

Changing Cultural Identity of Young People through Online Literature—A Case Study of Selected Poems of the 90s in Hindi

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Abstract. Online literature for youth has become the norm, and young people now read stories in new ways, with enormous impact on their cultural frames of reference. Online spaces such as Wattpad, Webnovel and fanfiction hubs have opened up access to stories from around the globe that reflect adolescent lives and expose them to different viewpoints. In this paper, we mainly focus on the impact of online literature on the cultural identity of youths, discussing the dynamic nature of self-study, cultural expression, and identity creation that the internet facilitates. Based on existing literature, they described how the online world allows for the expression of diversity, culture and the appreciation of culture as well as identity formation, while also exploring the dangers that come from cultural appropriation, lack of access to devices, and how certain narratives may harm mental health through overengagement. In conclusion, the changing nexus of young people, culture and technology deserves continued tracking as cyberspace narratives continue to nurture young people conceptualising ethnicity, connectedness and context in a complex world.

Keywords: Cultural Identity; Online Literature; Poems.

1. Introduction

Over the past year with pandemic and isolation time digital stories have become even more powerful in the ways the young people of today are connecting to stories and forming socio-cultural identities of selves. To this end, platform proliferation (Wattpad on the rise to grab readers) has changed consumption, with access to the internet providing a banquet of experiences while also exposing very different lives. These sites provide new tools for creating, sharing, and reading — proximity to the dream of identity incubators. Adolescence is a time of significant psychological and social development, as worldviews and social belonging are formed [1]. Cultural identity is fluid, and must be understood in contexts of both single events, and affiliations with collective groups (such as ethnicity, national roots and shared ideals). But as screen time grows, it is important to take note of literature in an online landscape. Through participatory stories that either reflect or reveal new cultures, youth are largely implicated in the formation of fluid identities that also place issues of diversity, inter-cultural community and self-definition upon centre stage. Overall, this paper seeks to explore how reading digital literature affects the cultural identities of contemporary adolescents, given the ways that digital spaces allow for contemplation, expression, and engagement with cultures. Examining scholarship applies light to the representation, and the intersections of constructed self and identity formation in this technology infused epoch [2-4].

2. The Rise of Web Fiction

In 2028, those children have now become the next generation of the storytelling industry, an industry that has been fundamentally reshaped by the rapid pace of change the internet and mobile innovations have brought for how stories are told, a complete paradigm shift for how audiences, particularly young ones, engaged with stories. Before the digital age, fiction mainly existed by way of published formats: books, magazines, newspapers. This type of media was expensive and far less available for the general population, so readership usually included those who were financially able and those who lived near a book seller or library. The old-world publishing model was dominated

by a fairly limited number of gatekeepers — publishers, literary agents, and editors, who determined what got published (and therefore, the story we read) [3-6].

But there was an experience of fiction that was largely centralized, mediated by a book-flavored gate however that became loftier, with the rise of internet computer. With smartphones, tablets and computers, digital reading is available around the world. OP: Platforms like Wattpad, Kindle, Webnovel, and Archive of Our Own (AO3) have all changed the way people read fiction and deliver fiction. Together with the other platforms, it allows readers access to millions of stories across almost every genre (including romance, fantasy, science fiction, and fanfiction) and typically for free or cheaper than printed books. By far the biggest change is that these platforms enable amateur authors to publish their articles or stories without the traditional publishing contract, spawning a new genre of self-publishing. For the very first time, anyone anywhere gets to write fiction and everyone everywhere gets to read it, creating a truly international and local literary canon — not without challenges, to be sure, but now more diverse than questioning early readers of history could have imagined.

Online accessibility means literature is more than just local; readers and writers can now travel over borders set by geography, economic status and social standing, lending their voices to a much bigger stage. The way literature is created and consumed has changed not only the traditional publishing industry, but also the way people think about storytelling. Gone are the menu-style tabbed browses of yore, where literature was limited to linear structures and the best content was carefully curated by institutions: online literature is increasingly fluid and open-ended, welcoming genre-bending experimentation, wild stylistic idiosyncrasy, and niche interests that, together, pass through the eye of the needle of an ever-diversifying digital readership. From serialized stories to choose-your-own-adventures to online book clubs, they spawned new forms of expression and engagement.

For the first time in their lives, today's children are growing up in a time when digital media is like the air we breathe. Unlike traditional literature (which is often filtered via publishers for a general audience), online literature exposes the actual tastes, experiences, and backgrounds of its writers and readers. The platforms accommodate diverse interests and help users find their own stories and those that reflect their lives. Whether they are stories with LGBTQ+ characters or stories about marginalized communities, online literature creates a space for stories that may not have a home in mainstream media and are either sugar-coated or shoved under the rug. From heavy thematic works with layered plots and a large cast of characters, to jovial and short stories with relatively few elements. In short, online literature has encouraged a more democratic style of writing.

When teenagers engage more with local and foreign materials online, their identity reaches out beyond the national and local boundaries, leading them toward a more holistic and quilted international consciousness [7-9].

The iterative exchanges between audiences and creators on many digital platforms also promotes a kind of shared ownership of cultural narratives. Writers revise their prose using individual feedback, while readers are compelled to propose and critique personal interpretations. In this relationship, however, stories and ideas are continually transformed making it less about the transmission of information from writer to reader. This level of interactivity speaks highly to teenagers, who are in such an influential part of their lives searching for the interaction from numerous different viewpoints to cement their place in society and understand their purpose.

3. Traits of Fiction in the Digital Medium

Although digitally mediated fiction can be analog literature too, one thing that makes it arguably more interactive — and therefore more accessible in nature — is that it exists within the digital realm. Because fiction available online can be accessed immediately by anyone with an internet connection, printed books, which require purchase or periodical subscriptions, are not directly comparable. This may be on Webnovel or Archive of Our Own or Tapas, wherever, but readers are challenged against limitless free tales. It enables instant-access to material with near-zero barriers to authorship,

completely shattering the form and market for fiction as we previously understood, bringing it into the wake-after-wake of accessibility and representation today.

Availability and Social Nexus

The one undeniable boon that digitally mediated fiction enjoys is its immediacy. Narratives are generally released in real-time, allowing authors to publish incomplete works and letting readers experience the writing process as it unfolds. Because online fiction is serialized, new installments are regularly posted in a systematic way, unlike traditional publishing processes that can take months or years from conception to print. It allows readers to participate in stories as they happen, even talking about events collectively. This currency imbues engagement with digitally mediated fiction as a social act — a very active one, especially in the case of young people.

Additionally, though the interactivity that the traditional publishing model denies to authors and readers alike is rather unique to online literature. It encourages its own communities via the comment section, the review section, and the relentless dialogue at fans being able to discuss in public free of charge. Other writers opens themselves up to new directions, molding stories from crowd-sourced feedback. Yet collaboration happens organically on the web, not serialized stories that eliminate the possibility of evolution.

Fandom is the heart of remix culture where admirers find inspiration from beloved lore. Fanfiction paints favoritism in new shades, playing around with stories and exploring unknown angles. This is an exchange, a gathering of young dreamers using character and self to play in new storyscapes. We all are a part of a communal creativity, and every voice adds its own colour to worlds we love.

The online literary ecosystem is big enough for all of them to belong. Mass media might be homogenizing to turn maximum profit, but websites are all about diversity. Alongside our lesser heard narratives, niche interest's bloom. Outsider Chroniclers Find Allies, Stories of Struggles through Care Ears to listen the competition between the narratives in the tales affirming of varied identities that celebrate a specific type and deflect prejudice as it brings lives with specific identities to the margins appears unbound.

In addition, while digital literature often chooses experimental forms of storytelling that cross limits of style and form, traditional print seems to remain decidedly conservative by comparison. The flexibility of the online platform encourages its authors to thwart expectations, whether that be through choices that lead to unpredictable paths, or through the mixing of mediatized words, worlds and sounds. Such innovation is particularly alluring to younger readers that are more susceptible to interactive video games, social networking services and other digitally native experiences. Even literature on the net discovers more voices, in a number of kinds.

One of the most impressive aspects of online literature may be its global presence. You have more access to authors around the world with writers from all around the world being able to contribute their works using online platforms, there are little to no barriers from state, country, and/or culture. This is especially important for young adults since they may not have access to many books found in their local libraries or bookstores. Young readers are introduced to narratives from other cultures through online literature, allowing them to explore different traditions, values and social issues [10-12].

The ease of accessing the online literature has provided adolescents throughout the globe with access to stories from a broad range of cultural backgrounds. As an example, a reader who is a teenager in Argentina might read an elaborate web novel by an author in Taiwan covering the class conflict simmering in Southeast Asia.

Contemporary Internet literature has become a channel for cultural diffusion unrivalled in any other time. It allows teenagers to engage in a global literary dialogue that mirrors our interconnected world. The tight weave of ideas passing through virtual pages is ever more important as the young generation are now exposed to numerous cultures in cyberspace. Virtual spaces represented in online narratives also help youth navigate through alternative identities and recognize increasing global diversity at a time of transition.

Because of all these reasons, we can summarize the contribution of online literature to the cultural identity of a nation as the following:

How Online Literature can either Help or Hinder Cultural Representation?

Now online literature is great for many reasons, but one of the major things it contributes to our society is that it gives power to marginalized groups and shows us many different cultural backgrounds. For most of publishing history, the mainstream cultures telling the stories have modeled what stories should be, in line with western norms and values. Traditionally, however, a lot of North Atlantic literature — particularly from America and Britain — has often been shaped by and geared toward these readerly frameworks. As a result, people who were not from Western cultures or from disenfranchised communities struggled to find representation of their identity and experience in the literature they read on a regular basis.

One cannot overestimate the importance of cultural representation — portrayal matters everywhere, especially in online literature. When asked who do I belong with, where do I belong or who am I culturally, for the adolescent trying to navigate these questions it can be helpful for them to see characters such as them, to feel empowered and validated through literature. These narratives give life to their experiences and create a sense that they are visible and also perceived and understood. In addition, they give young people an opportunity to figure out the complexities of their own identities in a way that traditional literature may not be able to give.

4. Themes of Cultural Hybridity and Fusion

Besides embodying cultural specificity, the online text is also a potential site for the negotiation of cultural hybridity, which is a preoccupying issue in our cross-border societies. With most of the adolescents today living in multicultural settings, they are more likely to be exposed to multiculturalisms and interacting with multiple cultural influences every day. The reality of mixed culture is resonated online literature; the incorporation of multiple cultures in online literature is in the same way the reflection of the experiences of young people who coerce between multiple cultural worlds.

Those in online literature often struggle with navigating multiple cultural identities. An example might be a teenaged protagonist born into an immigrant family, balancing the responsibilities of his/her homeland culture against those of his/her home country. These stories often underscore the struggles to balance and hold on to one's heritage, while learning to acclimate to the new community and environment as well. It may include challenges such as language barriers, family demands, and wanting to be a part of society [13-15].

The way online literature facilitates the construction of cultural identity also mirrors the overarching movement of globalization. With the internet bridging cultural divides across the world, online literature is a catalyst for dialogue and exchange. Literature in the past used to be limited to certain regions and cultures but now various writers of different backgrounds and cultures can tell their stories to a global audience via digital platforms. Because so many of these stories come from families around the world telling their stories to family, it provides the outlet for youth to step outside of their own world to understand the human condition and the shared experiences that link us all in a globalized culture. For example, a US-based reader may enjoy reading an Indian web novel that will allow them to get taste of the context of the society, customs, problems faced, etc. On the flip side, a teenager in Kenya may be exposed to a story from Latin America that allows for exploration of the adversities facing youth in an entirely different cultural and social context. These stories expose young people to multiple experiences allowing them to examine cultural identity within the context of the larger world. Those interactions foster empathy, understanding, and respect for other cultural others, thus leading a more global self.

Additionally, the global reach of online literature helps combat stereotypes and misrepresentation, often prevalent in mainstream media. Non-Western cultures have suffered limited understanding, and at times outright stereotyping, through traditional publishing channels, creating an oversimplified

diagnosis of rich, vibrant complex societies. In stark contrast to this, online literature provides a much more nuanced and variety of voices for every culture, which is more indispensable and authentic. It expands their horizons to recognize that not everything is portrayed on cable news, and to bring more nuanced understandings of the rich tapestry of human perspectives to the forefront of a young person's imagination.

These stories can play a vital role in assisting adolescents in processing their emotions, organizing their thoughts, and solidifying their identities. As an example, a young person may identify with a character struggling with personal social identity issues. With more people migrating due to globalization and cultural intermingling, it is not unusual nowadays to find adolescents upholding their family's cultural traditions while navigating a more cosmopolitan, often Westernized society. The dilemmas are many, as the readers/readers digests abound for adolescent angst, and online literature provides ample story space to work them through. Whether that be through characters under the pressure of complying with their family's ideals or characters that attempt to create a new identity that incorporate multiple spheres of influence, online literature allows adolescents to explore the nuances of cultural identity in a pluralistic society.

Additionally, cyberspace itself was described as a safe space for young people seeking to understand their sexual orientation. Anonymity and accessibility through online platforms brings young people closer to stories and others who share their sexual experiences, desires and challenges. When adolescents are not quite yet ready to talk their sexual identity through in person, the literature online can provide an outlet to the adventure. Many readers find affirmation of their emotions and impressions through stories about LGBTQ+ characters and situations at a growing age when sexual identity is still taking form.

5. Putting the Group in Group Identities

While providing support for personal identity development, online literature directly contributes to the formation of group identities. Amidst all this self-discovery though, they are also on a quest to try and learn where they fit in the about world that is ultimately larger than themselves, be it through race, nationality or other aspects. Stories from diverse cultural backgrounds encourage young readers to view themselves as members of a group, be it an ethnic, religious or social coalition. The identities possible through group membership provide a haven of belonging and commonality for teens, who need this fellowship more than ever as they grapple with changes while seeking connection and validation.

Lot of the online literature sites (especially those used for fanfiction and certain reading-oriented forums) create a world where young readers are able to come together and rally around interest and identity. These communities are often formed around certain genres (fantasy, science fiction, or romance), but may also be united by common culture or social problems. For instance, a reader tribe might form around immigrant adolescent stories, or stories featuring queer characters and themes, etc. They become a space where teenagers can exchange ideas, discuss their feelings, and support each other while they seek to understand who they are.

These online communities create almost a sense of belonging which is vital, particularly for adolescents who may feel isolated, or marginalized in other parts of their lives. In the US, many young people experience a sense of being stuck outside the social circle of their peers, or being strangers in a strange land desecrated by misunderstanding families; web literature gives them a chance to find a coterie of like-minded people who have similar experiences, or obsess over similar interests together. These communities are not just fun play spaces, but also support networks where young people can share their experiences, find and share their ideas, and affirm their identities, social and cultural identities.

As adolescents engage with their peers and the world around them, they begin to both shape a clearer idea of who they are and participate in broader conversations across culture. The stories told within these communities are also unique and intimate narratives of young people sharing experiences

that touch on their unique backgrounds that add a rich color to the general story of culture. This helps integrate adolescents into a global conversation about culture, identity, and belonging. It lets them grasp how their own experiences overlap or contrast with someone else's, and allows them to chime in with a voice of their own in the continuing conversation.

Reading online literature influences more than just literary identity, individual or community, but rather one type of identity that overlaps creating social ties. Having literary communities online and being teenagers, they are collectively part of a larger exchange that knows no borders. Such cross-culture exchanges provide a chance for young readers to ponder their culture identity and how their culture compare with others. They recognize how experiences are influenced by backgrounds but also common elements of identity that tie them to young people in different contexts. This global feeling of connectedness supports the perspective of being a part of a broader, intermeshed global village, which can be particularly strengthening when navigating individual and collective identity.

6. Recommendations

In this regard, online literature, with its deep-embedded and multi-dimensional influence on the adolescent cultural identity that can be both opportunities and challenges at the same time, offers an endless variety of perspectives. While the recent literature on online practices during adolescence has had a positive influence on identity building, some points could improve its effect further. Here are some suggestions for educators, parents, authors, and platform designers to help adolescents get the most from online literature, while also minimizing potential harm.

6.1. Sparking Critical Engagement with Literature on the Internet

Principally, critical thinking is one of the most important elements in the involvement of adolescents with online texts. The range of online literature has its benefits, but it is equally important that adolescents critically reflect on the stories they read. A lot of online platforms allow a free range of genres, making young readers susceptible to positive and negative stories. We encourage parents to prompt adolescents to question the messages within stories, especially those that might reinforce stereotypes, misinformation, or harmful representations of culture. Those kinds of conversations will help teens not just read but appreciate the complexities of culture and identity.

6.2. Supporting Other Perspectives And Narratives

Considering the immense influence that online literature shapes in adolescent reading of their identities, it is critical to have diverse cultural experiences readily available. Those who create platforms and those who write content ought to have enough characters of all shapes and colors to explore the myriad ways we deal with difference and fusing identities and how mooring our experiences in personal story can sail the seas of the global tide.

Voices in the LGBTQ+ community, and the many groups not typically heard in the mass-generated tales, should take priority. Offering the youth an opportunity to see themselves and wrestle with some of life's challenges connects in a validating way for identity development. Moreover, the sheer multitude of perspectives made available to readers—including those of Indigenous, African, Latin American, and Asian—fosters an understanding of our common world and an appreciation for cultural diversity.

6.3. Creating Literate Communities with a Culture of Protection and Belonging

Another suggestion focuses on creating secure and inclusive digital spaces for teen readers and writers to find like-minded peers. But the veil of anonymity can also act as a shield for damaging behaviour — especially aggression, harassment, or exclusion — online.

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