OPEN ACCESS

Int. Jr. of Contemp. Res. in Multi. *PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL* *Volume 4 Issue 3 [May- Jun] Year 2025*

Review Article

From Buchanan to Adiga: The Colonial Legacy of Communicating Bharat's Identity

Yogesh Singh*
Department of English, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Corresponding Author: *Yogesh Singh

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15713618

Abstract

This paper explores the impact of colonial era narratives and how they, and their likes, have almost resulted in their modern Indian adaptations, which have shaped Bharat's global perception, hindering its socio-political and literary progress. Communication is when information is shared between two individuals. Effective communication is key to national identity, yet Bharat has long been misrepresented, mostly deliberately, through Eurocentric literary and print media frameworks. From Buchanan's missionary lens in *An Apology for Promoting Christianity* to Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger,* English language narratives, both colonial and postcolonial, have perpetuated a distorted image. Gauri Viswanathan, in her *Masks of Conquest* (1989), argues that English literary education was a tool of ideological control, shaping Bharat's image and internal self-perception.

This colonial legacy continues to this day, as Indian English Literature often caters to Western expectations, reinforcing frameworks that once justified the dominance of the colonial powers. Drawing on Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic* and Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak,* this research critiques how elite, western-educated intellectuals mediate subaltern voices, creating a literary gatekeeping system that suppresses counter-narratives. Ultimately, this paper contends that Bharat's progress lies in countering past representations and actively reshaping the narrative through strategic communication in media and literature.

Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 2583-7397
- **Received:** 23-05-2025
- **Accepted:** 19-06-2025
- **Published:** 22-06-2025
- **IJCRM:**4(3); 2025: 446-449

- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

How to Cite this Article

Singh Y. From Buchanan to Adiga: The Colonial Legacy of Communicating Bharat's Identity. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(3):446-449.

Access this Article Online

www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: Colonial narratives, literary representation, global perception, postcolonial studies

INTRODUCTION

The formation of national identity is interlinked to the stories that shape a nation's history and current state. In the case of Bharat, a significant portion of this narrative has been viewed through a colonial perspective, one that has moulded not only international views but also internal perceptions. Throughout the British colonial period, literature and print media emerged as influential instruments of ideological control. As Gauri Viswanathan points out in Masks of Conquest (1989), the introduction of English literary education was neither neutral nor altruistic but a strategic effort to establish cultural supremacy and influence Indian perspectives to accept colonial power. This deliberate imposition of English and its related values persists in contemporary Indian literature, especially in works composed in English. From Buchanan's *An Apology for Promoting Christianity* to Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, the portrayal of Bharat has often been influenced by Western expectations, either deliberately designed to appeal to international audiences or inadvertently shaped by

an internalised colonial perspective. These stories frequently depend on simplistic stereotypes of poverty, corruption, and mysticism, perpetuating a singular and exoticised portrayal of India. Graham Huggan's concept of the "postcolonial exotic" critically examines this occurrence, where postcolonial literature is commercialised for global markets at the expense of authentic indigenous voices.

In addition to this, Gayatri Spivak's pivotal work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Emphasizes about the ongoing marginalisation of subaltern voices, and included it in the postcolonial discussions. Often, it is the elite, English-speaking Indian authors, most oftenly educated abroad, who articulate the experiences of the subaltern instead of allowing them to voice their own narratives. This results in a gatekeeping mechanism within Indian English literature, where the prevailing narrative remains guided by colonial power dynamics. This paper contends that to efficiently communicate Bharat's literary and socio-political identity, it is essential to reclaim and reconfigure these narratives. By exploring the lasting impacts of colonial discourse and the intentional use of language and media, this study seeks to underscore the necessity for effective and self-representative communication. Only by deliberately reshaping its narrative can Bharat liberate itself from the burden of imposed identity and progress toward true cultural and intellectual independence.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate how English narratives from the colonial period shaped and communicated a skewed portrayal of Bharat through literature and print media.
2. To explore the persistence of these colonial structures in postcolonial Indian English literature, especially in how they appeal to Western audiences and reinforce exoticized images.
3. To promote a strategic reworking of Bharat's literary and media narratives that prioritizes indigenous voices, challenges elite gatekeeping, and encourages authentic self-representation on the global stage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While several different key theorists have committed to understanding this field of study, no research in the past has done an extensive study that sees the communication of narratives, especially paying attention to the texts of Claudius Buchanan and Arvind Adiga. Gauri Viswanathan's Masks of Conquest (1989) serves as a background to understanding English literary education as a form of cultural domination during colonial rule. Spivak's seminal essay, on the other hand challenges the idea of authentic representation in postcolonial discourse. Together, these two texts, provide a theoretical framework for examining how the narratives from the colonial era continues to influence modern literature of Bharat.

The way the world views Bharat has traditionally been influenced not by its citizens, but by the narratives created and shared through both colonial and postcolonial perspectives. These accounts, often written in English, have fostered a simplified and frequently distorted portrayal of the country, a view that still shapes international media, politics, and literature today. This paper argues that English-language literature, from colonial missionary writings to Booker Prize-winning novels, has played a role in upholding Eurocentric perspectives, deliberately or mistakenly, that obscure the true complexities and realities of Bharat. The analysis focuses on Claudius Buchanan's *An Apology for Promoting Christianity in India* (1813) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) as pivotal works that demonstrate the enduring ideological heritage of colonial discourse and the current necessity for counter-narratives rooted in genuine representation.

Claudius Buchanan's *An Apology for Promoting Christianity in India* serves as a significant demonstration of how colonial literature operated as an instrument of imperial authority. His work is more than just a missionary appeal, as it might seem from the title, but it acts as a cultural artefact that rationalises the imposition of the English language, Christianity, and everything Western, along with its ethics on the Indian subcontinent. Through Buchanan's perspective, India is portrayed as a region of "spiritual darkness," where its indigenous customs, languages, and religions are deemed as inferior, corrupt, and in extreme need of salvation. This discourse is heavily influenced by Orientalism, as outlined by Edward Said. The colonizer depicts the "East" as everything the "West" is not: irrational, superstitious, and primitive. Buchanan's missionary efforts are veiled in an appearance of goodwill, yet his arguments expose a profound ideological commitment to the colonial agenda in the garb of religious service. The advocacy for English and Christianity is framed as inherently civilising, mostly out of sheer arrogance or ignorance, which dismisses indigenous knowledge systems and spiritual practices. Gauri Viswanathan, in *Masks of Conquest* (1989), illustrates this perfectly well, asserting that English literary education was never a neutral initiative. According to her, it was a strategic manoeuvre to ensure the cultural subjugation of the colonised. In Buchanan's hands, language transforms into a tool not just for communication but for absolute control, embedding a hierarchical perspective where Western values are legitimised and Indian traditions are marginalised.

Postcolonial Continuity, The White Tiger, and the Exotic Spectacle: If we leap ahead nearly two hundred years, one might anticipate a significant shift away from these colonial themes. However, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, a postcolonial novel that has gained international acclaim. illustrates how these frameworks continue to exist in modern literature. Narrated by Balram Halwai, a servant who becomes an entrepreneur, the novel reveals the darker side of contemporary India: its class struggles, corruption, and ethical decline. While it appears to critique the socio-economic inequalities in India, Adiga's story is deeply rooted in what Graham Huggan refers to as the postcolonial exotic, a form of representation that commodifies cultural differences for consumption by Western audiences. Balram's voice, characterised as gritty and genuine, serves as both a confession and a performance. His story seems to challenge norms, yet it ultimately reinforces the expectations of

Western readers who view India as a complex landscape of exotic terror but still as an entrepreneurial opportunity. The servant who ascends by killing his master represents less a critique of systemic inequality and more a neoliberal dream of personal empowerment. In this way, the White Tiger unintentionally perpetuates the colonial tendency to reduce Bharat into simplistic binary: light and darkness, servitude and freedom, tradition and modernity.

A more detailed comparison of Buchanan and Adiga uncovers notable parallels in their portrayals of Bharat. Buchanan depicts India as a nation in need of rescue from its problems, while Adiga portrays it as a country that is barely managing to exist. In both works, India's voice is represented through intermediaries—whether through a colonial missionary or an English-educated writer, often targeting an external audience, particularly those in the West. Although Balram directs his narrative toward the Premier of China, his style and cultural insights are aimed at readers who are not familiar with India. This rhetorical approach closely resembles Buchanan's direct entreaties to the British public, which rationalize intervention by presenting a narrative filled with suffering and barbarism. This mediated voice resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's crucial inquiry in Can the Subaltern Speak? Spivak challenges how elite intellectuals, typically educated in the West, co-opt the voices of the marginalized in ways that further mute them. In The White Tiger, Balram, despite hailing from a rural, lower-caste background. articulates his thoughts in a style that is meticulously constructed, infused with sarcasm, self-awareness, and Western expressions. He transforms into the "acceptable" subaltern, both violent and charismatic, crude yet shrewd. Consequently, the novel shifts from an endeavour to truly listen to the subaltern to a focus on alleviating the discomfort that the subaltern experiences, provokes for the global audience.

Both Buchanan and Adiga reflect the context of their era, yet they intersect in their function as gatekeepers of Indian representation. Buchanan employs theology and colonialism, while Adiga utilizes literary realism and irony. Nonetheless, both engage in a wider system that governs which narratives of Bharat are promoted and which are marginalized. English, once the language of colonial authority, remains the predominant medium through which India shares its narratives with the world. This linguistic dominance constrains the diversity of viewpoints available and favours a specific type of voice, urban, English-speaking, and Western-educated. This has resulted in a self-sustaining literary marketplace. Indian English authors, intentionally or not, frequently create works that cater to Western expectations, thereby reinforcing stereotypes of mysticism, poverty, violence, and resilience. Recognition, publishing opportunities, and critical praise are disproportionately awarded to works that validate these perceptions. Consequently, the literary industry becomes a manifestation of colonial ideology, where the authenticity of a narrative is assessed not by its alignment with lived experiences but by its appeal to global perceptions.

Towards Narrative Independence**:** From Buchanan's colonial narrative to Adiga's award-winning novel, the tale of Bharat has frequently been depicted through the perspectives of those who are distant from or above its realities. These stories, despite varying in style and belief, exhibit a concerning consistency: they influence how India is perceived, interpreted, and managed, both within its borders and abroad. They simplify a vast, varied, and ancient culture into easily consumable stereotypes and dramatic visuals, reinforcing the same power dynamics they purport to challenge. The challenge we face is critical and multifaceted. It is insufficient to merely condemn inaccurate portrayals; we must also dismantle the systems that enable and profit from such representations. Only then can Bharat restore its voice, not as a response to colonial misrepresentation, but as a declaration of narrative independence. In this process, we begin not just to recount history, but to redefine the future.

CONCLUSION

Analysing Claudius Buchanan's An Apology for Promoting Christianity in India alongside Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger reveals how colonial narrative frameworks continue to influence global views on Bharat. Despite their different historical contexts and ideological stances, both works contribute to a persistent misrepresentation—Buchanan through blatant missionary language and Adiga through the nuanced monetization of postcolonial distress. These portrayals, often seen through an English lens and crafted for Western readers, diminish the intricacies and diversities of Indian identity, reducing it to clichés of darkness, subservience, and exotic appeal. This essay posits that such narratives are not simply literary relics but tools of ideological manipulation and cultural regulation. As Gayatri Spivak warns, the subaltern remains spoken for rather than allowed to voice their own stories. To break this cycle, there is an urgent need for a strategic reclamation of language, voice, and narrative structure. Indigenous, vernacular, and subaltern viewpoints must be highlighted, not as curated displays but as genuine expressions of self and community. True advancement for Bharat does not lie in continuing narratives that favor global markets, but in creating new ones that assert cultural independence and intellectual authority. Only in this way can literature transform into a domain of liberation instead of restriction.

REFERENCES

1. Adiga A. *The White Tiger: A novel*. New York: Free Press; 2008.
2. Huggan G. *The postcolonial exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge; 2006.
3. Said EW. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books; 1978.
4. Spivak GC. Can the subaltern speak? In: Nelson C, Grossberg L, editors. *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press; 1988. p. 271–313.

5. Buchanan C. *An apology for promoting Christianity in India* [Internet]. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies; 1813. Available from: https://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.00310
6. Viswanathan G. *Masks of conquest: Literary study and British rule in India*. New York: Columbia University Press; 1989.