

Postcolonial theme in salman rushdie's the ground beneath her feet



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Postcolonialism literature is a literary genre that deals with literature evident in countries that were once under the colonial rule of other countries, specifically Britain, France and Spain as foremost. The phenomenon of Postcolonialism, with all its subtexts and nuances, is evident not just in literature but also the philosophy, media, history and even human geography of that cultural era. The prominent feature of Postcolonial literature is the destabilization of the Western perspective of universality and the creation of the subaltern voice.

It ascertains a perception opposing that of the hitherto dominant discourse established by the colonizers. It challenges the inherent assumptions believed by the West in affirming their superiority over colonized.

Postcolonialism also deals with issue of cultural identity in colonized societies. The struggle to maintain a nationalist identity after its divorce with colonized civilization has proved to be a dilemma faced by many writers of this era.

The ways in which the writers articulate and reclaim that identity while still maintaining strong connections with the colonizer is one of the themes of Postcolonial Literature. Postcolonialism has shown to be a tangled confusion of theories and ideas regarding the assertion of the identity of the marginalized because the post colonial world is full of half-finished processes of everyday functioning, contradictions and hybridization. In a way, therefore, Postcolonialism is a continuation of Colonialism, while constantly metamorphosing into a Self of its own.

Celebrated postcolonial author Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, is a mixture of all these elements seen through a span of almost six decades and travelling through the pre- and post Independence streets of Bombay, the transitional period in Britain and finally, America, the land of dreams. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, is a near epic tale of love, music and the unknown. It primarily revolves around the phenomenal love between Ormus Cama and Vina Apsara and its extraordinary and touching form as seen through the narrative of their childhood and lifelong friend Umeed ' Rai' Merchant.

A perspective that is highly ironically in its form because of Rai's love for Vina itself, which takes a backseat as he employs a objective yet a somewhat romantic voice to their exceptional tale. When Ormus met Vina, history was written. On these lines, thrives the plot of the book. Armed with an assortment of oddball characters who propel their conjoined destinies and a considerable symbolism of mythological references, the story of Ormus, Vina and Rai is written. Born into a family of a neurotic forbiddance to music, Ormus struggles to live with his musical genius and insuppressible talent.

A life followed by tragedy and gruesome burdens of the past, Nissa Shetty migrates to India to live with oppressive relatives. Soon after, she sheds the painful past and adopts the life of Vina Apsara. With her magically compelling voice and love of music, she transforms Ormus Cama's life into a musical frenzy. The plot twists and turns into many directions all the while quoting innumerable allusions into Greek, Roman, Hindu, and various mythologies. The novel is full of drama, controversies, engaging twists, while the love triangle of Ormus, Vina and Rai is oddly heartbreaking.

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The Ground Beneath Her Feet was published in 1999. Language of the novel: Rushdie narrates his book on thread of the Greek mythological tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, their love, her death, his descent into hell to resurrect her and its consequent failure. The Ground Beneath Her Feet is a modern rendition of the tale with various other Apollonian and Dionysian symbolisms. This trait of the use of epic metaphors is a characteristic trend of colonial literature. The tone of the book is nostalgic to begin with. Throughout the book, the narrator shows a flair for the dramatic.

The language is complex and employs a stream of consciousness mode for narration. The mood of the book is melancholic and reflective. The narrator, Rai, uses several perspectives to push the plot of the story. Despite the sombre mood, Rai displays a streak of romantic in his portrayal of Ormus' and Vina's love and his own love for her. There are several ominous and frightening moments in the book as shown by Ormus's visions, prophecies, his ability to visualize the parallel Other world, and other such phenomena. There is great character development and metamorphoses in the book.

Imperialism: Imperialism is considered the control by one state of other territories. Through political or military means (direct imperialism), the imperial power may take over the government of a particular territory, or through economic processes. British Imperialism is historically evident in Bombay until India attained independence in 1947. The Bombay location in the book exemplifies this. The vestiges of imperialism are witnessed throughout the book and even in the post colonial period. Colonialism: Colonialism is the building and maintaining of colonies in one territory by people from another territory.

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It can be defined as the conquest and control of another peoples land and goods and involved a wide range of practices including plunder, negotiation, and enslavement. Colonialism was the tool of the British Empire to establish their imperialism. Right from the establishment of infrastructures and the building of urban settlements in Bombay, to the imposition of Western education and its cultural influence, as is witnessed in all the main protagonists to Cricket, colonialism was imbibed in every part of Bombay and is still evident today.

The first half of the book portrays this vividly by glorifying the history of Bombay as is evident in the attitudes of Sir Darius Cama, father of Ormus Cama and the obsessive love of V. V. Merchant, father of Umeed ' Rai' Merchant, for the history of Bombay. Civilized Europe and Barbaric Others: The colonizers portrayed everything un-European as barbaric and crude. It became a means of justification for their imperialist seize of power. This was particularly witnessed in Sir Darius Xerxes Cama, a Parsi grandee who ostentatiously believed in British supremacy and was later seen to mourn their downfall.

A following excerpt: Sir Darius always disapproved of the behaviour of Bombay's spectators. ... The hooting, the shrieking, ... in short the incessant clamour created, in Sir Darius' opinion, an unsuitable environment... The country's imperial overlords, observing the bawdiness of the populace, could only feel disappointment at the continuing backwardness of those over whom they had ruled so wisely for so long. " (pp. 27-28) Sir Darius' Anglophilia and his continued dreams of residing in England proved to be his

slow descent into shame later on. Colonial Stereotypes: This means attributing particular characteristics to natives by colonizers.

Its function was to perpetuate an artificial sense of difference between 'self' and 'others'. Throughout the book, the Western characters continue to falsely stereotype India with 'land of the mystic', 'voodoo and shaman' and even going far as to referring to Ormus Cama as an 'Indian prince'. The spiritual mysticism of India, its healing powers are running gags throughout the book. A guru, Goddess Ma as she refers to herself, banks on the commercial value of these stereotypes to propagate her phony philosophies to the Americans. Vina Apsara herself adopts some of these fads, in an effort to create a radical image.

Naming and Mapping: They were primary colonizing processes because naming appropriates, defines and captures the place in language. The map is the crucial signifies of control over the place and thus of power over the inscription of being. The name 'Bombay' itself is an Anglicized term.

Originally the islands of Bombay were controlled by the Portuguese and were later gifting by Portuguese Princess Catherine Braganza to English King Charles II as a dowry. The subsequent naming and construction of the city of Bombay was a strategic plan from economic, trade and commercial viewpoint ascertaining British control over it.

However, a contradictory viewpoint can be read in the case of Vina Apsara. While both the male protagonists longed for the west, Vina showed surprising affinity towards the east. Especially when she changes her name from Nissa Shetty to Vina Apsara, a name whose meanings have Sanskrit

roots. Universalism: The nation of unitary and homogenous nature. It's a primary strategy of imperial control with an assumption that "European" equals "universal". This also means Euro centrism. The apparent assumption of central British forces as the 'Self' while associating every other colonies as backward and underdeveloped is a prominent theme in the novel.

Hybridity: According to Edward Said, it means the overlapping of colonizing and colonized culture in all domains. The concept of HUG-ME (Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi and English) that had formed a basic language structure of the typical Bombay resident is an example of hybridity. The use of all five languages in a broken manner at once is the dialect of Bombay. Hegemony: The concept means power achieved through a combination of force and consent by creating subjects "who willingly submit to being ruled." In this case, the character of Sir Darius Cama willingly believed in the hegemony of the British and submitted to it.