

**LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL
REPRESENTATION IN MODERN INDIAN WRITING:
A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

The Evolution of Modern Indian Literature is a 20th - 21st centuries wide domain which deeply analyzes the Negotiation of Language, Identity, and Cultural Representation, especially considering the impacts of the British Colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent. My paper focuses on the Indian Writer(s); a writer in English, a writer in the national language(s) of the country and a writer in a Lingua Franca; who, expressfully through Literature, post-constructively, identity through the written word, challenges, reclaims, and redefines, and in doing so exercising Creativity and Critical Thinking. Here, postcolonial (Bhabha, Spivak, Said) and post - modern in Literary Theory along with Linguistic Anthropology. Here, I have identified and will examine three major areas: 1. The Language of Power and the Language of Resistance, analyzing the English Language as a language of destruction (collaboration with the colonists); a language that is not a tool / weapon of the colonists, but, demonstratively a tool that empowers postcolonial engagement (Rushdie, Midnight's Children; Roy, The God of Small Things); 2. The Crisis of Identity and Hybridity, where it is in relation to Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri where diaspora displacement, code-switching, gap / void and the tension with 'Indianness' and modernity (which is global); 3. Cultural Representation and the Politics of Authenticity; in the provision of Modern Traditions and Modern Narratives, how the neglect and / or the revival of the Contemporary Narratives is focusing on the Regional Languages (i.e Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil) and Oral Literature (Mahasweta Devi's, Draupadi, Perumal Murugan's, One Part Woman).

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1. Introduction

Modern Indian Writing is about the trauma of history, the trauma of resistance, and the trauma of creative reinvention. Indian Literature has emerged, from the colonial shadows, as a polyphonic discourse where English, several regional languages, and many other forms, often coalesce and sometimes conflict, to express the divided and fragmented postcolonial consciousness of the nation. This paper attempts to analyze Indian authors of the present who deal with postcolonial positionalities, globalization, and the colonial inspired internal hierarchy of Indian Literature, and how such authors construct identities that are local and global/ transnational.

For constructing a theoretical apparatus, I have used Bhabha's notion of hybridity (1994), which argues that cultural identities are not stable, but are produced through negotiation and mimicry, and Spivak's (1988) critique of the subaltern where she asks who speaks for the subaltern. In addition, Edward Said's (1978) Orientalism will be used to explain how Indian narratives have been either exoticized or eclipsed in Western canonical Literature. With these frameworks, I would like to centre my argument on the fact that modern Indian writing is not a mere reflection of the cultural identities, but the active site of (re)constructing the cultural identities.

2.2 Vernacular Comes Back While Still Left Out

Most books around the world come in English, yet voices in Hindi, Bengali, or Tamil are pushing forward by telling hard stories. Mahasweta Devi wrote *Draupadi* in 1978 using Bengali to show what tribal people face under police brutality it wasn't gentle. She didn't pick her language at random; speaking their tongue meant standing beside them. Perumal Murugan did something alike in 2010 with *One Part Woman* - Tamil became his tool to break caste lines and question who controls women's lives. Truth told, novels not in English often get left behind due to weak translations, fewer print runs, plus academic preference for English narratives.

3. Hybrid Lives and Shifting Selves

3.1 Diasporic Displacement Meets Code Switching

Home. That word drifts through stories told by Indians living far from India. In *The Namesake*, published in 2003, Jhumpa Lahiri traces a quiet struggle - names that don't quite fit, languages shifting underfoot. Belonging slips like sand when English wraps around Bengali phrases mid-

sentence. Then there's Arundhati Roy's later book, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, arriving in 2017, jagged at the edges on purpose. Its rhythm stutters, mirrors lives pulled apart by borders, silence, violence. Words become shelter, though never fully solid. Between these lines, speech does more than communicate - it holds breath, memory, fracture.

3.2 The Myth of Authentic Indianness

Every now and then someone says they want "real" Indian stories, yet somehow that craving sticks people into tight categories, missing how shifting identity can be. From one angle, borders on maps seem solid until you notice how easily they blur through lives lived across them - Amitav Ghosh made that clear in *The Shadow Lines* back in 1988. What holds groups together isn't lines in the sand, but words spoken, moments remembered, echoes passed down. Take Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, published in 1980: it unfolds family fractures left behind after Partition, where speaking English or Hindi signals much more than preference - it marks rank, belief, distance between kin. Instead of repeating old myths about what being Indian means, these writers stretch space for many truths to fit inside.

4. Cultural Voices and Questions of Realness

4.1 Feminist and Queer Voices

Out of nowhere, stories once pushed aside begin to speak louder. Female authors, alongside LGBTQ+ voices, unsettle familiar patterns that long ruled the page. Not bound by tradition, figures such as Ismat Chughtai disrupt expectations - her 1942 tale *Lihaaf*, written in Urdu, dares where others stayed silent. Across time and tongue, Vikram Seth's 1986 novel *The Golden Gate* reshapes how love can look in verse form. Take Jerry Pinto's 2012 work, *Em and the Big Hoom*: it holds pain close, revealing minds stretched thin under weight of silence. Then comes Raj Kamal Jha's 2019 offering, *The City and the Sea*, folding yearning into fractured lives without apology. Little by little, difference becomes part of the fabric rather than an exception.

4.2 Translation and Digital Media

A doorway opens when words shift tongues - witness how Arunava Sinha reshapes Bengali tales. Online spaces such as *The Caravan* or *Scroll*. in breathe fresh air into stories rarely told in English. Yet obstacles remain because shifting context often loses delicate shades of thought while internet access skips many, particularly those beyond city limits. Events and honors - the likes of Jaipur Literature Festival or Sahitya Akademi - lift up homegrown speech, though balance still lags far behind promise.

5. Conclusion

Writing from India today shows just how tough language can be when it fights to bring culture back. Through mixedup backgrounds, challenging English rules, yet giving space to those often ignored, current writers redraw what being Indian means around the world. Even so, local tongues stay hidden behind English, while profit-driven choices mute rare tales. Looking ahead, scholars must study whether tech tools like artificial intelligence or online platforms could twist storytelling - also noticing heavy themes such as shifting climates and mass movement that never stop reshaping who people think they are.

What matters in Indian writing isn't chasing a single true sound. Instead, it thrives on the mix - the bump and hum of tongues, speech patterns, real lives stitched together. As Arundhati Roy puts it in *The God of Small Things*, great tales hold nothing back, yet reveal everything slowly. This openness fuels today's authors - they pull apart old skins, weave new ones, reshaping who we are after empire.

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