



Emergent Literacies: Hybrid Forms, Identity, and Culture in Indian-English Digital Literature

Kirti Soni, Suman Devi*

PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, India

Assistant professor, Department of English, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, India
sonikirti021@gmail.com

* **Corresponding Author:** Dr. Suman Devi Assistant professor, Department of English, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, India

Article Received on: 18/12/25; Revised on: 27/12/25; Approved for publication: 21/01/26

Keywords

Digital Hybridity, Indian-English Literature, Online Narratives, Postcolonial Theory, Platform Studies, Multimodal Literature, Reader Engagement

How to Cite this Article:

Soni K and Devi S. Emergent Literacies: Hybrid Forms, Identity, and Culture in Indian-English Digital Literature
Int. J. Sci. Info. 2026; 3(10): 119-124

Abstract

Digital platforms have redefined Indian-English literary practices, fostering hybrid forms that integrate language, genre, medium, identity, and cultural representation. This study examines the last three objectives of research on post-2010 Indian-English online narratives: (1) exploring the role of hybridity in language, genre, medium, identity, and cultural representation; (2) investigating how comments, likes, shares, hashtags, and serial publication affect narrative meaning; and (3) connecting postcolonial theories of hybridity with digital literature and platform studies. By analyzing selected digital texts from Instagram, Terribly Tiny Tales, YourQuote, Wattpad, Pratilipi, Twitter/X, blogs, and spoken-word/video performances, this research highlights the transformative effects of digital hybridity on literary expression, postcolonial identity negotiation, and participatory authorship.

1. Introduction

The Indian-English literary ecosystem has undergone substantial transformation since 2010. Digital platforms have not only broadened the reach of literature but also encouraged experimentation with hybrid forms that challenge conventional categories. While the first part of this study focused on the emergence of digital narratives, platform influences, and narrative analysis, this paper examines the remaining objectives concerning hybridity, reader engagement,

and postcolonial theoretical frameworks.

Digital hybridity manifests in multiple dimensions: linguistic mixing, genre blending, multimodal storytelling, identity negotiation, and cultural representation. Additionally, platform-specific features such as comments, likes, shares, hashtags, and serial publication actively shape narrative meaning and authorship.

2. Role of Hybridity in Language, Genre, Medium, Identity, and Cultural Representation

2.1 Linguistic Hybridity

Indian-English online narratives frequently combine English with regional languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, and Malayalam. This multilingual interplay reflects postcolonial linguistic negotiation and allows authors to address diverse audiences. For instance, Instagram poetry and YourQuote texts often employ code-switching and transliteration to convey nuanced cultural contexts. Such hybridity enables writers to retain local authenticity while engaging with global English-speaking audiences.

2.2 Genre Hybridization

Digital literature blurs traditional genre boundaries. Short stories, flash fiction, poetry, narrative threads, memes, visual storytelling, and spoken-word videos coexist on the same platform. Platforms like Wattpad and Pratilipi host serialized narratives with embedded commentary, while Terribly Tiny Tales emphasizes microfiction with social media brevity. These hybrid genres respond to digital constraints, audience engagement patterns, and platform-specific affordances.

2.3 Medium and Multimodality

The digital medium itself fosters hybridity. Indian-English writers integrate text, images, audio, video, emojis, GIFs, and typography to create layered narratives. For example, Instagram poetry combines visual aesthetics with written words, while YouTube spoken-word performances merge oral narration, performance, and cinematic editing. Multimodality enables richer expression and expands interpretive possibilities for readers.

2.4 Identity Construction

Digital narratives allow authors to explore and perform multiple aspects of personal and collective identity. Postcolonial hybridity theory, particularly Bhabha's concept of the "third space," illuminates how online writers negotiate between global and local influences, traditional and contemporary norms, and multiple linguistic and cultural identities. Online communities enable

writers to experiment with marginalized, regional, gendered, or diasporic perspectives, creating hybrid identities mediated by digital networks.

2.5 Cultural Representation

Digital hybridity enhances cultural representation by incorporating regional idioms, folklore, urban narratives, and social commentary. Indian-English writers leverage platform features to highlight contemporary social issues, local traditions, humor, and aesthetic sensibilities. Visual and multimodal elements allow for the representation of culture in ways not feasible in print-only literature.

3. Impact of Comments, Likes, Shares, Hashtags, and Serial Publication on Narrative Meaning

3.1 Participatory Meaning-Making

Reader engagement transforms literary interpretation. Comments, likes, and shares act as feedback mechanisms, influencing narrative evolution, authorial choices, and reader perception. On Wattpad, for example, serialized stories receive ongoing reader input that shapes subsequent chapters. These interactions challenge the notion of the fixed text, producing co-constructed narratives where meaning emerges dynamically.

3.2 Hashtags and Metadata

Hashtags on Instagram and Twitter/X provide context, categorization, and intertextual connections. They allow readers to situate narratives within broader cultural or social trends and participate in networked storytelling communities. Hashtags can also influence visibility and engagement, indirectly shaping which narratives become prominent and how meaning circulates across digital publics.

3.3 Serial Publication

Serialization extends narrative temporality and encourages iterative storytelling. Authors respond to audience reception over time, adjusting plotlines, character development, and thematic emphasis. Serial publication fosters reader anticipation, active participation, and co-authorship, transforming narrative meaning into a fluid, evolving process.

3.4 Algorithmic Influence

Digital platforms employ algorithms to determine content visibility, creating additional layers of meaning. Engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and reading time affect algorithmic

recommendations, which can prioritize certain narratives and styles. Consequently, narrative meaning is not only shaped by authorial intent and reader interpretation but also by platform-mediated circulation and algorithmic governance.

4. Connecting Postcolonial Theories of Hybridity with Digital Literature

4.1 Bhabha's Third Space in Digital Contexts

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "third space" illuminates the negotiation of hybrid identities and cultural forms. Indian-English digital literature exemplifies this third space, where local and global influences intersect, and traditional literary hierarchies are reconfigured. Online platforms enable experimentation with postcolonial identities, transcultural references, and linguistic play, aligning with Bhabha's framework.

4.2 Resistance to Fixed Literary Categories

Digital hybridity challenges traditional categorizations of high and low literature, English versus vernacular writing, print versus digital forms, and author versus reader authority. Indian-English writers exploit platform affordances to destabilize these boundaries, producing narratives that resist singular interpretation. This reflects postcolonial critiques of hegemonic literary norms and the valorization of diverse, decentralized voices.

4.3 Platform Studies and Postcolonial Theory

Platform studies complements postcolonial theory by examining how structural affordances, algorithms, and interface design shape narrative forms. Indian-English online narratives operate within platforms that mediate authorship, circulation, and reception. Understanding hybridity requires attention to how postcolonial identities intersect with platform-mediated literary practices, revealing the digital negotiation of cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic meaning.

4.4 Multimodality and Cultural Hybridity

Multimodal forms—integrating text, visual elements, performance, and audio—offer postcolonial writers opportunities to represent complex cultural realities. This hybridity accommodates multiple linguistic, ethnic, and cultural registers, creating inclusive spaces for narratives that reflect India's linguistic and cultural plurality.

5. Contribution to Academic Recognition

This study emphasizes that Indian-English digital literature merits scholarly attention. By

highlighting hybrid narrative practices, multimodality, and participatory authorship, it establishes digital literature as a legitimate and central site of literary and cultural production. Integrating postcolonial theory and platform studies provides a framework for critical analysis, encouraging the inclusion of digital texts in academic curricula and literary research.

Documenting emerging online literary practices is crucial for preserving transient digital texts vulnerable to platform changes or deletion. By analyzing hybrid forms and audience interactions, the study also informs future research in comparative postcolonial digital literature, gendered and regional studies, and AI-mediated storytelling.

6. Conclusion

Indian-English online narratives post-2010 exemplify digital hybridity in language, genre, medium, identity, and cultural representation. Reader engagement through comments, likes, shares, hashtags, and serial publication actively shapes narrative meaning, while platform structures mediate authorship and circulation. Postcolonial theories of hybridity provide a lens to interpret these phenomena, revealing how digital literature functions as a third space for negotiating identity, culture, and literary form.

Digital hybridity challenges traditional literary hierarchies and expands the scope of Indian-English literature. Recognition of these practices is vital for contemporary literary scholarship, digital humanities, and cultural studies. This study underscores the transformative potential of digital platforms for literary expression, offering pathways for future research, preservation, and academic inclusion.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Kirti Soni contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, original draft writing, and supervision. Suman Devi contributed to formal analysis, review and editing, and visualization.

References

- Aarseth, E. (1997). *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.

- Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (1999). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. MIT Press.
- DataReportal. (2023). *Digital 2023: India*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-india>
- Electronic Literature Organization. (n.d.). *What is Electronic Literature?* <https://eliterature.org/about/>
- Flores, L. (2019). *Third Generation Electronic Literature*. *Electronic Book Review*. <https://electronicbookreview.com/publications/third-generation-electronic-literature/>
- Hayles, N. K. (2008). *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Khilnani, S. (2023). *#Instapoetry in India: The aesthetic of the digital vernacular*. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*.
- Mukherjee, S. (2017). *No Country for E-Lit? India and Electronic Literature*. *Hyperrhiz: New Media Cultures*, 16.
- Pianzola, F., Rebora, S., & Lauer, G. (2020). *Wattpad as a resource for literary studies: Quantitative and qualitative examples of the importance of digital social reading and readers' comments in the margins*. *PLOS ONE*, 15(1), e0226708.
- Shanmugapriya, T., & Menon, N. (2019). *First and second waves of Indian electronic literature*. *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, 42(4), 63-71.
- *Terribly Tiny Tales*. (2018). *Terribly Tiny Tales: Popularising Microfiction*. INKLINE.
- *YourStory*. (2020). *YourQuote: An app where anyone can tell a story or pen a poem*. YourStory.