

Narrative Voice, Memory, and Postcolonial Identity Formation: A Comparative Analytical Study of Lyrical Storytelling in the Select Novels of Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai

Abhimanue Yadav¹, Dr. Shikha Dutt Sharma²

¹Research Scholar, KR Mangalam University, Gurgaon

Email: abhimanueyadav28555@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, KR Mangalam University, Gurgaon

Email: shikhadutt.sharma@krmangalam.edu.in

Received: 15th Jul, 2026 | Revised: 25th Jul, 2026 | Accepted: 5th Aug, 2026 | Available Online: 12th Aug, 2026

Abstract

The rise of the postcolonial narratives has predicted the intricacies of fractured identities informed by the past, displacement and cultural ambivalence. Nevertheless, the significance of lyrical narrative voice as a memory creating and mediating mechanism is under-researched. This paper examines the interplay of narrative voice and memory to construct postcolonial identity in these two novels that were chosen Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. Through the application of qualitative comparative textual analysis based on the postcolonial and memory theory, the paper examines how the two authors employ lyrical narratives told through non-linear storytelling, remembrance imagery and rhythmic language in re-creating personal and community experiences. It is argued in the analysis that the role of the lyrical narrative voice is a compelling discursive tool wherein fragmented identities are researched, which enables characters to power brokering trauma, belonging, and cultural dislocation. Although the narrative style of Roy is more intimate and localized in terms of memory and emotional richness, the one of Desai is indicative of the general diasporic conflicts and national identity construction. This study can help to better explain how modern Indian English fiction can be articulated by focusing on the issues of memory, voice, and postcolonial subjectivity.

Keywords: Postcolonial Identity; Narrative Voice; Memory Studies; Lyrical Prose; Arundhati Roy; Kiran Desai; Indian English Fiction

How to cite this article: Abhimanue Yadav¹ Dr. Shikha Dutt Sharma². Narrative Voice, Memory, and Postcolonial Identity Formation: A Comparative Analytical Study of Lyrical Storytelling in the Select Novels of Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. Int J Drug Deliv Technol. 2026;16(76s):2087-2091. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.76s.2026.

3. Introduction

3.1 Background

The Indian English fiction has undergone a great change in the postcolonial discourse changing its nationalistic narratives into multifaceted issues of identity, memory, and subjectivity. Fragmented identities that were influenced by colonial pasts, globalization and socio-political changes are increasingly being enjoyed in the works of the now writers. Memory has also become a decisive narrative tool by which authors are able to recreate the personal and communal pasts in a way that is non-linear and experimental in presenting the story. The experimentation with narrative, lyrical prose, the changing point of view, the disturbed temporality are now the main area of expression of the fluidity of the postcolonial identity. Examples of this change include writers such as Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai who use stylistic novelty to illustrate the conflicts between the rootedness of the local and the displacement of the global (Nayar; Gopal).

3.2 Research Problem

Although the issue of postcolonial identity has been extensively studied, a comparative examination on specific mechanisms of memory construction as narrative voice and lyrical storytelling is little and limited. Additionally, the connection between the memory formation and identity formation is under-researched when it comes to these writers.

3.3 Research Questions

This paper deals with the mediating effect of narrative voice in remembering in Roy and Desai, the importance of lyrical storytelling in identity formation and a comparison of the narrative styles of both writers in the context of postcolonialism.

3.4 Objectives

The study will examine narrative voice as a stylistic and ideological device; research on memory as a process of reconstruction and a comparative

assessment of identity construction in the chosen texts.

3.5 Thesis Statement

The lyrical narrative voice of the texts by the authors Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai functions as a mnemonic device and a political tool that helps to create fragmented postcolonial identity through stratified temporalities and affective narration.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Postcolonial Identity and Narrative

Postcolonial theory focuses on identity as changeable, mixed and influenced by colonization, immigration, and cultural exchange. Hybridity and displacement continue to be the main concept of how subjects cope with fractured cultural spaces where frequent outcomes of this process is a multiple identification that is difficult to categorize. The modern criticism emphasizes on how narrative is one of the locations where such tensions are expressed and resolved, especially in terms of the diaspora and belonging representations (Bhabha; Nayar).

4.2 Memory and Literature

The work on memory has greatly impacted the study of literature in projecting trauma, nostalgia, and group recollection as the driving force of a narrative. Researchers believe that literature does not rebuild the memory as a fixed archive but as an active, interpretative process, which is influenced by the affect and context. Trauma histories, especially, are based on fragmented narrations to depict interrupted events, with nostalgia frequently being the mediator of the diasporic desire and identity formation (Assmann; Erll).

4.3 Narrative voice and Lyrical Prose.

Narrative voice is also very important in creating a sense of perception in the reader, particularly when it involves the use of lyrical prose and non-linear narratives. Poetic diction, changing the focalization and discontinuity of time enables writers to blur the characters defining the line between the past and the present. These stylistic effects contribute to the emotional richness and the instability of the postcolonial subjectivity (Fludernik; Herman).

4.4 Studies on Arundhati Roy

The recent studies about *The God of Small Things* focus on the fragmented style of narration used by

Roy in which the memory is narrated by the childlike, lyrical voice. Critics point to the fact that the technique pulls into focus the challenges of trauma, caste relations and intimacies, and establish in place the interactions between an individual memory and the socio-political reality (Tickell; Mukherjee).

4.5 Studies on Kiran Desai

The Inheritance of Loss is the topic of scholarly interest associated with the identity of the diaspora, globalization, and cultural alienation. It has been said that Desai wrote a reflective and multifaceted story about the emotional and psychological effects of migration by showing a number of different ways and approaches, and with the help of lyrical nuances (Gopal; Banerjee).

4.6 Research Gap

Although literature has covered postcolonial identity, memory, and narrative techniques separately there has been deficit in collective comparative study on how the narrative voice in lyrical form concurrently mediates the memory and creates identity in these two works by Roy and Desai.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Postcolonial Theory

The postcolonial theory offers a critical angle through which identities are built in the realms of colonialism and negotiation of cultures. The idea of hybridity, imitation and fragmentation points out the unreliability of the identity within the postcolonial societies. The fact of hybridity signifies the reaction to the cultural influence, and mimicry expresses the ambivalence of colonial power relations. The result of that is identity fragmentation, in which people have to manoeuvre through conflicting cultural discourses, and as a result, identity becomes loose and dynamic instead of being certain (Bhabha).

5.2 Memory Theory

The memory theory places memory in the context of a dynamic and reconstructive process and not as a simple remembrance of yesteryear. Cultural memory focuses on how a collective experience and histories can be used to construct individual and group identity and narrative reconstruction enables people and groups to re-tell the past using stories. Memory is further complicated by trauma and nostalgia which tend to give rise to non-linear and

fragmented representations in literature (Assmann; Erll).

5.3 Narratology

Narratology dwells on the stylistic and structural components of story telling especially narrative voice, focalization and temporality. Narrative voice allows deciding on perspective and tone coloring, whereas focalization regulates the information flow and interest to readers. Temporal disturbances, including flashbacks and missing chronology, imitate the mechanics of memory and underscore the confuse the postcolonial identity (Genette; Herman).

5.4 Analytical Model

This paper will join the postcolonial theory, memory theory, and narratology to create a unified analytic framework. It looks at the interaction of the narrative voice and the memory structures to come up with identity representations. The intersection of these aspects will help to identify the presence of lyrical narratives as a tool of rebuilding fragmented postcolonial identities.

6. Methodology

The proposed study will follow a qualitative research design that is based on the comparative textual analysis to explore how the voice of narrative, memory and the identity construction in the postcolonial literature interact. In its turn, the qualitative method is quite appropriate because it enables the exploration of stylistic subtleties, the intricacies of the themes, and layers of interpretations underlying in the literary texts.

Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai are the authors whose books, *The God of Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, are chosen to analyze them. The novels are selected because they are all densely engaged with postcolonial issues, through the new structures of narratives, and because of their critical attention to memory and identity in particular and closely related socio-cultural settings.

Close reading is one of the key approaches used in the research and helps to analyze language, imagery, voice of the narration, and patterns of structure. They are supplemented by thematic coding, according to which the important aspects of memory, narrative voice and identity are identified and analyzed in the two texts in a systematic way. This kind of coding helps to detect similar motifs and conceptual patterns.

Then a comparative literary analysis is undertaken to determine similarities and differences between the application of lyrical storytelling techniques by both authors. Such analytical methods are narrative discourse analysis that emphasizes on voice, focalization and temporality, and postcolonial critique to understand how power, history and cultural displacement as a construct of identity. This combined approach is to make sure that the aesthetic and ideological aspects of the texts are understood thoroughly.

7. Case Study: Narrative Voice, Memory, and Identity in Roy and Desai

This case study explores the role of narrative voice and memory as the main processes in the formation of postcolonial identity in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *The Obsession of Loss* by Kiran Desai. The two novels adopt different but similar narrative techniques to signify disjointed identities in the postcolonial worlds.

The narration voice in Roy, *The God of Small Things* is lyrical, and it takes a childish approach especially under the awareness of Rahel and Estha. The non-linear form reflects the processes of the memory, past and present constantly overlap. The traumatic incidents, including caste-related violence and family disintegration are not disclosed directly, but they are gradually unveiled in pieces in the form of fragmented memories. The repetition, interrupted time, and imagery of the senses turns the memory into the ongoing narrative power. In this case identity is formed based on personal, localised experience, in which individual trauma cannot be separated out of the social-political reality.

Conversely, the voice of the narration is more scattered in the book *The Inheritance of Loss* written by Desai because it moves through several characters and different geographical settings. Memory in this text is strictly linked with migration and displacement as it represents a sense of culture alienation and diasporic anxieties. The story is narrated in a multifaceted way as characters are haggling across boundaries. Desai uses a more restrained but thoughtful tone in his work, in contrast to the emotional involvement approach of Roy, where irony and lack of attachment are used to emphasize the disintegration of global postcolonial identity.

Compared to each other, the ways of how both authors use memory as the reconstructive activity are inwards and affective (Roy) and outwards and diasporic (Desai). Both the narrative voice are important critical means of expressing identity, and it shows how the lyrical storytelling mediates the

connection between memory and postcolonial subjectivity.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Narrative Voice as a Stylistic and Political Device

The voice of Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* is quite clearly lyrical, disjointed, and frequently mediated by a childish mind that does not conform to realism. Such stylistic decision makes it possible to express repressed past and emotional trauma and to turn narrative voice into a political weapon opposing society as a whole, caste and patriarchy. The tone in which Kiran Desai narrates *The Inheritance of Loss* is, however, less personal and more ironic, moving between characters and settings. Her voice shares the disillusionment of the postcolonial modernity with its delicate sense of irony to criticize globalization and cultural alienation (Mukherjee; Banerjee).

Memory and temporal disruption A memory lapse is observed as the person struggles to recall past events and shows confusion, particularly when trying to identify time or place (Brown et al., 2018).<|human|>7.2 Memory and Temporal Disruption A memory loss is experienced when the person has difficulties in recalling past events and becomes confused, especially in case of the need to remember time or location (Brown et al., 2018).

Both the texts are dependent on non-linear timelines whereby memory breaks the sequence of time. Roy is narrated in the form of recursive memories, in which the trauma is described in a slow way, focusing on emotional intensity. Desai also incorporates the concept of memory, although in a different context, with regard to displacement and migration, memory is a way to negotiate loss and belonging (Erl).</human>

7.3 Lyrical Narrating and Landscape of Emotion.

The use of repetition, rhythm, and imagery bring out lyrical storytelling in the two novels. The poetic language of Roy enhances the sense experience and the memory seems real and alive. In her prose Desai is more restrained, though it contains lyrical elements, to induce slight emotional undercurrents. In both situations, language acts as a bearer of memory, that is, the ways experiences are narrated and interpreted (Fludernik).

An individual identity is formed by means of memory, which is the 7th one.

The sources of identity in Roy are based on the local contexts such as the caste hierarchy, family organization and the history of the region. These identities are rebuilt through the intimate and painful memories by the use of memory. Desai, in his turn, introduces a concept of identity as fluid and diasporic, subjected to the influence of the global mobility and cultural hybridity. Memory is, in this case, nostalgia, alienation, and finding a place above the borders (Gopal; Nayar).

7.5 Comparative Insights

In relative terms, the narrative style of Roy is more fragmented and poetic and is based on trauma and localized identity, but Desai is more linear and reflective and writes about the diasporic nostalgia and formation of a hybrid identity. The two writers show the intersection of narrative voice and memory to create multifaceted postcolonial subjectivities.

8. Conclusion

This paper has examined how narrative voice, memory, and postcolonial identity formation are intricately connected in relation to each other through a comparative analysis of Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* and Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Losses*. The results indicate that the two writers use unique narration techniques to depict fragmented identities that are created under the influence of the historical, cultural, and socio-political dynamics. Where Roy has a highly lyrical, incoherent and emotional narrator, Desai is relatively reserved, ironic and reflective giving a wider scope of the realities of the diaspora. Although these aesthetic variations affect stylistic decisions, narrative voice is employed by both authors as the means of expressing not only formality but also political-aesthetic aspect opposing mainstream narratives and voicing marginalized voices (Mishra; Nayar).

The major lesson of this study is the reconstructive power of memory. The memory in both novels is not given as a linear and stable record of what has happened in the past but rather as a dynamic and frequently fragmented process by which identity is reconstituted. The personal and localized memory focus by Roy amplifies the role of trauma, caste and familial background in identity formation whereas the diasporic memory by Desai emphasizes the aspects of displacement, nostalgia and cultural mediation. In both the memory is used as a narrative construct that joins the past and the present and help the characters redefine themselves.

Moreover, the paper supports the notion that postcolonial identity is always fluid and multi-

layered. identity is not fixed or unitary, but it is constructed through the process of a sustained negotiation, a process that bears the influence of time, space, and feelings. The characters of Roy have rooted but fractured identities that are bound to local settings, and the characters of Desai are indicative of hybrid identities that are bound to transnational settings. This comparison highlights the plurality of the subjectivities of postcolonials and the plurality of options with which identity can be formed and expressed.

This study has implications to the general postcolonial literature discourse. The study focuses on the relevance of stylistic analysis to interpretation of postcolonial texts by predetermining the point at which the narrative aesthetics and identity politics converge. It is also relevant to the research of memory since it demonstrates the role of literary narratives as the location of memory construction. In conclusion, this paper highlights the necessity of more coherent methods that can utilize narrative form, memory, and identity as the interdependent aspects of contemporary literature analysis.

References (MLA 9th Edition)

1. Assmann, Aleida. *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.
2. Banerjee, Mita. "Globalization and Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2023, pp. 145–158.
3. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Updated ed., Routledge, 2020.
4. Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. Penguin Books, 2006.
5. Erll, Astrid. *Memory in Culture*. 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
6. Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Routledge, 2020.
7. Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Cornell University Press, 2021.
8. Gopal, Priyamvada. "Postcolonial Literature and the Question of Global Identity." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2020, pp. 421–438.
9. Herman, David. *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.
10. Mishra, Vijay. *What Was Multiculturalism? A Critical Retrospective*. Melbourne University Press, 2021.
11. Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "Narrative Strategies in Arundhati Roy's Fiction." *Indian Literature*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2022, pp. 78–92.
12. Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2023.
13. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Penguin Books, 1997.
14. Tickell, Alex. "Arundhati Roy and the Politics of Narrative Form." *Interventions*, vol. 23, no. 5, 2021, pp. 689–704.
15. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Verso, 2020 edition.
16. Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Routledge, 2020, pp. 222–237.
17. Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. Routledge, 2021 edition.
18. Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands." *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism*, Penguin, 2020 edition.
19. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Updated ed., Columbia University Press, 2020.
20. Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2021.