

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Global South Literary Studies: Reclaiming Voices, Histories, and Cultural Identity

**Dr. Garima Kalita**

Retd. Professor, Cotton University, India;

[kalitagarima58@gmail.com](mailto:kalitagarima58@gmail.com)

**Barsita Sarkar**

Assistant Professor, West Guwahati College of Education, India;

[barshadas239@gmail.com](mailto:barshadas239@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Global South Literary Studies has emerged as a significant field within contemporary literary and cultural scholarship. The discipline focuses on literary works produced in societies historically affected by colonialism, imperial domination, economic exploitation, and cultural marginalisation. Literature from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and indigenous communities offers alternative perspectives that challenge dominant Western narratives. Through themes of resistance, identity formation, migration, language politics, and cultural survival, Global South literature contributes to a broader understanding of world literature and decolonial thought. This paper examines the development, themes, theoretical foundations, and significance of Global South Literary Studies. It also analyses the contributions of major writers and theorists whose works have reshaped literary criticism by emphasising marginalised voices and alternative epistemologies.

**Keywords:** decolonisation, postcolonial literature, identity, resistance

**FULL RESEARCH PAPER****Introduction**

The study of literature has undergone significant transformation with the increasing recognition of marginalised voices and non-Western perspectives. One of the most influential developments in this regard is the emergence of Global South Literary Studies. The term "Global South" refers to societies that have experienced colonial domination, political subordination, economic dependency, and cultural marginalisation. Rather than serving merely as a geographical category, the concept emphasises shared historical experiences of oppression and resistance. Global South Literary Studies investigates how literary texts from these regions challenge colonial narratives, recover indigenous histories, and articulate alternative visions of culture and identity. The field extends beyond traditional postcolonial studies by incorporating concerns related to globalisation, migration, environmental justice, and decolonial knowledge systems.

**Understanding Global South Literary Studies**

Global South Literary Studies (GSLs) is an academic field that examines literary and cultural expressions emerging from regions across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. Rather than merely being a strict geographical label, the "Global South" is treated as a historical, relational, and counter-hegemonic framework. It centres shared legacies of colonial subjugation, structural inequality, and anti-imperial resistance. The discipline re-frames traditional world literature by moving away from Eurocentric perspectives and prioritising dynamic, multidirectional dialogues.

**Major Conceptual Frameworks**

**Decolonial & Postcolonial Studies:** Focuses on subverting Western epistemologies and interrogating the enduring economic, social, and cultural legacies of imperialism.

**Contrapuntal Reading:** Draws heavily on Edward Said's concept of reading texts with an awareness of both the coloniser and the colonised, emphasising the overlapping, dialogic histories of texts.

**South-South Dialogues:** Swivels the axis of literary critique from the traditional coloniser-to-colonised framework to lateral, transnational connections across different Southern regions.

**Indigenous Epistemologies:** Re-centring native, oral, and localised storytelling and knowledge systems that predate Western literary models.

**Vernacular Modernities:** Exploring how localised narrative forms, visual arts, and oral histories interact with global circuits and digital culture (e.g., graphic novels and comics from the Global South).

**Precarity and Vulnerability:** Addressing structural violence, migration, trauma, and the lived realities of class, caste, and race in the wake of neoliberalism and globalisation.

Global South Literary Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines literary and cultural productions emerging from societies historically shaped by unequal global power relations. It encompasses novels, poetry, drama, oral traditions, indigenous storytelling, migrant narratives, and digital literature. The primary objective of the field is to recover voices that were historically marginalised within colonial and Eurocentric frameworks. Colonial discourse frequently represented colonised societies as inferior or uncivilised. In response, writers from the Global South have used literature to reclaim cultural identity and historical agency. The field also promotes intellectual decolonisation by challenging dominant systems of knowledge and recognising alternative epistemologies rooted in indigenous and local traditions.

### **Historical Background**

The origins of Global South Literary Studies can be traced to anti-colonial struggles and the emergence of postcolonial criticism during the twentieth century. Colonialism transformed societies across Asia, Africa, and Latin America through political domination and cultural control. Literature became both a tool of colonial ideology and a means of resistance. Writers from colonised societies challenged imperial representations and sought to preserve cultural memory and indigenous traditions. The development of postcolonial theory through the works of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provided important frameworks for understanding colonial power structures and their lasting effects. Later, the concept of the Global South emerged as a broader framework capable of addressing contemporary issues such as globalisation, migration, and economic inequality.

### **Major Themes in Global South Literature**

**Colonialism and Resistance:** A dominant theme in Global South literature is resistance against colonial oppression. Literary works frequently expose the violence and exploitation associated with imperial rule while celebrating cultural resilience and political liberation.

**Identity and Hybridity:** Questions of identity are central to many Global South texts. Writers often portray individuals navigating between indigenous traditions and

Western influences. These experiences frequently result in hybrid identities shaped by multiple cultural affiliations.

**Language and Cultural Expression:** Language remains a significant issue within Global South literary discourse. Many writers challenge colonial linguistic dominance by incorporating indigenous expressions, oral traditions, and regional dialects into their works.

**Feminism and Gender:** Global South feminist literature examines the intersections of patriarchy, colonialism, class inequality, and social exclusion. Women writers foreground experiences that have traditionally been marginalised within literary and historical narratives.

**Migration and Diaspora:** Migration, displacement, and diaspora are recurring themes that explore questions of belonging, alienation, cultural adaptation, and identity formation.

**Environmental Concerns:** Contemporary Global South literature increasingly addresses environmental degradation, climate change, and ecological justice, often linking these issues to histories of colonial exploitation.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

**Postcolonial Theory:** Postcolonial theory investigates the cultural and psychological consequences of colonialism. It criticises systems of representation that perpetuate colonial stereotypes and inequalities.

**Subaltern Studies:** Subaltern Studies focuses on marginalised populations whose voices have been excluded from dominant historical and political narratives.

**Decolonial Theory:** Decolonial theory challenges Eurocentric knowledge systems and promotes alternative epistemologies rooted in local and indigenous traditions.

### **Important Writers and Thinkers**

Several writers and scholars have made significant contributions to Global South Literary Studies. Chinua Achebe challenged colonial representations of Africa through his literary works. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o advocated linguistic decolonisation and cultural resistance. Salman Rushdie explored migration and hybridity, while Arundhati Roy addressed caste, environmental issues, and social inequality. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie examined feminism and postcolonial identity. Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provided influential theoretical frameworks that continue to shape contemporary literary criticism.

**Contemporary Relevance of Global South Literary Studies**

Global South Literary Studies remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary issues such as globalisation, migration, racism, economic inequality, and environmental crises. The field contributes to the decolonisation of academic curricula and promotes greater cultural diversity and social justice. The rise of digital media and international publishing networks has further increased the visibility of Global South writers, enabling broader global engagement with their works.

**Research Findings**

The analysis of Global South Literary Studies reveals several significant findings regarding literature's role in representing marginalised voices, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting cultural decolonisation.

1. **Literature as a Tool of Resistance:** The study finds that literature from the Global South functions as a powerful means of resisting colonial and neo-colonial ideologies. Writers challenge imperial representations and reclaim histories that were distorted or suppressed during colonial rule.
2. **Reconstruction of Cultural Identity:** The findings indicate that Global South literature plays an important role in restoring cultural identity and collective memory. Literary texts preserve indigenous traditions, local histories, and cultural values that contribute to the affirmation of marginalised communities.
3. **Identity and Hybridity as Central Concerns:** The research demonstrates that questions of identity remain central to Global South literary production. Many texts portray individuals negotiating between traditional cultures and modern influences, resulting in hybrid and evolving identities.
4. **Language as an Instrument of Decolonisation:** The study reveals that language is a major site of resistance within Global South literature. Writers often reshape colonial languages by incorporating indigenous expressions, local idioms, and oral traditions, thereby challenging linguistic dominance.
5. **Growing Emphasis on Indigenous Languages:** Another important finding is the increasing effort among writers and scholars to preserve and promote indigenous languages. Such efforts contribute to cultural revival and intellectual decolonisation.

**Conclusion**

Global South Literary Studies has transformed contemporary literary criticism by foregrounding voices and experiences historically excluded from dominant literary

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traditions. Through its emphasis on resistance, decolonisation, cultural identity, and social justice, the field challenges Eurocentric assumptions and expands the scope of literary inquiry. As globalisation continues to reshape cultural and political realities, Global South literature remains essential for understanding the complexities of power, representation, and human experience. The field not only enriches literary scholarship but also contributes to broader efforts toward cultural recognition, equality, and intellectual diversity.

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