



**THE ASPECTS OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE TO THE INDEPENDENCE,
ACUTE SENSE OF DISILLUSIONMENT IN THE NOVEL MIDNIGHT'S
CHILDREN BY SALMAN RUSHDIE, AN AREA OF DARKNESS BY V. S.
NAIPAUL, AND THE SHADOW LINES (1988) BY AMITAVA GHOSH**

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Cite This Article: Aaya Adil Alrammah & Ahmed Faiq Almedee, "The Aspects of British Colonial Rule to the Independence, Acute Sense of Disillusionment in the Novel *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, *An Area of Darkness* by V. S. Naipaul, and the *Shadow Lines* (1988) by Amitava Ghosh", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education*, Volume 11, Issue 2, July - December, Page Number 63-67, 2025.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16914169>

Abstract:

Britishers left India, but their impression, impact, and influence are still present in this country, including culture, literature, linguistics, and thinking methods. A distinct literary genre named Postcolonial literature presents the aftermath of the British ruled period. Prominent novelists have written numerous novels on how native Indians are influenced by British culture and habits, and to some extent, they are pretty indifferent to native culture. This thesis focuses on three novels: *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, *An Area of Darkness* by V. S. Naipaul, and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) by Amitava Ghosh, as the message bearer of postcolonial conceptual frameworks and their success as postcolonial novels. The methodology for Postcolonial novels involves social, cultural and political scrutiny. Post colonialism with research propoganda relates to addressing racism and oppression.

Key Words: British East India, Free country, *An Area of Darkness*, The *Shadow Lines*

Introduction

British colonisers transformed the free country of India into a colonised country in 1757. British East India companies came to India to outsource and globalise their business, and gradually they took control of the judiciary, economics, and political system of this country. Their oppression and draining of Indian wealth to England caused an uprising in 1857. The British Government took control of this country as colonisers Britishers tended to impose British culture, concepts, and education on citizens of India. India was recognised as a colonised country till 1947.

Post colonialism is a theory that has been adopted and manifested in almost every corner of the world as colonialism is observed in almost every nation except a few coloniser nations like the United Kingdom and France. Nevertheless, postcolonial culture is different from a country's pre-colonial culture, rich in the nation's aspects and features. The prefix post of postcolonial literature is the subject of complicated discussion and debate, but one thing it makes clear is that colonialism is never ended. The postcolonial theory works on the effect of colonisers after the end of the empire.

Research Statement:

This research illuminates Post colonialism based on three different novels written on postcolonial ideologies by three different novelists. The literature review will help the academic understand the critical concept of the discussed subject.

Literature Review:

Postcolonial Themes in *Midnight's Children*:

Postcolonial novels are generally written after the independence of a country from the colonisers (McLeod, 2018, p. 220). Authors of these novels focus on the lifestyle, culture, and language of the people who were once ruled by a foreign power. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a famous novel on postcolonial literary theories (Gallien, 2018, p. 725). This novel narrates charming and minute details about the postcolonial phase of India. The turmoil of historic events that determined the fate of India has been successfully portrayed in Rushdie's work through the description of the Sinai family. This novel is considered as a critique of the mindset of Indian citizens, diversity in India and Indians, history, and political background while being a study on the mutual human relationship (Patel 2019, p. 4052). *Midnight's Children* is one of the most celebrated works of Rushdie. He won the Booker Prize for this novel.

Post-colonial literature forms a new perspective on the relationship between colonised and the ruler. It puts forward a discussion on whether the culture of colonised people is superior to the culture of colonised people or not. People of different countries are under the influence of colonialism, and postcolonial literature formulates a vital way to express the reality of colonised people (Sultan 2020, p. 90). Post-colonial literary criticism gives attention to the literary works made by postcolonial writers (Johns-Putra 2018, p. 30). One target of this type of literary criticism is to confront the western perspective of universalism, judging all literature from the western point of view (Soter et al. 2021, p. 104886).

Western norms generally overlook the cultural, social-historical mismatches presented in postcolonial countries' literature. Post-colonial literary criticism explores the justice and injustice in literary works on colonisation. The coloniser and colonised are presented through this work, validity and shortcomings of their opinions and empowers the colonised people to write about their feelings and experience. Post-colonial literary criticism never marks diversities, plurality, and hybridity as negative impacts; instead, those are celebrated and handled with importance in postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literary works generally use the colonisers' language, and the authors have the propensity to add their native phrases and flavours to the story's narrative.

The narrator of *Midnight's Childrens* Saleem Sinai; he is also the novel's protagonist. From his narrative, readers learn about a postcolonial country's charming story. The readers of this novel never find the story monotonous from the beginning to the end because of the diversity and plurality of the story and narrative the novel contains (Singh 2018, p. 108). Readers find the reflection of their own life stories in the character development and their traits. They feel that they are also becoming an integral part of the novel by finding a history of their motherland from the description of battles. What they read and listen to in everyday media are presented in this novel with sheer transparency. *Midnight's Childrens* the story of one of the fascinating countries globally and depicts the crisis and emotion of a family. Rushdie takes an approach by sharing the story of his country and fellow citizens to remind his reader that they should embrace every culture and diversity around them and must take a lesson from the past harmful incidents.

Rushdie took five years to write *Midnight's Children*. Critics acclaimed that *Midnight's Children* possesses an autobiographical element about Rushdie. Rushdie himself confesses that he has built the character of Saleem Sinai after himself-

"I gave Saleem certain parts of my childhood, so he lives in my house and goes to school. His friends are composites of people I went to school with. The school bullies know who they are."

The story of Saleem Sinai centres around postcolonial India. Coincidentally his birthday matches the same day of the liberation of India from the Britishers, the midnight of 15th August 1947. Saleem has become an integral part of India's fortune and upcoming events. The country's adversities and favourable situations, ups and downs find their expression in the story of Saleem's life. It's a myth in the context of the novel that several 1001 children were born when the handover of leadership took place from British to Indians.

The children were blessed with supernatural powers, and even the powers are more extraordinary for those born much closer to midnight. Saleem finds that 581 children are alive when he comes to know about their blessing. Saleem himself is blessed with the power of telepathy, which enables him to find a portal to other people's minds, and he can find their most secret thoughts, hidden desires, and emotions. Most surprisingly for himself and the readers, he can even enter into India's mind, his native country. He is aware of everything taking place all over India, including its cultural diversity of religions and languages. The children born the midnight of 15th August 1947 are the most precise reflection of India, representing diversity and plurality, the main trait of Indian culture.

British colonialism divided India into two different nations based on religion, India for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims (Rahman et al. 2018, p. 5). This partition of India observed extreme bloodshed, numerous human casualties from both countries, and a tremendous economic crisis. India and Pakistan have fought gory battles multiple times in the postcolonial stage (Raja & Mazumdar 2021, p. 2). However, the most painful tragedy is that the partition of India compromised the diversity of this country, which is a unique feature of India. Despite all differences, citizens of India were living a conjugal and harmonious life free from hatred and mistrust. Thus *Midnight's Children* is a milestone in the postcolonial novel genre as it celebrates the independence of India and, at the same time, puts forward the horrific picture of post-colonial India.

India has always been a country where cultural, social, and linguistic diversity is celebrated, and it is the most significant feature of Indian culture. The partition of India comes with the sole purpose of dividing the nation on the ground of two castes. People behind the partition are not true believers in pan-Indian brotherhood and unity. Many people think of India as their motherland, and they feel an inseparable bonding with this country. However, they were uprooted and sent to a different nation because they belonged to a different caste. *Midnight's Children* aired controversies with its publication and was restricted in India.

Postcolonial themes in *An Area of Darkness*:

In his novel *An Area of Darkness*, V.S. Naipaul shows postcolonial India as a country full of darkness. According to the author, third-world countries like the post-colonial stage are a land of oppression and anarchy; people have no dignity, human rights, and gender equality. This novel is written during Naipaul's visit to India in 1964. In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul imposes his western ideas and global visions contradictory to Indian society. Naipaul mainly chooses postcolonial worlds like India, Pakistan, Iran, Argentina, and Malaysia as the background and the story of people of these countries as the subject of his novels. *An Area of Darkness* is the most emotional work for Naipaul. As a West Indian citizen, he described his first voyage to India, the land of his ancestors, in this novel. Readers find India as the most distressed and developing country reading this novel as the poverty of India takes a significant part in the context of the novel. Indians lack tidiness, but they are not ashamed of it.

Naipaul mentions that detachment of intelligence from physically hard work obliged Indians to be the world's most oppressed and exploited labour. A bitter experience marks Naipaul's visit to India because he finds the streets and villages of India full of garbage and dirt. People are sick and mal-nutritional, starving for food (Maharani et al. 2020, p. 150). They are deprived even of basic needs like bread, butter, a shade over their heads, and a cloth to wear. Upon seeing this pathetic scenario, Naipaul wants to leave India at once. Before entering into India's culture and inner traits, he becomes terrified of the practical and visual conditions of Indian societies.

Naipaul opines that beggary is deeply rooted in Indian society, and it is difficult to understand the reason behind beggary from a western perspective. Beggars hold a unique position in Indian society, and giving something to beggars is considered a good deed and act of greatness. Donating money and food to beggars is a step closer to heaven, a concept popular among Indians. Open defecation is also a familiar ritual among Indians; streets and fields are full of human waste because Indians think defeating nature is suitable for their health. Though few families have toilets, they never use them. It is almost unthinkable for western people.

An Area of Darkness is divided into three parts; the first part is the description of Naipaul about his ancestors coming to India as bought labourers. Naipaul was born in a conservative Hindu family, but he is an unbeliever. He does not support the caste discrimination between Hindus and Muslims (Bhagat 2022, p. 5). He is shocked to see that caste creates a cruel distinction of labours. Despite being an unbeliever, he is hurt to see that old customs and concepts of Indian society no longer exist.

The second part focuses on a hotel named Liward on Dal Lake, Kashmir. The author describes his time in this hotel and his relationship and interaction with the hotel's workers. Naipaul visited Amarnath temple, 90 miles north of Srinagar as a pilgrim

and depicts that the place of worship is like a miniature of a typical Indian market (Kalsotra et al. 2021, p. 24). Readers come in contact with a couple, Rafique and Laraine; Rafique is a musician; he loves Laraine, but ultimately Laraine returns to her home in America because she finds it challenging to dwell in the poverty of India.

The third part of the novel is named Fantasy and Ruins. This part is engaged to focus on the British captivity of India. There is mention of author Rudyard Kipling, the famous architecture Taj Mahal, Sikh community. Naipaul mentions that his journey to India is a wrong effort for him as this journey becomes psychologically painful for him. Post-colonial stage of India contributes to the cultural context of *An Area of Darkness*. Naipaul's time in India is long, and contains travels even longer. Expression of his first visit is quite journalistic and is scarce of observations. Many critics blamed Naipaul for overlooking the part side of the optimism of India. The whole picture of the novel is gloomy, and he never illuminates the good sides of Indian culture. But it must be considered that this novel is a travelogue, and the true feelings and responses of the author are reflected here. So ultimately, *An Area of Darkness* by V.S. Naipaul becomes a vivid reflection of postcolonial Indian society.

Area of Darkness goes accordingly to Naipaul's religious and philosophical views. Naipaul approaches to establish himself as a successful novelist and tries to strengthen his writings. He also attempted to prevent a sense of insecurity. Like his father, he is also in a situation facing the dilemma of home and homelessness. He tries to give his life an appropriate meaning in postcolonial background. People of colonised societies lack basic humanitarian dignity; they think of themselves as inferior human beings and try to assimilate a foreign culture imposed by their oppressor (Rosert & Sauer 2019, p. 372). It ends with their loss of identity, dislocations, and suffering.

Postcolonial themes in *The Shadow Lines*

The Shadow Lines is a venture by Amitav Ghosh to review the postcolonial influence on the identity of characters, culture and society. Ghosh never refrains himself from pointing out the horrors and darkness of the time of partition of Bengal. The impacts of Post colonialism on the culture and society of two adjacent cities of Bengal, Calcutta and Dhaka, have been scrutinised in this novel. It illuminates the number of exploitation that people suffered caused by oppressors and anarchists. Ghosh chases the postcolonial elements throughout the novel to reflect postcolonial effects on Bengal. This thesis aims to establish *The Shadow Lines* on the postcolonial ground with the help of postcolonial elements like anarchy, economic crisis, and partition theories.

Indian writing in English in postcolonial stages is primarily the work of Indian writers. The literary works are diversified as well as the country India. Indian English literature is not bound to specific ages or decades (Reddy 2018, p. 37). This literary genre became popular in the nineteenth century with the arising voice of protests against British colonialism and oppression. A feeling of Indianness is found in these writings, and it enables citizens to be influenced by nationalism. *The Shadow Lines* is situated in the context of events of historical interests like the Swadeshi movement, World War II, partitions of India and communal riots (Rastogi 2021, p. 17). Through the story of a Bengali family, Ghosh paints the sufferings and adversities caused by communal riots and an unending line of migrants due to the partition (Chakraborty 2022, p. 33).

An anonymous teller narrates the story. His uncle, Tridib, is one of the essential characters of the novel. The story unfolds itself with the development of political and judicial events that are taking place in India (Chang 2019, p. 457). The characters are the representative of the events, and these events influence the private life of these characters. The grandmother of the narrator- Thamma- is a deliberate characterisation by Ghosh to bring the issues like partition and its effects on people's lives into focus and point out the conceptual framework of nation, nationalism, and *nationhood* (Naidu 2021, p. 19). The narrator is a boy of eight years, and he informs the reader that his dhamma thinks the time is the essential thing in human life, and she does not like wasting time. Gradually readers get familiar with two families- one is his family of them, and the other is her sister Mayadebi's family.

The novel depicts a wide diversity of people with various types of characters. People are struggling to adapt to the new type of living in the postcolonial era. The Minds of colonised people have been moulded so that they can only think and follow the culture that has been imposed on them. The political and structural transformation after liberation caused great anarchy and unrest. The influence of Post colonialism is hard to surpass, and it is difficult to make a self-perspective.

The Shadow Lines deals with a severe issue like the Identity Crisis in postcolonial India (Ulasov et al. 2018, p. 142). An identity crisis is a deterioration of a person's mental health when he feels mentally insecure caused by social and political change around him. This novel deals with the story of three generations in their search for identity, need for freedom, and complicated relationship with colonial culture. Ghosh manifests the idea of nationhood and national identity in his portrayal of characters. The missing name of the narrator of this story is exciting and provides scope for the reader to think about the novel.

Methodology:

The methodology of Postcolonial novels takes social, cultural and political scrutiny to involve it in colonial matters. Post colonialism is known as both a social movement and research propaganda with the primary objective of addressing racism and oppression. Postcolonial research includes cultural, social, and political experiences of prior colonised people. The theoretical framework of colonialism enables postcolonial scholars and writers to work on colonised individuals, societies and cultures. It is mainly based on the picturisation of the colonial past, writers of the postcolonial stage use tradition of gathering knowledge and ideas from the past incidents and history. The propensity of colonisers is to make colonised people biased with colonising education, culture and mentality. However, this scenario changed after the freedom of colonised people from colonisers. This methodology aims to readdress the social injustices and oppression that occurred to the ruled peoples.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used to research post-colonialism. It is pretty different from colonialism as it is more interested in the aftermath of colonialism than the feature of colonialism from a conceptual point of view. Some literary figures focus on the disappointing effects of colonialism, such as insecurities of life, racial and gender inequalities, cultural feuds, and the migration problem (Dunne et al. 2020, p. 380). Some other critics have pointed out the positive outcome of Post colonialism in education, culture and other grounds.

Other forms of postcolonial theories are involved in finding the postcolonial change that a nation faces, but it is still under discussion. The popularity of postcolonial theories and research articles related to postcolonial theories emerged in UK and

US in the decade 1980 as a new genre of humanistic research, mainly for the further study of feminism and racial theories. These theories are incomplete without anti-colonial thoughts and movements of colonised countries in Asia and Africa. Primarily this theory is linked to the colonial rule of the 20th century and is concerned with the political and social ground of that period.

Several forms of this theory are committed to historical and aesthetic representation; it is marked by globalisation and global modernisation. It accounts for the reshaping of politics and ethics by imperialism. Focusing on the injustice by theorising and discovering the grounds of environmentalism to human rights is a vital purpose of this theory. Postcolonial theories influenced world citizens' thought processes, their perspectives on foreign culture, and national and international histories. Though frequent criticisms are made towards postcolonial theories of this genre, the postcolonial theory stands as one of the primary aspects of critical humanistic interrogation worldwide.

Findings:

Post-colonialism is like an umbrella term covering a vast range of topics. This theory helps understand the state and condition of colonised people's minds. Colonisers' perspectives also often have been presented by this theory. This theory originated in so-called "third world" countries once under the rule of any particular external force (Drobotya et al., 2021, p. 300). Literary works of colonised authors reflect postcolonial impacts. This theory demonstrates how colonisation, imperialism, and exploitation have a tremendous effect on colonised people and nations even after the change of power. Postcolonial criticism came out as a distinct aspect in the 1990s. Orientalism by Edward Said in 1978 is a prior work, and on it, post-colonial theory depends. Edward Said is famous as the "father" of post-colonialism and the first post-colonial theorist. Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhaba, and Gayatri Spivak are other notable post-colonial theorists.

In the course of making this thesis, it is found that according to Michael Ryan- postcolonial studies evaluate cultures of colonised and colonisers, including the distorted cultural condition in post-colonialism. This theory is somewhat ambiguous as it covers most of the primary genres of knowledge. Post-colonial theory is perceived in literature, especially in literary items written by colonised writers. The novels that have been discussed within the context of this thesis are examples of successful post-colonial literary works. Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, and Amitav Ghosh are well known for their manifestation of postcolonial theories and elements in their novels. These three novels' backgrounds, subjects, and character formations may differ. Still, they all convey the same voice, the voice of nationalism and the well-being of citizens in the war-stricken postcolonial era. Nationalism and national identity portrayed in these novels reflect individual characters' existence. These debates between concepts often lead to a conflict of opinion and even heated arguments.

Post colonialism is often criticised for its tendency to link with national identity. Researchers have proved that national identity is not an abstract concept, and it can be changed from time to time (Fukuyama 2018, p. 10). So it is not essential to predict the aftermath of a country that would or would not be colonised. From a post-modernist perspective, it is believed that independence and liberation are western ideologies used to colonise different cultures (Kroskrity 2018, p. 140).

Postcolonial theory is a thought process generally marked by the political, economic, polyphonic, historical and social impact of European colonizers worldwide from the 18th century to the 20th century. Postcolonial theories may have the basis of different concepts and interventions. Still, one claim is expected: human civilisation is incomplete without understanding the relationship between imperialism and colonial rule. So it is challenging to realise the impact of European philosophy, literature and history on colonised areas without colonial encounters and oppression of Europeans. Colonised worlds are an ambiguous centre for global modernity.

Conclusion:

As a British colony, India is aware of colonialism's sufferings and benefits (if there are any). Nearly 75 years later, the citizens of India are still under the influence of British culture. The Constitution of India is the impression of the British Constitution. English is one of the most important and official languages in all states of India. Even Indians believe that speaking in English makes anybody acceptable, and it has become a style statement. Many British people still dwell in India and its territories. Literature is created under the influence of British languages. Post colonialism is in the vein of Indian culture and society. Therefore postcolonial literature and novels take their motives and influences from colonial elements left by colonisers. From introduction to conclusion, this thesis focuses on postcolonial criticism regarding literature, society, and economic crisis of postcolonial world, and third world by reviewing different postcolonial novels written by famous writers who emerged from the postcolonial background. These creations make Indian literature-rich and open new paths for researchers and scholars to satisfy their knowledge thirst.

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