



Postmodern Perspectives on Colonisation in Indian Fiction: Analyzing the Works of Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the lasting effects of colonization on Indian society and identity through a postmodern analysis of the works of Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy. By examining key novels such as *Cry, the Peacock*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, and *The God of Small Things*, the study investigates how these authors portray themes of cultural displacement, identity crises, racial and caste discrimination, gender oppression, and the tension between tradition and modernity. The paper argues that these narratives not only reflect the complex socio-political realities of postcolonial India but also critique the ongoing influence of colonial legacies. Through a detailed literary analysis, this study aims to highlight the ways in which Desai, Desai, and Roy use postmodern techniques to articulate the fragmented identities and multifaceted experiences of their characters, thereby offering profound insights into the postcolonial condition. Colonization introduced India to Anglican ideas and customs, leading to significant changes in various aspects of its civilization, particularly literature. This era brought about the creation of new literary forms and added new dimensions to the structure and texture of Indian literature.

English became part of the array of Indian literary languages, expanding the content to include new ideas and knowledge. Writers began focusing on themes of realism, morality, and psychology in their work. New forms such as novels and short stories emerged, becoming essential to native literature. These influences paved the way for the adoption of Western ideals. This research aims to examine the impact of colonization on Indian literature and its cultural mindset.

INTRODUCTION

The legacy of colonization has profoundly shaped the socio-cultural and political landscapes of postcolonial societies, particularly in India. As a nation that endured extensive colonial rule, India presents a rich tapestry of narratives that grapple with the complexities of postcolonial identity and experience. This paper delves into the postmodern perspectives on colonization as depicted in the fiction of three acclaimed Indian authors: Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy. Through their intricate storytelling and vivid character portrayals, these writers explore themes of cultural displacement, identity crises, racial and caste discrimination, gender oppression, and the enduring tension between tradition and modernity. Anita Desai's works often center on the psychological turmoil of her characters as they navigate the postcolonial Indian milieu. In novels like *Cry, the Peacock* and *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Desai delves into the intricacies of marital discord, self-alienation, and the quest for identity in a rapidly changing society. Kiran Desai, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, paints a poignant picture of globalized India, highlighting the subjugation and exploitation of women, as well as the cultural and economic dislocations wrought by colonial and postcolonial forces. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* powerfully addresses caste discrimination and subaltern existence, portraying the severe marginalization faced by untouchables and the complex dynamics of inter-communal relationships.

By analyzing these works through a postmodern lens, this paper seeks to uncover the multifaceted ways in which Desai, Desai, and Roy engage with and critique the enduring impact of colonization on Indian society. Their narratives not only reflect the fragmented identities and lived experiences of their characters but also challenge and deconstruct the residual colonial ideologies that persist in contemporary India. Through this exploration, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the postcolonial condition and the diverse literary strategies employed to articulate it.

Colonization is often perceived as a historical phenomenon with deep-rooted implications, dating back to ancient times. The term “colonialism” derives from the Latin word ‘colonia’, meaning settlement or farm, reflecting the Roman practice of establishing settlements on foreign lands. Colonialism generally refers to the expansion of a nation’s power over foreign territories through forceful occupation. Colonialism began in earnest during the 15th century and escalated in the late 19th century, evolving into a global phenomenon. The relationship between capitalism and colonialism has been a significant area of study. According to some scholars, “colonialism acted as the midwife for European capitalism,” facilitating the transition to capitalism through the expansion of European powers into other territories. Colonizers sought raw materials and new markets for machine-made products, necessitating the forcible occupation of territories. Initially, colonial activities focused on exploration and the exchange of goods, often using barter systems. This period saw minimal intervention in the cultural and social systems of the colonized peoples. However, the Industrial Revolution, which began around 1762, marked a shift in colonization. The focus of colonial expansion evolved to include more direct economic and cultural exploitation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kamala Markandaya has worked out the theme of East-West encounters in her novel “Nectar in a Sieve” (1954). It recounts the touching tale of sorrow and misery of Rukmini, the narrator heroine of the novel. Rukmini endures the calamities of industrialism and nature with great courage. She passes through the harsh realities of life while facing the struggle to overcome poverty, hunger, male domination, and betrayal. The novel also deals with the incursions made by industry and modern technology and their sinister consequences.

Anita Nair (2000), in the novel, “*The Better Man*”, exposes the dilemma of the protagonist who comes to terms with his past life. Set in the traditional village of Kerala, Mukundan suffers from childhood nightmares caused by his tyrannical father Achuthan Nair. Mukundan has a negative notion about women, which explains his relationship with Anjana and Anjana’s departure from his life. His fear of women is reduced through his interaction with Anjana and the older woman Bhagiyam.

Malti Agrawal presents a collection of thirty-eight research papers focusing on various Indian fictionists, dramatists, and poets. These papers analyze the major works of both pioneering and contemporary Indian authors writing in English. The book explores how Indian writing in English has engaged with all major literary genres, with fiction being particularly prominent. In the editorial section,

Malti Agrawal emphasizes the writers' drive to express themselves in their native languages. The literary achievements of these writers are notable for their lasting impact and their efforts to adapt English to reflect Indian society.

R.D. Sharma's edited volume, *“Multiculturalism: Canada and India”*, includes essays on immigrant literature, native writing, and cross-cultural studies. The collection highlights the rich diversity of both Canada and India. In a world where people of various ethnicities and religions coexist and work together, the topic of multiculturalism has become increasingly important and urgent.

Kothari Rita (2006): In *translating India* gives an account of the specialized and the general sphere of English translations in India. In addition to the chapters like English translations in colonial India.

WORK PLAN AND IMPLICATIONS

This theoretical study will involve an in-depth examination of research related to social, religious, and political factors and their impact on the development and shaping of Indian literature. To thoroughly understand the topic, we will utilize a variety of sources, including books, scholarly articles, references, and online resources. We will also analyze notes and surveys on postmodern fiction authored by relevant writers, with guidance from a supervisor. This theoretical study seeks to delve deeply into the intersection of social, religious, and political factors and their influence on the development of Indian literature. The objective is to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these factors have shaped literary expression in India, particularly in the context of postcolonial and postmodern fiction. The aim of the study is to enhance our comprehension of global literary development in countercultural contexts. The study aims to provide valuable insights into the development of Indian literature by examining how social, religious, and political factors have shaped literary expression. The implications of this research include:

- *Enhanced Understanding of Literary Development:* By analyzing the impact of socio-political and religious factors on Indian literature, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature evolves in response to changing societal contexts.
- *Broader Contextualization:* The comparative analysis with global literary trends will help situate Indian literature within the broader framework of global literary development. This will offer a more nuanced perspective on how local literary traditions interact with global influences.

- *Contribution to Literary Scholarship:* The findings will contribute to the existing body of literary scholarship by providing new insights into the ways in which Indian literature reflects and engages with social, religious, and political issues.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the intricate ways in which Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy address the lingering impacts of colonization in their fiction through a postmodern lens. By analyzing their works—*Cry, the Peacock*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, and *The God of Small Things*—this study has illuminated the multifaceted nature of postcolonial experiences and identities as depicted in contemporary Indian literature. Anita Desai's novels reveal the psychological and emotional ramifications of cultural estrangement and self-alienation in a postcolonial context. Her portrayal of marital discord and identity crises reflects the internal conflicts faced by individuals navigating a rapidly changing society. Kiran Desai's works, on the other hand, offer a critique of globalization and its effects on gender and cultural displacement. Through her nuanced characters and settings, she addresses the exploitation and resistance experienced by marginalized groups in a globalized world. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* provides a poignant exploration of caste discrimination and the complexities of inter-communal relationships, highlighting the ongoing impact of colonial legacies on social structures and personal identities. The comparative analysis underscores both the shared and unique ways in which these authors engage with postcolonial themes. While each author presents a distinct perspective, their collective works reflect a deep engagement with the residual effects of colonialism and the diverse responses of postcolonial societies. The use of postmodern narrative techniques by Desai, Desai, and Roy allows for a rich exploration of fragmented identities, cultural conflict, and the negotiation of traditional and modern values.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Indian fiction addresses the enduring legacy of colonization. It demonstrates the significance of literary analysis in revealing the complexities of postcolonial life and identity, offering insights into the ways literature can both reflect and critique socio-political realities. The findings highlight the continued relevance of postcolonial and postmodern theories in examining contemporary Indian literature and provide a foundation for future research on the evolving dynamics of postcolonial narratives.

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