western institution that Said considers "a western style for dominating, restricting and having authority over the orient" (3). Said has clarified the idea through Gramscy's notion of hegemony. The maintenance of positional superiority and the exercise of power by the dominant social group over the dominated without the influence of physical force or threat but by the mild affirmation extended by the latter.

Post-colonial study has the western origin. As it depends on western philosophy labeled as Euro-Centric. In the intellectual procedure the non-western indigenous creative impulse finds its expression in western idiom, through western paradigms and from interactions with western cultures and languages. While natives may not be making the choice of western alternatives the existence of post colonialism does not lose its force as a counter-discourse simply because it employs western paradigms and western idioms. Regarding the counter-discourse Benita Parry points out that it is very complex one and necessarily based on "an implacable enmity between native and invader" (32). The study of natives and invaders in post-colonialism shows the split in both. It is a viable concept that allows thinking about the cultural difference, but not much about economic exploitation. Post-colonial study is a complex

phenomenon that is embodied with excessive jargon and branded as "the latest catchall term to dazzle the academic mind" (Jacoby 30). It is related to object, methodology, content, scope and terminology of Post colonialism. However, the Australian writers Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin consider the term postcolonial as a universal structuring formation in their book *The Empire Writes Back* that to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonialism to the present day it has come out as a western theory, which has been transformed as a result of its encounter with the non-western cultures. The crossover of ideas and identities created by colonialism is better understood by the botanical term hybridity. Robert Young explains the significance of such a term in literacy process that a hybridity is technically a cross between two different species and that therefore the term 'Hybridization' evokes both the botanical notion of inter-species grafting and the 'Vocabulary of the Victorian extreme' right, which regarded different races as different species (10). So the intellectual hybridity between Whites and Indians happens in early nineteenth century. But with the anti-colonial movements, the cultural purity generated by the colonial hybridity creates a setback to destabilize colonial rule. Ania Loomba has rightly observed that in such process of hybridization native Indians

created new ideas with proper interaction and opposition with colonialism.

Indeed they often hybridized what they borrowed by juxtaposing it through their own interpretative lens and even using it to assert cultural alterity or insist on an unbridgeable difference between colonizers and colonized. Thus Gandhi's notion of nonviolence was forged by reading Emerson, Thoreau, and Tolstoy, even though his vision of an ideal society evoked a specifically Hindu vision of 'Rama Rajya'<sup>1</sup> or the legendary reign of Lord Ram.

Homi Bhaba popularizes the notion of such 'hybridity'<sup>1</sup>, that the natives interact with the invaders in their thought, culture and literature to create an individual identity. It happens in the conception that 'The White man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body' (Bhaba 117). Postcolonial theory aims at the liberation of native cultural identity from the colonialism. Stuart Hall identifies it as a search for "a sort of collective one true self [...] which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (394). It is the identity, which is a matter of becoming or as well as of being in the status of 'marginality' of the colonized. Bhaba also evolved a term 'mimicry' which is a state of ambivalence that shows the racialized essence of either the colonized or the colonizer.

Thus Bhaba's term 'mimicry' exposes the postcolonial situation by the concept of

binary opposition between colonialist and colonized, "authorization and de-authorization and inaugurates the process of anti-colonial self-differentiation through the logic of inappropriate appropriation" (Gandhi 150). In postcolonial study the exposition of 'hybridization', 'multi-culturalism' or 'Diaspora' concentrate over the native reality, national beliefs and rootedness. On ideological point of view such exposition creates the voice of the third world, the voice of the native. It is the search for identity.

Once upon a time, like some other countries India was dominated by the British imperialism. The west flourished the hegemony through knowledge. And further being independent, the writers of these states project cultural, political and intellectual hybridity in a delicate fusion of history and language that set a new tradition. They also sustain cultural heritage, national epics and mythology to gratify the literature. As it is seen in the postcolonial literature of the different countries like America, Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Canada including India project their own native reality to restore the lost identity and roots.

The postcolonial Indian English fiction witnesses at least three generations of Indian novelists in English. The first generation consists mainly the prominent figures like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan

and Raja Rao, the second like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal and others enriched the fiction. But the third generation of writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, etc. established the fame in international arena. Indian English fiction succeeded to win almost every well-known literary prize in the world.

In postcolonial literary setup cultural nationalism has become a recurrent focus. In treatment and tone the native reality and Indian sensibility take a significant turn in every branch of literature. The outcry of east-west encounter becomes prominent in fiction. Sehgal's *Into Another Dawn*, Bhattacharya's *Music For Mohini*, Rajan's *Too Long in the West*, Jhabvala's *The Nature of Passion* portray the same theme. The socio-political problems of India are also pictured in Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*, Sehgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*, etc. The contemporary Indian reality takes its significant mode in the writing of the golden trio, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Anand's *Untouchable*, Rao's *Kanthapura* and Narayan's *The Guide* reveal the better stand depicting such reality. Narayan is regarded as the father-figure in postcolonial Indian English fiction. Ancient Myth, fables and rituals deal with the relevance for the contemporary reality. The recreation of

events and situations are rightly reflected in the different fictions. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*, Malgonkar's *The Distant Dream*, Chaman Naha's *Azadi* and Attiah Hussain's *Sunlight on a Broken Window*, etc. offer a sense of nostalgia sustaining the event of partition of India. The postcolonial Indian English fiction upholds the Indian spirit at large. It depicts Indian thought, Indian emotion but English only in words. In this way new Indian English idiom originates at this moment.

Some women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rao, Attiah Hussain including Nayantara Sehgal contribute to postcolonial fiction in a blooming mode. Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of Rice* set on Indian background. Her *Inner Fury* is a compelling love story of an Indian girl Mira and a British government official Richard. The love crosses the boundary defying the hatredness and terror of war. Her another novel *Silence in Desire* bridges the chasm between matter and spirit, faith and doubt in connection with spiritual reality of India. Nayantara Sehgal is also another accomplished artist writing today, properly set against the spirit of postcolonial tradition. Her *From Fear Set Free*, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *A Time to be Happy*, the three autobiographical fictions deserve wide

acclaim. Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*, *Voice in the City*, *Bye-Bye- Black Bird*, etc. deal with the exploration of native sensibility. Her Indian situations and characters are models for postcolonial outlook. The same thing happens in Arundhati Roy. Her *The God of Small Things* that depicts the picture of the downtrodden oppression or marginal group those stand with Spivak's colonial discourse "the subaltern cannot speak."

Indian English fiction reflects the spirit of different regional literature as a whole. Indian culture and Indian psyche take a significant position in it. Postcolonial writings sustain the spirit. Though the postcolonial discourse is greatly influenced by the different schools of criticism like Saussur's structuralism, Adorno's Marxism, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and carnivalesque, de Man's studies of grammar and rhetoric, Foucault's preoccupations with system of knowledge and power, Barthes's *Textual Decoding*, Derrida's deconstruction and Spivak's focus on displacement, etc., still the importance of nationalism play a vital role in postcolonial literary outputs. The concept of nation has become a curious debate in the postcolonial study. It broods on the concerns of gender, ethnicity race, religion, caste, language, tribe, class, region and so on. But peculiarly, the above factors are absent in some postcolonial writings. Rushdie in *The*

Moor's Last Sigh puts question to the multi-cultural histories of India, hybrid lineage and the Nehruvian vision of free secular nation:

Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views pushy ladies, skirts not saris; Spanish Shenanigans, Moorish crowns... can this really be Indian? Bharat Mata, Hindustan Hamara, is this the place?... the history changing notion that there are two nations in the sub-continent, one Hindu, the other Mussulman.(87)

The crisis arises with the historical objectivity that is claimed disregarding the relativity of the historical truths and presentation. But his *Midnight Children* deals with the memory and imagination to present versions of historical events. However, Rushdie handles the multiplicity and totality of experience in connection with nation. The postcolonial theory is also based on the consciousness of multilateral perspectives.

Some other writers including Rushdie innovate a distinctive "otherness". Amitav Ghose in *Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*, Upamanyu Chatterjee in *English August*, Sashi Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel*; Alan Sealey in *Trotter Nama* or Vikram Seth in *The Golden Gate* defy all sorts of confinement with the narrow domestic walls. These writers accept the world as their domain and derive the

impression from "Multiculturalism" and universalize their approach. The creative impulses are integrated with all sources available in myth, legend, religion and symbol of global concern. M.K. Naik observes, "Several strategies - linguistic, literary, cultural and even political - have been employed in the attempt to prove the utter redundancy of Indian literature"(168). Postcolonial literature sustains the same.

### : References :

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