

# **A Postcolonial Analysis of Om Parkash Valmiki's Joothan and Frederick Douglass' Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass**

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## **Abstract:**

The term "postcolonial literature" refers to a body of literature that responds to the colonization discourse. In post-colonial literature, concerns of decolonization, or the cultural and political liberation of people formerly oppressed by colonial power, are frequently addressed. Both writings by Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass, respectively, will be analysed from a postcolonial perspective. Hybridity, Otherness, and Identity are some of the characteristics of Postcolonial writing that are highlighted in these two works. Although postcolonialism encompasses a wide range of notions, I intend to focus on these three.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Identity, Other

Many critiques of colonialism and its aftermath have been published under the name 'postcolonial' in the last few decades. Despite the wide range of viewpoints and topics covered, all the writings and studies that make up this collection have one thing in common: a single point of departure. They're all interested in colonial oppression's effects to marginalize, subjection, and resistance. Because of this, Postcolonialism is a word that encompasses all of the repercussions of the colonial encounter between both the West and the non-West, spanning from 16th-century to present-day times. Literary works that respond to the discourse of colonization are called Postcolonial literature. In post-colonial literature, concerns of decolonization, or the political and cultural liberation of people formerly subjugated to colonial power, are frequently addressed. It is a critical examination of the historical, cultural, literature, and styles of discourse unique to the colonists of the European imperial powers.

The Third World has been a particular focus of postcolonial writing. It also serves as a literary critique of works that have racist or colonial connotations. Furthermore, in its most recent incarnation, postcolonial literature also aims to critique the present postcolonial discourse that was developed in recent times. The paper aims to apply a postcolonial approach to the works of Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass. Postcolonial literature features such as Otherness, hybridity, colonialism struggles, and many more are highlighted in both of these works. The adoption of colonial languages is a key aspect of Postcolonial literature. Most of them attempt to narrate in the language of the colonist. However, there is a debate about this, with some arguing that using colonists' language to tell African stories is an enabling practise, while others argue that using native languages and cultural vocabularies is essential to developing a native cultural space that is independent of the intellectual determinisms of the colonization education system and

colonial ideological imperatives. To share their stories, the majority of postcolonial critics and writers stick with colonial languages and in this regard both Om Parkash Valmiki's *Joothan* and Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. According to Homi K Bhabha in *The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse*:

"The 'colonial discourse' depends on the ideological construction of 'otherness'. He further states that it gives rise to 'the stereotype', an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness...it is this process of ambivalence, central to the stereotype that my essay explores as it constructs a theory of colonial discourse. (Bhabha 293)

Valmiki was often left to wonder if he had been the "Other". Before that, it was during his time at school days, his teachers humiliated and punished Valmiki and his two companions. Almost every day, Valmiki was subjected to a brutal beating in school. The Headmaster asked Valmiki to climb a teak tree and split some of its branches to make a broom. When the broom was finished, the headmaster made Valmiki to clean up the entire school. Sweeping was also mentioned to be a part of his family's daily routine. All classrooms and playgrounds were cleaned by Valmiki on his own while other students were in them. His face and mouth were caked in dust. The only thing he was allowed to ingest was water. Valmiki was asked to do the same thing each day by the headmaster. He'd been sweeping all day. Valmiki in *Joothan* mentioned:

"The hollowness of this hospitality had been exposed. It is the guest's caste that entitles him to respect. How did we have any entitlement to hospitality? My apprehensions had turned out to be correct. Somehow, we managed to escape their wrath". (Valmiki 52)

It was always tense, violent, uncertain, and courteous between Frederick Douglass and both his masters and his slaves. Sophia Auld's connection with him was a roller coaster. She was born and reared in Baltimore, and she and her husband acquired Douglass when he was about eight years old and brought him home with them. Sophia Auld has a "a white face glowing with the kindest sentiments" when Douglass first meets her. She's a good girl who's never had slaves under her control. She tried teaching Douglass the letters and some simple words, but her husband forbids her from going any farther. A shift in attitude results in a change in her attitude towards Douglass, making her antagonistic towards him. Hugh Auld forbids his wife, Sophia Auld, from teaching Douglass to read because Sophia Auld believes in slavery. Douglass is motivated to learn on his own after this experience, which is ironic. However, Douglass and Hugh Auld reunite later in their relationship. Douglass is forced to learn a craft by Hugh Auld during this time. All the money Douglass earns is given back to his master. After Douglass is punched out at work, Hugh Auld tries to help, but the The owner didn't seem to take it seriously and dismiss the allegation. Valmiki was allowed to fly thanks to his relationship with William Freeland. Freeland is renting Douglass on a short-term basis. Douglass sees Freeland as a more friendly and really just leader than any of his previous bosses. Freeland does not turn to faith after committing acts of violence. During his time as a slave, Douglass runs a Sabbath school in Freeland that enrolls around 40 slaves. They make close friendships, and they work together to help each other escape enslavement. Slavery had made Douglass feel like an outsider, which made him even more determined to free himself.

Slavery owners' values are slammed by Douglass. In addition to treating slaves like animals, many owners see animals as more valuable than slaves. A system that places animals above people

is a terrible one, according to Douglass. Using Lloyd's justice, we can see the arbitrary nature of slavery, where the owner favoured animals over their slaves. In accordance with the legislation, this is the case. As described in this chapter, slaves live in fear and are subjected to an oppressive society. Legal and ethical frameworks for whites and slaves are at odds, according to Douglass. Another example of the way that slaveholders led by example is Demby's horrific penalty for revolting. Frightened, they are unable to resist. Slavery involves complete obedience of the body and mind.

When two cultures intersect, Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) examines how they blend into one another. By employing concepts like mimicry, stereotype, ambiguity, and unhomeliness, Bhabha contends that the identity of both the colonizer and the colonized is altered during their encounter with each other. Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass both drew their inspiration from persons who have been exiled from society and are in quest of a sense of belonging and a sense of self-identity. Bhabha's assertion that their civilizations were intertwined can be seen in this example. Cultural fusion is a central theme in Homi Bhabha's work, which is best summarised in his essay "*The Location of Culture*" (1993).

Post-colonial identity is the way a person or group of people affected by colonization. Characteristics of post-colonial identity include being dehumanised, marginalised, voiceless, hybrid, and being classed as 'other' or 'subaltern'. In the text, Om Parkash and Frederick Douglass attempted to demonstrate how the colonists dehumanised the colonized in an inhumane manner.

Postcolonialism is characterised by a fusion of cultures. Hybridity can be defined as any combination of cultures from the East and West. Most typically, it refers to colonial subjects of the colonized countries who are able to combine elements of both eastern and western cultures. The diversity of characters in their lives serves as a powerful illustration of their hybridity. Frederick Douglass's contentious, hostile, doubting, and respectful relationships with both his masters and his slaves illustrate the cultural divide that exists within hybridity. Om Parkash Valmiki's relation with Headmaster Kaliram, Sukhdev Singh Tyagi, Phool Singh Tyagi, Omdatta Tyagi, Master Vedpal, Master Brajpal Singh did their best to bring Om Parkash Valmiki down in all possible ways of physical and mental harassment, which result in behavioural attitudes that are again typical to a colonizer/colonized pair leads to postcolonial circumstances, specifically the condition of 'hybridization'. Powerful and weak people have an analogous relationship with their students. Education and economics alone will not be sufficient to bring about equality and justice for Dalits. Dehumanization can be seen here, because the colonists convinced the indigenous residents of the subject country that their own culture and standards were inferior and animal-like. It was common for both to portray the colonial people as "voiceless."

Even though Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass were working at the government level, they were still subjected to hostility because of their caste and the race. They both highlight Postcolonial literature's distinct characteristics. Both Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass portrayed a struggle for 'identity' Additionally, both protagonists are made to represent the Postcolonial structure. Both portray the events that formed postcolonial India and America's lives. Both Om Parkash Valmiki and Frederick Douglass were born out of a conflict between the elite and poorer strata of society, as well as between colonizers and colonized. With their 'creative capacities' to break the orthodox and erroneous beliefs about their identity, they were able to emerge into the 'foreign domain' of the flagbearers of revolution, revolt, and heroism. So, in the end I can say that

Postcolonialism deals with a wide range of topics, including psychological, cultural geography, political and post-structural among others. These significant writings helped us comprehend both the "colonizers" and the "colonized" in a range of field of post colonialism.

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