



IRWLE

The Indian Review of World Literature in English

ISSN: 0974-097X • Vol. 22, No. 1 • January 2026

Growing Up Between Worlds: Cultural Expectations, Children and Silent Politics of Life in Post-Colonial Indian Fiction

Ms. N. Krithika

Part-Time Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of English, Pachaiyappa's College,
Chennai-600030, India

*Assistant Professor in English (SFS) & Deputy
Dean, School of Languages, Guru Nanak
College, Chennai-600041, India*

Dr. K. Subapriya

Research Supervisor, Assistant Professor
Department of English, Pachaiyappa's College,
Chennai-600030, India

Abstract

The article explores how Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* show how the so-called children as the main protagonist of their novels suffer between the expectations of the Cultural norms and the silent politics of day-to-day routine life in Post Colonial India. This paper argues how the set up in the family and social spaces has alterations in the behaviours and the personality of the young individuals becomes evident when hybrid identities interfere. Unlike the hero-worship or with supreme climaxes, these novels revolve around the forgotten corners of the young children's world, that is the silences, playtime, nurturing, caregiving, an act that views the perspectives

of caste, class, and gender narratives from a child's eye. These novels, when studied together, speak loudly on the "silent politics", highlighting the post-colonial life from the effect on childhood.

Keywords: Cultural expectations, Silent politics, post-colonial, Children, Family.

Introduction

Post-Colonial (ism) - the term carries a baggage of its former term of colonial rule, the politics of opposition and struggle, the necessity of breaking the barriers of oppressors in the ideological overtones were seen evident in its literature. With the bridge being set between political and cultural boundaries of the post-colonial age, the shaping and reshaping of identity resulted with the foundations of hybridity and interpretations

The hybridisation, constitution of countries with varied cultural diversities floated the questions of self and silent politics of life. The style, narration and the literary backgrounds started setting in the countries freed from the colonial British commonwealth, the system of dominance being questioned and dominated by the so-called suppressed.

The concept of cultural appropriation, discrimination, silent politics of life are the approaches to the postcolonial literature when shown from children's point of view the post independent Indian society through fictions in particular three postcolonial novels namely *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai are selected to write this research article. Kiran Desai, a great Indian female novelist in Indian English literature, is the daughter of well-known novelist Anita Desai. Anita and Kiran's early migration to English countries and real life diasporas were very much evident in shaping their literary careers. Their ideologies of racism, identity, cultural homogenization are prevalent in their writings.

Booker prize Winner for fiction Suzanna Arundati Roy is a postcolonial writer who fights for human rights and environmental Causes. Her novel about the fraternal twins and experiences of destruction on life by “Love Laws” in the early postcolonial era showcases the people’s behaviour of Silent politics and the lingering effects of Casteism in India.

The commonness of the three novels mentioned in the article is the cultural expectations and silent politics of life in postcolonial India from the viewpoint of children. The constant battle to fit in, learn, relearn and unlearn building childhood an expression of character analysis of diasporic self and identity.

The transition between colonial and national, tradition and modernity, elite and the working class are the prominent elements of postcolonial Indian fiction. The operations of power and resistance are reflected in the silent politics of the society. The enactment of the trauma, cultural hybridisation and memory from the viewpoint of the young protagonist gives a fresh perspective.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find the Cultural expectations of the postcolonial world from a child’s perspective in Indian fiction.
2. To study the silent politics of life depicted in postcolonial Indian fiction.
3. To show the reality of the inbetweenness growing up amid different worlds of Society.
4. To study trauma, memory, tradition, modernity from the children of postcolonial fictions.
5. To find out hybridization of lingualism and alienation.

6. To focus on cultural hegemony and exchange in a diasporic environment.

Limitations of the Study

The study's extension is confined to Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*.

This paper will be explored and analyzed from the perspective of cultural expectations, childhood and inbetweenness of East and West intersections. Dealing with the multicultural conflicts and silent politics of postcolonial life due to cultural exchanges.

Research Methodology

This study focuses on the study of the selected three Novels:

1. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*
2. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*
3. Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

through the primary and secondary sources, using textual, critical, evaluative, descriptive, analytic and interpretive methods of analysis. The MLA Handbook of Research 9th Edition is followed.

The secondary sources critically analyses authors' works, research papers, dissertations, shodhganga, e-resource web sources, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, Britannica.

Hypothesis

This study to find out the elements of Global postcolonial capitalism, migration in the aspects of caste discrimination, gender differences of power entanglement, memory and trauma issues. The present study is to picture the

inbetweenness of the childhood days and the silent politics of life from a child's perspective depicted in the hybrid multicultural postcolonial Indian fictions taken for this research.

Analysis of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Sai, a young Indian girl who grows up in a post-colonial world where capitalism and global migration redefines her innocent childhood into clueless chaos. Though the story talks about the grown-up life of the protagonist, the impact of the past where the main character was young shapes the entire plot.

When viewed from the historical point of view, the Kalimpon's local unrest speaks loud about the period after the colonial rule. The unrest movements and revolts mirror the real world political scenarios. The education which the judge received due to Colonial impact and the tireless labour of Biju in the US portrays the condition impacted due to the neoliberal Capitalism and global migration. Here the life between both worlds contradict and push to a compulsion of survival. From the kitchens of Village to that of the New York basements and the struggles to pass the embassy queues.

Being an Orphan Sai tries to fit in the society for validation but the ride between the two worlds are contradictory to each other as her Anglicised grandfather stands against Indianness and she suffers from understanding the local realities. The classic struggles of postcolonialism is where a child tries hard to fit in the value systems, complex culture and real world. The drastic shift of post-Colonialism, migration multiculturalism deliberates the feeling of not belonging and left out for loss. For Sai, this is not just external but happening in day-to-day scenes. The silent politics of postcolonialism, capitalism and migration to choose the sides in an ethical difficulty of the environment leaving deeper psychological scars. This novel envisions what it means about "growing up in a postcolonial privileged home."

Analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

The Children Rahel and Estha grew up in a postcolonial environment of caste hierarchies, class differences, and power entanglement. From power politics to conversion of religion, colonialism has made a greater impact on the cultural influences of children of the post-colonial era. The novel revolves around a local Syrian Christian family with the intersections of colonialism, missionary acts, Marxist ideologies, and colonial education. The broader Umbrella of the society's discrimination holds the layer of discourse in language, moral policing, and class differences, while the inner layer of it outlines the caste oppression, gender discrimination and police brutality. The ladder of differences between the society's migrant workers and Anglo-Indian cultural capital.

Roy uses a child's point of view in the narration of this novel where the childhood is built on nonlinear structures of memory, the blend of mishearing & playfulness are used by the author to question the common sense of the caste myths. The purposely drafted mispronunciations portray the gestures used as a function to expose larger power structures. The presence of ghosts is the outcome of unspeakable memories. The intertwined Caste, Colonial and patriarchal systems suggest that it exposes collective trauma and power entanglement.

Analysis of Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*

The Das siblings, Bim, Tara, Raja and Baba's sibling relationship acts as a miniature of nature amid global post-colonial emergence of societies in third World Countries. The trauma and domestic memory of hybrid identities are being fragmented in this novel.

The Hindu-Muslim relationship tensions of fragile partitions of the post-independence creates the third space where the intersection of post colonial western & Indian traditions exist.

The pre-teen memories rekindle parental negligence and negotiation. Gender discrimination and class differences altered the patterns of the children's collective wounds of trauma. The riots of the partition impacted as silent politics of the household.

The taste of music blend of the western and Eastern Worlds Critiques the choices Children made in real life Scenarios. The hybrid lives of the psychic remains of the Childhood trauma is global postcolonial understanding of Indianness.

Literature Review

Jesse Patrick in her article *Violent Dis-Placements: Natural and Human Violence in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss*, explores the connections between natural and human violence using space and place theories in Kiran Desai's Novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) developing a theory named "placeness" with the concepts of Bill Ashcroft, Benedict Anderson, Yi-Fu Tuan, Homi K. Bhabha, Michel de Certeau converting "empty" space to place.

Ksenija's article, *Migration, globalization, and divided identity in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss* Draws on the studies of Vijay Mishra and Paul Jay about globalization and diaspora, discussing Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) which attention towards displacement colonial legacy and identity. This also fragments the values of Individual and collective identity of the ever-changing world right from U.S capitalist to English colonisation of India.

According to Oana, *Disjunctures and diaspora in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss* speaks the juxtapose of underprivileged diasporas in the USA and India during the colonial past and the present, where the struggles for recognition on the global politics of power, suggesting immigration and diaspora between home and alien land. The socio-economic inequalities narrate the global capitalism and diaspora.

In the article *Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (1997)* discusses the mistreatment of the characters in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy which mirrors the Indian society. Caste system in India follows a social system of the Hindu tradition where social discrimination prevails even in post colonial India echoing the presence of untouchability.

In study *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things* by Julie is on gender and caste issues and their effects on the women and young characters in the novel *The God of Small Things (1997)* by Arundhati Roy. Existential psychological predicaments in the lives of the subjugated Indian women abused psychologically and physically in a male-dominated society confined to rules of the superior. Freud's psychoanalytic theory reveals the disturbed psyche of her female characters.

The article *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Traumatic Distress in Children* by Pradeep Kumar Giri, narrates trauma and its deep distress in child psychology of the two major characters Rahel and Estha haunted by events that happened throughout their lives, this also interprets psychological trauma that occurs in the childhood and its long-lasting effects even in adult life.

The Research paper *Womanhood and Indian Independence in Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day* discusses the traditional archetypes and the emergence of new model of womanhood in post colonial India, Anita's narration of Indian Independence and partition and its impact on multicultural hybridity of diasporic women and children.

Dieter's *History and the Individual in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day* highlights the impact of History and the past in the life of the present day survival of an individual's quest for identity. Also, this article highlights that the frame of childhood trauma travels even in the shadow of adulthood life.

In *The Ultimate Colony: The Child in Postcolonial Fiction* by Meenakshi the role of a child is a regular part of creative literature, critical discourse of society. The cultural and social backdrops vary using the point of view of children, voice of the child and childhood memories shaping the post colonial world.

Ranit Mandal's scholarly research *Navigating Ethics and Cultural Transformation: Indian Modern Literature in the Postcolonial Era* explores the relationship between ethics and cultural transformation in Indian modern literature during the postcolonial period witnessing the quest for identity, independence and socio-political changes in literary landscape.

Conclusion

Based on the textual analysis and the interpretation of the review of literature the study concludes that the conflict of globalisation and the inbetweenness of growing up amid different worlds of West and East cultural influences when viewed from a child's point of view is a real situation of the world that exists as freed after colonisational influences. The key concepts of silent suffering and politics of life showcases that displacement, dislocation, linguistic hybridisation and migration are prevalent in postcolonial Indian societies irrespective of class differences. The young characters of the novels as the main protagonists capture the fact that the colonised remains are the conflicts of globalizational influences. Thus, the scenarios in which the generation grew up after the colonised age, that is the "postcolonial World" had to bridge the gap of inclusiveness across societies.

Works Cited

Bharat, Meenakshi. *The Ultimate Colony: The Child in Postcolonial Fiction*. Allied Publishers, 2003.

Desai, Anita. *Clear Light of Day*. Vintage, 1980.

Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. Penguin Books, 2006.

Dizayi, Saman Abdulqadir Hussein. "The Crisis of Identity in Postcolonial Literature." *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2017, pp. 79-86.

Ferguson, Jesse Patrick. "Violent Dis-Placements: Natural and Human Violence in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2009, pp. 35-49.

Giri, Pradeep Kumar. "Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: Traumatic Distress in Children." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2020, pp. 1431-1434.

González Sánchez, Carmen. "Womanhood and Indian Independence in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980)." 2022.

Karkaba, Cherki. "Deconstructing Identity in Postcolonial Fiction." *ELOPE: English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2010, pp. 91-99.

Kondali, Ksenija. "Migration, Globalization, and Divided Identity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *Umjetnost riječi: Časopis za znanost o književnosti, izvedbenoj umjetnosti i filmu*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2018, pp. 101-116.

Mandal, Ranit. "Navigating Ethics and Cultural Transformation: Indian Modern Literature in the Postcolonial Era."

Mishra, Vijay, and Bob Hodge. "What is Post(-) Colonialism?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 276-290.

Monis, Nafees, Manoj Kumar, and Faiyazurrehman. "Multicultural Ethos and Conflicts of Globalization: A Study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *International Journal of Applied Research*, vol. 7, no. 7S, 2021, pp. 05-09.

Mullaney, Julie. *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*. A&C Black, 2002.

Riemenschneider, Dieter. "History and the Individual in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*." 1984.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. IndiaInk, 1997.

Sabo, Oana. "Disjunctures and Diaspora in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2012, pp. 375-392.

Shukla, Veena. "Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997)." *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2009.