



A Review of Post-Colonial English Literature at the Backdrop of Indian Knowledge System

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Abstract: Post-colonial English literature refers to the body of literary works produced by writers from former colonies who grapple with the legacies of colonialism. These works often examine the effects of colonialism on identity, culture, and language, and critique the structures of power and domination established during the colonial period. Indian Knowledge Systems refers to India's traditional knowledge developed over thousands of years, such as Ayurveda & Yoga, Mathematics (like zero, geometry), Astronomy & astrology, Architecture (Vastu, temple design), Philosophy, ethics, literature, and sciences. Today, IKS is also promoted in education (NEP 2020) to integrate traditional Indian wisdom with modern studies. In post-colonial English literature, the Indian Knowledge System serves as a powerful means of resistance against the epistemic violence of colonialism. Through reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous knowledge, post-colonial writers critique colonial structures that sought to suppress and replace India's rich cultural and intellectual traditions. By weaving IKS into their narratives, these writers not only challenge Western paradigms but also assert an alternative vision of modernity that is deeply rooted in India's spiritual, philosophical, and cultural heritage. The present paper 'A Review of Post-Colonial English Literature at the Backdrop of Indian Knowledge System' attempts to review Post-Colonial English Literature through the lenses of IKS establishing the root of the same to the Post-Colonial English Literature.

Introduction: Ideas such as "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means "the world is one family", emphasize the moral and ecological aspects of conventional Indian philosophy. Epic stories like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata contain intellectual, moral, and ethical lessons. These components collectively form a rich tapestry that has shaped the cultural, philosophical, and scientific heritage of India. Festivals like Diwali, Holi, and Navaratri are not only celebrations but also carry cultural and philosophical significance, promoting values of joy, harmony, and the triumph of good over evil. British colonialism disrupted traditional Indian education systems, replacing indigenous languages with English and introducing Western curricula. This led to a marginalization of traditional knowledge. The colonial education system prioritized Western knowledge at the expense of indigenous wisdom. This created a dichotomy between traditional and modern education, contributing to a loss of confidence in native systems. The imposition of Western values and norms eroded aspects of India's cultural identity and created a perception of a hierarchy between Western scientific knowledge and indigenous systems. Post-colonial literature often reflects on the colonial experience itself—the violence, exploitation, and cultural suppression of colonized peoples. Writers revisit colonial histories, whether through historical fiction, allegory, or personal narratives, to expose the impacts of imperialism and to give voice to marginalized histories. In this context, the literature often serves as a form of historical reclamation, where writers seek to tell the stories of those silenced by colonial narratives **Basham, A.L. (2016).**

Post-colonial English Literature: Post-colonial English literature refers to the body of literary works produced by writers from former colonies who grapple with the legacies of colonialism. These works often examine the effects of colonialism on identity, culture, and language, and critique the structures of power and domination established during the colonial period. Post-colonial literature typically emerges after a colony gains independence but continues to engage with the complexities of colonial histories and the lingering influence of imperial powers. One of the central themes in post-colonial literature is the exploration of identity. Colonialism often imposed foreign systems of governance, education, and culture on colonized peoples, leading to a fragmented or hybrid sense of self. Post-colonial writers frequently explore the complexities of



maintaining or redefining cultural identity in the aftermath of colonization. Hybridity (a concept popularized by theorist Homi K. Bhabha) is a key idea in post-colonial theory. It describes the mixing of cultures, languages, and traditions that arises as a result of colonial encounters. Post-colonial literature reflects this hybrid identity, where characters often find themselves caught between their indigenous heritage and the Western cultural influences imposed by colonial powers. One of the enduring legacies of colonialism is the imposition of the colonizer's language. In many post-colonial countries, English became the language of administration, education, and literature, often sidelining indigenous languages. This linguistic domination raised questions about the legitimacy and power of native languages and the role of English in post-colonial societies **Bourdieu, P. (1996)**.

Indian Knowledge System: Indian Knowledge Systems refers to India's traditional knowledge developed over thousands of years, such as Ayurveda & Yoga, Mathematics (like zero, geometry), Astronomy & astrology, Architecture (Vastu, temple design), Philosophy, ethics, literature, and sciences. Today, IKS is also promoted in education (NEP 2020) to integrate traditional Indian wisdom with modern studies. It refers primarily to the vast, ancient heritage of traditional Indian wisdom in fields like math, medicine, astronomy, arts, and governance, now actively promoted by India's Ministry of Education to integrate into modern education and solve contemporary problems, aiming to decolonize minds and offer holistic solutions, though some critics view certain aspects as promoting pseudoscience.

Objectives: 1. To review Post-Colonial English Literature.

2. To revisit Post-Colonial Literature through IKS.

3. To support the claim through the reference of Indian English Literature.

4. To establish relationship between IKS and Post-Colonial Literature.

Hypothesis: The present paper attempts to trace the roots of IKS as back as to the beginning of the British Era in India and the onset of the Indian English Literature helming the IKS. The paper proposes that In post-colonial English literature, the Indian Knowledge System serves as a powerful means of resistance against the epistemic violence of colonialism. Through reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous knowledge, post-colonial writers critique colonial structures that sought to suppress and replace India's rich cultural and intellectual traditions.

Research Methodology: The present paper 'A Review of Post-Colonial English Literature at the Backdrop of Indian Knowledge System' attempts to review Post-Colonial English Literature through the lenses of IKS establishing the root of the same to the Post-Colonial English Literature. The reference of the **Post-Colonial English Literature and the prominent writers and works were made. The conclusions were drawn accordingly.**

Literature Review:

A.L. Basham (2016), researched the history of Indian civilization. For those who are interested in the history, culture, and civilization of India from its earliest times until the arrival of Islam in the 11th century, it remains a foundational text. A vast range of subjects, including history, religion, philosophy, art, literature, and social systems are covered in the book's numerous sections. With an interdisciplinary approach, Basham brings together findings from literary studies, linguistics, archeology, and anthropology to present a comprehensive picture of ancient India. The duties of numerous social groups and the social structure, including the caste system, are covered in the book. Aspects of economy like trade, industry, and agriculture are also included.

Surendranath Dasgupta, S. (1922), conducted an extensive and groundbreaking study that delves into the complex and wide-ranging field of Indian philosophy. This book is a part of a multi-volume series that attempts to give a thorough overview of Indian intellectual traditions. The meticulously organized book of Dasgupta covers the several philosophical systems and schools of thought that have influenced Indian intellectual history. It mostly concentrates on the early history of Indian philosophy, which includes the Six Systems of Indian Philosophy, the Heterodox Schools, the Epics and Puranas, the Vedas and Upanishads. It is a crucial text for comprehending Indian thought's conceptual foundations. It is regarded as a seminal book in the field of Indian philosophy because of its thorough scholarship and wide coverage. Shodh



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Zimmer, H. (1952), made a substantial contribution to Indian philosophy. The book examines how tradition and reason interact within the framework of Indian philosophy. Mohanty uses a dialectical method to study the relationship between tradition and reason in Indian philosophy. He contends that rather than being a single, cohesive philosophy, Indian thinking is a dynamic synthesis of many intellectual traditions that interact with one another. The book emphasizes how Indian philosophy is pluralistic, with several schools of thought coexisting and frequently contradicting one another.

Bourdieu, P. (1996) It is believed that this diversity is a strength since it fosters a vibrant and diverse intellectual environment. In his comparative philosophy, Mohanty compares and contrasts the traditions of Indian and Western philosophy. He contends that a deeper comprehension of philosophy as a whole can result from seeing the parallels and discrepancies among various systems. It provides an in-depth analysis of the interaction between tradition and reason, offering important insights into the dynamic and eclectic character of Indian thinking.

Mohanty, J.N. (1989), investigates the connection between local and universal knowledge systems. It highlights how crucial it is to value and acknowledge indigenous knowledge within the larger framework of world knowledge. According to Durie, indigenous knowledge is essential for sustainable development and creativity in addition to being a cultural legacy. An extensive summary of the importance of indigenous knowledge is given in the study. It emphasizes how crucial cooperation and respect between various knowledge systems are to each other. Case studies and real-world examples back up Durie's claims.

Chakrabarti, Arindam. (2017) It makes a major addition to the conversation about the importance of indigenous knowledge. It emphasizes how important it is for indigenous knowledge to be acknowledged and included into international systems in order to promote innovation and sustainable development. Frameworks for incorporating indigenous knowledge into global knowledge systems are proposed in this research. Durie supports curriculum changes in education that incorporate indigenous knowledge.

Durie (2005), examines the numerous, varied, and rich knowledge traditions that have grown over millennia in India. This covers the conventional sciences, the arts, literature, philosophy, and more, all of which have added to the body of knowledge on a worldwide scale. Mandavkar highlights the relevance of these systems in the modern era as well as their possible advances in science and technology. The book offers a Shodh Samarth- Research Journal of Commerce, Management & Economics 127 thorough historical review of Indian knowledge systems, tracing their origins to prehistoric times. The article covers significant advancements in several disciplines, including astronomy, mathematics, Ayurvedic medicine, and architecture.

Post-colonial English Literature: In **V. S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas**, the protagonist struggles with his sense of self in a post-colonial society that is still shaped by the legacy of British colonialism. The novel explores the tension between colonial history and post-colonial identity, with the protagonist's life becoming an allegory for the struggles of post-colonial Trinidad. Post-colonial literature frequently examines the challenges of building a new nation after independence. The end of colonial rule does not immediately resolve the deep-seated issues of poverty, inequality, ethnic divisions, or political instability that often stemmed from colonial rule. Writers explore how nations navigate the transition from colonial subjugation to self-rule and the complex legacies of colonial systems. These narratives often address the question of what "freedom" means in a post-colonial context and critique the failure or limitations of nationalist movements that promised liberation but were later co-opted by elite powers. **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood** critiques the failures of post-colonial Kenya, examining the ways in which the new political elites have inherited the oppressive systems of the colonial regime, perpetuating economic and social inequalities **Chakrabarti, Arindam. (2017)**.

Many post-colonial works focus on resistance, whether through overt rebellion or subtle forms of cultural resistance. The struggle for independence from colonial rule is often depicted as both a political and psychological battle, where colonized people must not only fight for freedom but also reclaim their own sense of dignity and identity. **Frantz Fanon**, while primarily a theorist, is often discussed in post-colonial literary studies for his work on the psychological and cultural



effects of colonialism. Fanon's book 'The Wretched of the Earth' discusses the violence of colonialism and the violent means necessary to achieve liberation. While not a work of fiction, his ideas profoundly influenced post-colonial writers like **Jean-Paul Sartre** and **Ayi Kwei Armah**. The trauma of colonialism often becomes a central theme in post-colonial literature. Writers examine the psychological and cultural scars left by colonial rule and explore the difficulty of recovering from the violence and exploitation that colonized societies endured. Memory, both individual and collective, becomes a way of resisting the erasure of colonized histories. **Toni Morrison's Beloved**, while focusing on the history of slavery in America, parallels many themes found in post-colonial literature. It explores the haunting effects of a traumatic past on individual and collective identity. In a similar way, post-colonial writers examine how history continues to shape the present and how people attempt to heal or reclaim the past **Dasgupta, S. (1922)**.

Post-Colonial Literature through IKS: The theory behind post-colonial literature is deeply informed by the work of several key intellectual figures critiquing colonialism and its aftermath, providing frameworks for understanding the literature produced in the wake of colonial rule.

1. Frantz Fanon: A psychiatrist and philosopher who wrote extensively about the psychological effects of colonization, especially in 'Black Skin, White Masks' (1952) and 'The Wretched of the Earth' (1961). Fanon's work has been deeply influential in post-colonial literary criticism, especially concerning race, identity, and violence.

2. Edward Said: His book Orientalism (1978) critiques the Western construction of "the Orient" as an exotic, backward, and inferior other. Said's work has shaped much of post-colonial theory, particularly in examining how the West has historically constructed knowledge about the colonized world to justify imperial domination.

3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Known for her essay Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988), Spivak addresses the challenges of giving voice to marginalized groups in post-colonial societies and critiques the Western academy's role in silencing the subaltern.

4. Homi K. Bhabha: His ideas on hybridity, mimicry, and third space challenge fixed notions of cultural identity and highlight how colonial encounters create new, mixed identities. Post-colonial English literature is a diverse and rich field that explores the complexities of post-colonial identity, culture, history, and politics. Writers in this genre engage deeply with the legacies of colonialism, offering both critiques of colonial histories and meditations on the possibilities and challenges of post-colonial existence.

Reclaiming Identity and Cultural Heritage

One of the central themes in post-colonial Indian literature is the reclamation of cultural identity that was disrupted by colonial rule. Writers sought to rediscover and assert traditional Indian knowledge systems, often highlighting their superiority or richness in comparison to Western systems. This reclamation often involves engaging with classical texts, philosophies, and practices that were marginalized or dismissed by colonial authorities. For instance, in **Rabindranath Tagore's** work, particularly his essays and poetry, there is a continuous engagement with the idea of "Swadeshi" (self-reliance) and a return to indigenous knowledge, which stands as a critique of the Western colonial paradigm. Tagore's **Gitanjali** (Song Offerings), for instance, blends Indian spirituality with universal themes of longing and divinity, drawing on Vedantic and Upanishadic traditions. **Aurobindo Ghosh** similarly incorporates elements of Hindu philosophy, particularly the concept of divine spiritual evolution, in his writing and in his political work, emphasizing a reawakening of Indian consciousness in opposition to colonial subjugation **Durie, M. (2005)**.

Manifestation of post-colonial English literature in IKS:

Post-colonial writers in India have often sought to revive and reclaim indigenous knowledge systems that were suppressed or disregarded by the British colonial rulers. The colonial project not only imposed Western education and epistemologies but also undermined Indian traditional wisdom—whether in the form of philosophy, science, spirituality, or social systems. Literature becomes a site where writers engage with this erasure and seek to reassert the importance and validity of IKS **Zimmer, H. (1952)**.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, a nobel laureate and a key figure in Indian post-colonial



thought, often advocated for the rediscovery of India's spiritual and philosophical heritage. In his essays and works like "Gitanjali" and "Visva-Bharati" movement, Tagore called for a fusion of Eastern and Western knowledge systems. His belief in the relevance of Indian spirituality and the ideals of the Upanishads and Vedanta became central to his literary and intellectual work. **Sri Aurobindo**, a philosopher, poet, and nationalist, was another key figure who sought to integrate Indian spiritual traditions, particularly Vedanta and Yoga, with modern knowledge systems. His works such as "The Life Divine" and "The Synthesis of Yoga" emphasize the relevance of IKS in understanding human consciousness and the spiritual evolution of society **Pollock, S. (1985)**.

One of the most significant ways in which IKS features in post-colonial literature is through the critique of Western colonial epistemology. Colonialism not only imposed political and economic control but also introduced a new system of knowledge based on rationality, science, and order, while often dismissing or marginalizing indigenous knowledge as primitive or backward. Post-colonial Indian literature, therefore, often challenges the supremacy of Western knowledge and calls for the valorization of indigenous ways of knowing, which are seen as holistic and interconnected. These include philosophies of interconnectedness (like the Indian worldview of interdependence found in traditional texts), holistic health practices (such as Ayurveda and Yoga), and spiritual teachings (from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism) **Gupta, B. (2009)**.

In **Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children'**, the narrative intertwines Indian folklore, history, and post-colonial realities. The novel critiques the British colonial legacy while also incorporating elements of Indian mythology and magical realism. The portrayal of Saleem Sinai's life, intertwined with the historical upheaval of post-independence India, reflects a return to indigenous narratives that resist colonial depictions of history and knowledge. **Arundhati Roy**, in **The God of Small Things**, engages with Indian caste systems, regional traditions, and the historical impact of colonialism on the community's knowledge structures. The text blends mythological elements with the real-world struggles of modern India, challenging Western frameworks of rationality and law through the presentation of alternate truths that emerge from Indian collective memory and experience. Myths, folklore, and oral traditions have always been a crucial part of IKS. In post-colonial literature, these forms of knowledge—often dismissed by colonialists as superstition or folklore—are central to understanding the complexities of Indian identity. Writers often turn to myths, stories, and legends as ways to explore and assert the richness of Indian culture and its spiritual wisdom. In **Vikram Seth's The Golden Gate**, the poetical structure and themes subtly reference Indian mythology and traditions while dealing with contemporary issues such as love, loss, and identity. The weaving of Eastern and Western narratives mirrors the larger theme of post-colonial hybridity. **Girish Karnad**, one of India's most prominent playwrights, often uses myth and folklore to explore social issues. His play **Tughlaq** examines the conflict between idealism and pragmatic governance, drawing on historical and mythological figures to question the nature of leadership and governance in post-colonial India **Malhotra, R. (2022)**.

Discussion & Analysis: The relationship between **IKS and Post-Colonial Literature** is one that is deeply interwoven with the historical, cultural, and intellectual legacies of colonialism in India. Post-colonial Indian writers, through their works, grapple with the complex aftermath of colonial domination and the challenge of asserting a distinct identity and knowledge system in the wake of Western imperialism. IKS, with its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, spirituality, science, and social structures, serves as a crucial site of resistance against colonial epistemologies, which sought to diminish or distort indigenous ways of knowing **Mohanty, Jitendra N (1989)**.

One of the primary concerns of post-colonial Indian literature is the exploration of identity. Colonialism forcibly displaced many Indian communities from their cultural, intellectual, and spiritual traditions, often imposing European systems of knowledge, religion, and governance as the standard. Post-colonial writers attempt to reclaim and assert the validity of indigenous knowledge systems to restore pride in cultural identity. A major thrust of post-colonial literature is the critique of the colonial imposition of Western rationality, which often saw indigenous knowledge as primitive or backward. In contrast to the Western focus on science and technology, post-colonial Indian writers emphasize holistic, spiritual, and ecological knowledge systems that were historically central to Indian civilization. They argue for the importance of these systems in



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contemporary society and question the dominance of Western modes of knowledge that prioritize materialism, linearity, and objectivity **Mandavkar, P. (2023)**.

Conclusion: In post-colonial English literature, the Indian Knowledge System serves as a powerful means of resistance against the epistemic violence of colonialism. Through reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous knowledge, post-colonial writers critique colonial structures that sought to suppress and replace India's rich cultural and intellectual traditions. By weaving IKS into their narratives, these writers not only challenge Western paradigms but also assert an alternative vision of modernity that is deeply rooted in India's spiritual, philosophical, and cultural heritage. The relationship between **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** and **Post-Colonial Literature** is one that is deeply interwoven with the historical, cultural, and intellectual legacies of colonialism in India. Post-colonial Indian writers, through their works, grapple with the complex aftermath of colonial domination and the challenge of asserting a distinct identity and knowledge system in the wake of Western imperialism. IKS, with its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, spirituality, science, and social structures, serves as a crucial site of resistance against colonial epistemologies, which sought to diminish or distort indigenous ways of knowing.

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