



Postcolonial Texts: Expressions from the Periphery

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Manuscript ID:
BIJ-SPL3-Nov25-ES-038

Subject: English

Received : 30.07.2025

Accepted : 12.08.2025

Published : 27.11.2025

DOI: 10.64938/bijsi.v10si3.25.Nov038

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Abstract

Postcolonial literature serves as a powerful response to colonial history, offering an authentic portrayal of the experiences of people who were once colonized. This study explores the development and importance of postcolonial literary works, focusing on how they give voice to and reclaim the identities of marginalized communities. Drawing on key postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha, the research highlights how writers use literature as a means to resist and challenge colonial ideologies. It also examines how concepts like intersectionality and identity politics influence the depiction of race, gender, and class in these texts. Ultimately, the study underscores the continued importance of decolonizing approaches to understanding postcolonial literature, which plays a vital role in shaping a more diverse and inclusive global literary tradition.

Keywords: postcolonial literature, marginalized voices, colonialism, decolonization, intersectionality.

Introduction

Postcolonial literature consists of writings in English that originate from former colonies and seek to give voice to worlds that were once silenced. These works provide access to perspectives previously excluded from dominant narratives, offering insights into the lives of people whose realities were often misrepresented or ignored. This body of literature expresses the authentic experiences of colonized communities and revisits the cultural richness of their pre-colonial past. The term indigenous literature

refers to this genuine expression of native life and identity.

Postcolonial societies emerged from the complex interaction between colonizers and the colonized—places inhabited by natives yet structured to serve colonial powers. These narratives often reveal how even fellow natives could become agents of subjugation. Postcolonial literature aims to amplify the voices of formerly colonized peoples, particularly within Commonwealth countries and broader global contexts, many of which now belong



to the developing world. In the realm of comparative literature, postcolonialism frequently carries a strong nationalistic tone and functions as a critical practice (praxis).

Reflecting on British Orientalist historians, postcolonial thinkers have identified a profound struggle between colonizer and colonized over who controls the telling of history. Postcolonial communities, still affected by the cultural collapse of empire, are filled with untold stories. The term "account" here is significant, pointing to narratives that reflect colonial trauma and their lingering effects—accounts that are often difficult for others to understand without context. These competing stories now strive to gain attention in a world dominated by media and global audience.

Key Theoretical Frameworks in Postcolonial Studies

To analyze and interpret postcolonial literature, this study includes an overview of foundational postcolonial theories. These critical approaches help unpack the ways empires influenced language, identity, and cultural representation, especially in relation to gender, race, and class. These theories also examine how colonial ideologies have shaped literature, society, and cultural imagination.

European cultural narratives often glorify the Roman Empire while ignoring the exploitation of colonized peoples, excusing imperial plunder as acts done for the natives' supposed benefit. Gayatri Spivak, a key figure in postcolonial theory, argues that colonized subjects have been made subaltern—a term for those excluded from dominant discourse and unable to represent themselves within existing structures of theory. In her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", she questions whether these marginalized voices can ever truly be heard within the frameworks of Western thought. The title reflects her concern with how colonial subjects are represented—or erased—within systems of knowledge.

Edward Said and Homi Bhabha also explore how postcolonial theory reshapes the act of reading literature. Their work emphasizes the importance of

challenging established narratives and recognizing the complex identities formed under colonial rule.

Representation of Marginalized Voices in Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial writers often use both written and oral storytelling to reclaim and present the histories of colonized societies. Through their works, they challenge the distorted images imposed by colonial narratives and reassert their cultural identities. By bringing in voices of women, minority groups, and the socially excluded, postcolonial literature expands the boundaries of traditional literature, which once ignored these groups.

However, not every postcolonial text attempts to represent those who were exoticized or oppressed. There is ongoing debate about whether any writer—regardless of their own background—can fully and truthfully represent a collective cultural experience. Even when attempts are made to be respectful or cautious in representation, the question of accuracy remains unresolved. Feminist theorists, in particular, emphasize the importance of the author's identity and the voice used to tell the story. Overall, most postcolonial theorists reject the idea that language—spoken or written—can perfectly mirror reality.

Even decades after the emergence of postcolonial literature, the struggle to express truth continues amid the noise of global capitalism and media. A metaphorical sense of disillusionment echoes across postcolonial nations like India, where individuals still face political and social chaos. The passage paints a vivid picture of a conflicted identity, burdened by the forces of globalization, but still choosing resistance over surrender. In the end, the power lies not in being defeated, but in continuing to struggle and to speak—however imperfectly—against oppression.

Intersectionality and Identity in Postcolonial Texts

Intersectionality focuses on how various aspects of identity—like race, gender, class, sexuality, age, health, and religion—interact to shape unique and layered experiences of oppression and power. Rather



than viewing these aspects as separate, intersectionality shows how they overlap and influence each other.

Postcolonial literature reflects these ideas through complex portrayals of identity. For example, a female speaker in a poem contrasts images of wealth and poverty, beauty and ugliness, to question any fixed or one-dimensional view of self. Similarly, the perspective of a domestic slave in the same poem reveals how different historical backgrounds lead to vastly different forms of suffering. The speaker asks how one can claim to understand her pain when their experiences are so unequal. She emphasizes that true equality is impossible until such disparities are erased—until freedom becomes as light and open as the space between the sky and the earth.

Decolonizing Approaches in Postcolonial Criticism

Postcolonial literature encompasses the creative works of authors who exist on the fringes of dominant power structures, both geographically and socially. In contrast, postcolonial literary theory offers various frameworks for understanding the cultural and literary expressions of individuals from colonized or formerly colonized societies. Postcolonial criticism examines the dynamics between colonizers and the colonized, particularly how colonial rule shaped the identities and perceptions of the colonized populations.

This section specifically discusses decolonizing methods within postcolonial criticism. These approaches directly confront the colonial influences that still shape how texts are read and interpreted. Traditional Western interpretations often reflect viewpoints rooted in colonial centers of power, portraying colonized groups as lacking in legitimacy, knowledge, and agency.

In response, decolonizing criticism seeks to restore the authentic voices of those who have been historically silenced or misrepresented. It challenges binary thinking that divides the world into “self” and “other,” instead encouraging critical reflection on one’s own assumptions. Advocates of decolonizing

strategies argue that postcolonial criticism plays a crucial role in expanding the literary canon to include diverse perspectives, supporting activism, and promoting social justice.

Conclusion

Postcolonial literature continues to serve as a vital space for expressing the stories and struggles of those once silenced under colonial regimes. It addresses complex themes such as identity, power, and cultural representation, offering sharp critiques of colonial legacies while also transforming how we understand history, society, and culture. By embracing decolonizing methodologies and intersectional perspectives, postcolonial texts promote richer, more inclusive readings that challenge Eurocentric interpretations. These works create room for resistance, empowering marginalized voices and contributing significantly to social justice and intercultural awareness in today’s globalized world.

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