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Option : Literature

**Hybridization and Power: Revising Colonial Legacy in  
Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

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## **Dedication**

It is my genuine gratefulness regard that I dedicate this work to;

My beloved parents for their infinite love, trust and support. I have been blessed to have such wonderful parents. May Allah bless you.

My lovely sisters Raja, Ferial, Wejden, Niama, Nour, and my beloved brothers Haroun and Rabeah who stand by my side and gave me notable encouragements throughout my research.

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All of those people who believed in my success, lightened up my life and inspired me to accomplish this work.

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## Abstract

The current study focuses on Arundhati Roy's attitude towards the British colonial legacy through paying attention to hybridity and power in her master piece *The God of Small Things* (1997), a postcolonial-Marxist Indian literary product. The main aim of this thesis is to conceptualize hybridity and its three interrelated types: hybrid language, culture, and identity. It also intends to investigate the characters' fusion between two different cultures and social classes and castes as it examines this fusion's aftermath on the Indian society. In connection to this, this study consists of three main chapters, in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter is a general overview on postcolonialism in India. The second chapter utilizes postcolonial theory to discuss the theme of hybridity, while the third chapter utilizes the Marxist theory to discuss the theme of power. Therefore, selected characters will be analyzed in the light of postcolonial term "Hybridity" as it is viewed by Homi Bhabha. Moreover, selected characters will be analyzed in the light of the Marxist notion "Power" as it is viewed by Karl Marx. In the conclusion, the analysis shows that through the characters of this novel, Roy is unsatisfied with British colonial legacy in India as she is stressing the need to change and challenge the hierarchal structure and rules that have governed the Indian society for years.

**Key words:** Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Legacy, Identity, Marxism, Caste, and Class.

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## General Introduction

Throughout the tenure of Indian-English literary works, tremendous writers tend to use both recent novelistic forms and literary styles. Accordingly, those forms and styles are attached with the current social and political alteration in India. After India's independence and during post-colonial arena, many new changes and challenges came out to embrace the Indian life. Indian people find themselves influenced by the British colonial culture, values, and way of life. Each segment within the Indian community deliver distinct characteristics, these distinctions create a problem within a social life. While reading contemporary Indian English works, and drowning in their stories, one can notice that lack of belonging and the problem of social structure are big titles and important issues that the writer focuses on. It is only after gaining independence that writers have launched examining the aftermath of colonialism on the former colonies.

One of the excellent postcolonial Indian works that grants a most pleasant-sounding depiction for hybridization is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). In her novel, Roy tends to exemplify how new generation of Indians are being strongly affected and groomed by the British during colonial India through her characters who appear to have a hybrid nature. Many characters in the novel are suffering their fusion between two different cultures, the Indian culture and the British culture. Roy's readers follow the perspectives of the twins, Estha and Rahel, who experience the stigmatizing effect of being "Syrian Christian Hindu hybrids" of divorcee parents within "a strongly caste-regulated society". In addition to discussing hybridity within the novel, social class and caste system is another issue that is tackled in the novel. Roy's work turns around the characters' complicated relationships, between upper class and the untouchables. Indian society was

structured for centuries according to different social classes and boundaries, through what is known as the caste system.

An important work entitled " A Postcolonial Discourse in *The God of Small Things*" by Mohammedzadeh Behbood explores the idea that many characters within the novel are suffering from an internal war in their minds and that they are trying to mimic and adopt the colonized culture, values, principles, language, and way of life, how they appreciate the English culture and, and the way they try to become like them through imitation. The Marxist theory was developed by Karl Marx. It fights for the self-emancipation of the working class, subjecting all forms of domination by the bourgeoisie, its institution and its ideology, to theoretical and practical critique.

A. Hariharasudan and S. Robert Gnanamony in their work "Feministic Analysis of Arundhati Roy's Postmodern Indian Fiction: *The God of Small Things*" (2017) argue that the upper caste (like Syrian Christian) domination is carried on to show more power over the lower caste. They believe that the novel of *The God of Small Things* deals with the destruction of caste classification in the South Indian state of Kerala. Through their work they portrayed that Roy depicts equally the depressed troubles of people who belong to the lower class, and problems women face within a patriarchal society.

The major aim of this study is to examine Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) which is truly an excellent example of Indian postcolonial novel. The novel's characters are characterized by their hybrid nature and their mixed social castes living within the same community. The main aim behind this study is to make an earnest attempt to highlight and identify hybridity as it is reflected in the novel. It also aims at portraying the impact of social structure on selected characters within Roy's novel.



The current study is an attempt to uncover Arundhati Roy's attitude towards the British colonial legacy through paying attention to hybridity and power in her master piece *The God of Small Things*.

The present study will apply two different theories. From one perspective, the Postcolonial theory will be utilized to examine selected characters in the novel in terms of "hybridization" as it is viewed by Homi Bhabha. From another perspective, the Marxist literary theory will be applied to analyze the characters' distinct social classes in terms of "power" as it is viewed by Karl Marx.

Therefore, my thesis will consist of a general introduction which includes general overview about the cotemporary Indian English literature. The study will comprise three chapters. The first chapter entitled A Historical Overview of Colonialism in India. It provides some key factors and a historical background about postcolonialism in India and its contribution on the Indian literature and society. However, the two other chapters are more practical.

The second chapter is entitled Elements of Hybridity in *The God of Small Things*. The novel is Arundhati Roy's first and only novel, it is one of the biggest selling books. The novel earned her the Booker Prize in 1997. Roy is known for her strong political position. She is one of the most followed writers in contemporary India today (Behbood, 1025). The novel revolves around the twins, Estha and Rahel, who experience the harmful effect of being Syrian Christian Hindu hybrids of divorcee parents in a society that is regulated by social castes. This chapter will focus on discussing the issue of hybridity and its influence on the characters in the novel, who appear to have an Indian hybrid nature with its different levels; social, cultural, and individual hybridity.

The last chapter is entitled The Issue of Power in *The God of Small Things*. This chapter will discuss the issue of hierarchical structures of power and how these differences of caste, class, as well as gender function through the Indian society and the way they impact on Roy's characters and their relationship with one another. Furthermore, the conclusion will summarize the theme of hybridity and social castes which are mirrored in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) as to portray Roy's attitude towards the colonial legacy.

## **Chapter one**

### **A Historical Tone of Postcolonialism in India after 1947**

India as a post-colonial country has welcomed a set of changes and challenges at different levels, including; culture, religion, education, women status, social structure and literature. These changes are considered as significant elements in India after getting independence. The first chapter "A Historical Tone of Postcolonialism in India after 1947" will be a theoretical one. At first, it will deal with the definition of Postcolonialism and award glance about India as a postcolonial country. Then, it will highlight the effect of Postcolonialism on the Indian English literature. Furthest, it will explore the impact of Postcolonialism on Indian society.

#### **I. Understanding Postcolonialism in India**

##### **1. Definition of Postcolonialism**

During the last decades, postcolonialism has been rapidly sprawling to become a substantial arena of studies. According to Ponzanesi Sandra, the term "postcolonialism" refers to the conscious arising of the former colonized countries. These countries strongly "call for the maintenance of difference instead of assimilation to the west". It extremely offers a challenge to colonialism since it designates the effect of any type of a colonial power with the process of its gradual demise; the British rule in India for example (XII).

Postcolonialism is a capacious concept utilized to allude to the aftermath following colonialism, at most, the British and the French colonial rule during the second half of the twentieth century. Postcolonialism is a political movement that deals with the analysis of the procedures of colonial forces. Accordingly, it spotlights on a variety of problems

concerning the vilification of politics, economics and more importantly the cultural reformation's blindness (Hiddelston 1-5).

Bill Ashcroft et. al. denoted "postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on culture and societies"(168). It is greatly concerned with the examination of European colonialism's mechanics and effects from the sixteenth century till the present days. The term "post-colonialism" designates post-independence period or anti-colonialism. In the same vein, it describes the relationship between "self" and "other" or the "colonizer" and the "colonized" after the colonial arena (171).

To put it simple, postcolonialism is a current movement that is concerned with the effect of colonialism on the former colonized countries. Additionally, the fundamental regard of these countries is calling for a total independence.

## **2. India as a Postcolonial Country**

India gained its freedom from the British colonialism after a long struggle that lasted for more than two centuries. When independence was imminent, Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah among other Indian leaders worked side by side across the larger aim of independence from colonial power. The movement was the fruit of the establishment of the Indian National Congress, or Congress Party in 1885, which continued until 1947. After independence, India was exposed to various practices and thoughts introduced by the British colonial power. It became strongly influenced by the constraints of the colonial legacy of the British control and the existing social conflicts that are based on class system (Hay 48- 49).

During that era, the Indian leaders blindly adopted numerous features of colonial legacies, and other features copied from the political practices that have been conditioned

by the British control. In other respects, the Indian constitution maintains, in total, the administrative composition of the west minister that is built on democratical system rather than bureaucratic authoritarian which is the actual existing system in India. Thusly, the far-reaching goal of the Indian country after adopting the democratical system is to manage parliamentary democracy in a society governed by vast religious groups. Their traditions, social structures, and practices are based on ideology instead of equality. To state it differently, India is based on overcoming the social conflicts via respecting the Indian social differences (Brass 3- 4).

### **3. The Effect of Postcolonialism on Indian English Literature**

#### **3.1. Understanding Postcolonial Literature**

In an article entitled "A brief History of Postcolonial Literature", Golden Audrey stated that since the closing stages of the Second World War, tremendous writers started producing literary works that have been counted up as postcolonial products. This category spotlights on the suppressed forces of colonialism to produce what is currently known as "postcolonial literature". Postcolonial literature has been produced primarily by writers from the postcolonial colonial countries including; Indian subcontinent, South Africa, Nigeria, and parts of the Caribbean that were undergoing decolonization. Most of the works demonstrate the overwhelming aftermath of colonial rules on the colonized countries.

Decolonization did not just win the interest of freedom fighters and politicians, writers as well played an immense role during the postcolonial arena. Through their works, postcolonial writers challenged the end product of colonialism on the mind, in other words, they tend to revise history from a colonized perspective to affirm the richness of the cultures of the former colonized countries. Thus, postcolonial literature seeks to recuperate

pride in their traditions and practices that were sullied by the colonial power (Boehemer 19-21).

In the same line of thought, postcolonial literature is a modern discipline and an altering historical frame that hunts for figuring out the way postcolonial countries attempt to regain and reconsider their real identities. Postcolonial writers tend heavily to shed birds' eye on the anti-colonial feeling during the colonial era, which was the basis of their topics (Britannica).

In sum, postcolonial literature would seem to describe literature written in a postcolonial period by postcolonial writers emerged from Africa, Asia, and South America among other places as a reaction to colonization. Some of the most significant postcolonial novels in this period were Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).

### **3.2. The Development of India English Literature**

Indian literature written in English becomes a significant contribution to the postcolonial literature. It is the fruit of the English education in India under the colonial rule. Despite the fact that the English language still echoes stereotypical image of colonialism, many Indian writers adopt it as a tool to reflect widely diverging and complex cultural experiences of the Indian people. Indian English literature is produced by Indian writers who naturalize the English language and whose native tongue is one of the diverse languages of India (Thorat 779).

In the postcolonial arena, earlier writers developed a new genre of writing known as Indian English Literature. Although it has existed years ago, its recognition as a distinct

frame is a recent process attached with the headway of new literature written in English, fundamentally known as "Commonwealth Literature". Indian English Literature has developed to be the Indians' strong voice and their new form of echoing their culture. Since the pre-independence era, tremendous writers bring about a momentous contribution to the literary global libraries. Indian English Literature, thus, is considered as the mirror that reflects the Indian's real culture, traditions, social values, and even their history via depicting the India's life (Sharma 138).

Indian English writers have dealt with spacious ranges of themes such as; subjugation of lower and working classes, gender discriminations, untouchability, oppression, marginalization, deprived classes...etc. Arundhati Roy is one of the minority Indian English writers who tackled the issue of untouchability and caste system in her novel *The God of Small Things*. Most of the postcolonial themes draw attention towards the reality of Indian's pre-colonial experiences.

It is well known that the Indian society belong to a multilingual and multicultural society. This diversity is mirrored, mainly, in their numerous native languages. Years after independence, the English language appeared to gain a profound attention in India and even abroad. Copious historians designate the 1800's as the turning point in the Indian literature written in English. The famous Indian-English work was "Minute on Education of 1835" in 1925 by Thomas Babington Macaulay. In his work, he states that: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect" (Kasbekar 78).

The British colonial power did not only dominate and control the Indian country but also they dominated their minds as well. They had contributed in the emergence of

British-Indian writers who use the English language to produce a significant Indian-English works.

The English language has enriched every direction of inhabitants' daily life ultimately the field of literature. Henceforth, post-colonial zone has witnessed a mass of Indian English novels which gained a great deal of importance in Indian literature and world literature as well. After independence, the Indian government earmarked resources that encouraged translations of the distinct genres of literary works into English in order to enrich India's cultural heritage (Iyer XVII, WVIII). In 1997, Salman Rushdie, an Indian-English writer, indicated in his work "Dear Motherland, This is the Original Scene for You!" that:

Indian writers working in English is proving to be stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the eighteen 'recognized' languages of India [...] and, indeed, this new and still burgeoning 'Ando-Anglian' Literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books.

(50)

In other words, the above quotation explores the fact that the Indian literature written in English has gained an immense importance in the Indian literature. It strongly became a new different entity of great significance as any global postcolonial literary genre.

The 1950's and the 1960's era witnessed not only an enormous advance for male English writers but also it did witness female writers who shed light on the struggle between tradition and modernity in connection to women's position in the Indian society. They utilize writing to express their lives within a patriarchal society. They tend to display their power as they had been diminished and marginalized by men. Subsequently, writing



becomes a major device for female writers to echo their voice and to take base in public life (Kabekar 85).

During the year 1958, a new track of Indian English literature appeared. This genre of writing came to be known as Dalit literature. According to Dadawala in his article "Dalit Literature\_ concept, Origins and Features", the term "Dalit" is used as a synonymy to "oppressed class" or "untouchable". The notion has become an identity to the castless parts of India who are designed to undertake inferior activities and banned from participating in the ordinary social life. In recent times, Dalit literature has spotlighted on the tormenting experiences of the oppressed Indians. As a prime example, *The God of Small Things* is one of the literary works which portrays the ravage of Dalits in south India, Kerala. In this work, Arundhati Roy presents how terribly atrocious such system can be (11-13).

## **II. The Impact of Postcolonialism on the Indian Society**

India is a multicultural country. It consists of two major religious groups, thousands of various languages, and a large number of "sub-cultural" sets in its society. After 1947, Indian culture faced a set of cultural reforms concerning cultural aspects of education, and women's position, caste system in the Indian society.

### **1. Culture**

The postcolonial enlargement has remarkably influenced the authentic Indian culture and religion. This influence, which was the fruit of the British colonialism in India, creates a challenge between both cultures. The British were strongly conscious that their domination cannot be accomplished without influencing the Indian culture. They tried hardly to persuade the natives that the British culture is the superior, the most developed

and progressed one. After getting independence, Indian people "found themselves left with a culture which sounded like their previous culture and yet now combined with that of the colonial rule" (Shoobie 11). Therefore, they attempted to alter the language and culture of the native.

Indian culture is compelled to engage with the British culture that was ideally considered as the dominant one. The nexus between the two cultures is what Homi Bhabha labels "hybrid cultural space". Bhabha proclaimed in his work *The Location of culture* that:

[The] borderline engagements of cultural differences may as often be consensual as conflictual; they may confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and the challenge normative expectations of the development and progress (3)

In the same line of thoughts, Bhabha probes how British-Indian citizens intentionally utilize elements of British culture with the purpose of elevating and empowering themselves in their country. Thusly, cultural hybridity is an altering status which functions as an instrument to empower the colonized society. Furthest, it prevents the individual from being entirely integrated within the larger community.

The concept of "hybridity" recognizes the cultural plurality existing within one society. Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is one of the paramount works that raises the attention on the cultural transformation, cultural clashes, and cultural transgression. In this work, Roy portrays a series of events occurring in South India, Kerala, through shedding light on multi-culturalism and cultural hybridity that reflect the Indian reality from postcolonial times to contemporary era (Bhatt 234,235). Basically, some characters in Arundhati Roy's novel have not discarded their own culture though

they have lived in the west for some time where they took their education. Amongst those hybrid characters; Rahel, Baby kochama, Margaret, Sophie Mol, and Chacko.

## **2. Religion**

One of the most common and powerful aspects of religion in India is its diverging religious practices and beliefs. The major religions in India are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. India is a place where citizens of distinct religions and cultures live in a harmony. Whilst, after independence Indians had faced numerous religious conflicts and decisive struggles in the social Indian history. Mainly, due to India's partition into two states; India and Pakistan. In this context, Mukherjee in his book "Postcolonial Environment: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English" displayed that the sole basis of these violent conflicts was "religion". (112).

## **3. Education**

After attaining independence, the Indian government was fully aware of the necessity for enhancing the educational system. This system was considered as a major tool to stand up with the economic progress, the equality of opportunity, and to make a democratic society. Additionally, it built up a diversified policies where the sole goal was to modernize India, deconstruct the colonial legacy, and to give the Indian students the opportunity to meet their real identity, character, and history. However, most of the policies failed (Chopra 89). Nair (1979) denoted that the Indian government has historically struggled to alter and develop the educational system yet it failed to overstep the British colonial legacy it inherited during colonial zone.

As it has been alluded to earlier, Mookerjee (1944) depicts that the educational system promoted in India under the British colonial power was totally divorced from the

educational and the socio-cultural realities of diverse Indian society. It was unconnected with the indigenous educational systems. By an irony of fate, the new government adopted this system which considers English language as a medium for interaction. Thus, they lost the opportunity to build up an educational program that is based on their own language and culture (30).

Reforming the Indian educational system from the elite to an inclusive one was a great challenge. In the outset, colonial India promoted Western learning schools that served only the higher classes and the elite. Few decades later, the educational institutions have broadened to include both rural and urban areas. The expenditure of schools during postcolonial era was remarkable. After 1947, the first step towards enhancing the educational zone was in 1952 through adopting distinctive policies of planned improvement. Those policies recommended peculiar targets mainly to embrace the mother tongue as communication's medium enhance the national educational program, and significantly bind culture with the educational environment since education became culture oriented (Biwsal 28).

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, most of the characters are bilingual in English and Malayalam, mainly Estha, Rahel, Chacko, and Baby Kochama who belong to the 'upper' and the 'middle' class. Rahel, among other female characters, mirrors the fact that women in Kerala are more educated and powerful than in other parts of India. Many educated female characters in the novel enjoy their personal freedom unlike the uneducated ones.

#### **4. Women Status**

The period between the years 1951 and 1961 witnessed a speedy widening of education. Simultaneously, the Indian constitution awarded the Right of Education for all

Indian children including girls. The period saw an increasing number of girls in schools what marked a radical changes in the women's position in India (Chandra 144-145).

Throughout history, the status of women welcomed great changes in every sphere of life including educational, political, social, and economical status; their position was a subject to alteration. Indian women like Indira Gandhi, Umabarti, Jayalalitha, and others have made a great significance in the development of women in India (Mainwal 288-290).

Throughout history, the status of women welcomed great changes in every sphere of life including educational, political, social, and economical status. Their position was subject to change. After adopting the democratic system, women became active segments in elections in different social domains which are quite important in developing their social position in India (Chandra 144-145). During the independence, the new government attempted to change laws affecting Indian women and girls positively. Thus, they gradually succeeded to held responsible positions in various scopes (Forbes 2-3).

### **5. Caste System after Independence**

According to Deshpande in his article entitled "History of the Indian Caste System and its Impact on India Today", Indian caste system is a form of classification where people in India are socially comprehended through religion, class, gender, region, and language. Depending on this stand point, it is a "system of stratification" where Indians' social position is imposed to the caste they grow up in. Despite the fact that caste system is a global issue that is present in all human societies, it turns to be a considerable issue when one social class dominates the other one. This dimension becomes the focal basis of inequality and systematic ranking (1).

Traditionally, India was divided into various groups. It has many aspects of hierarchy that prevent the equal access to different spheres of life. This division led to the

exploitation, discrimination, and oppression of lower classes by the higher ones. With independence, the Indian government attempted to remove the caste prejudice and unfairness. From that, the new constitution drawn-out a set of political rights to all Indians regardless to their religion, sex, language, caste, and race (Chandra 459).

India is a terrain of diversities the fact that is reflected in the multi-caste environment of the country. Caste is one of the intricate and significant features of the Indian social organization. The term "caste" is narrowly defined. It is a term used to describe the complex social division that penetrates the Indian life. Thereby, it has played an immense role in the Indian history and still continues to stratify tremendous impact on postcolonial Indian politics and culture (Sonawani 24-26).

In the same line of thoughts, Punan supposed that caste system in India is a categorization of Indian people who are classified according to their access to power, wealth, and privilege. It is a form of social depiction to every class. Indian caste system is based on hierarchy in which it is difficult for individuals to alter their social position. However, the influence of the British rule in India brought new changes and opportunities in the Indian class structure. During the colonial arena, a very few opportunities were given to the lower classes, mainly due to education, what lead to the emergence of the middle class (1-11).

Over the last century, there was a remarkable growth of the Indian middle class. The continuous increase of the economy in India has rapidly changed the socioeconomic status in rustic India. On this account, Surinder S. Jodhka and Asseem Prakash in their article "The Indian Middle Class: Emerging Cultures Politics and Economics" declared that "no one denies the fact that the Indian middle class has been growing in both size and

influence, over the years and that by now their absolute number is quite significant". Thus, they played a very significant role in the construction of India (44).

Bharti Kumar in his dissertation "Wealth Inequality, Class and Caste in India 1951-2012" claimed that there are four major categories that built up the Indian caste structure. They are ordered hierarchically as follows 'Brahman' which stands for the priest caste, 'Kshtriya' refers to the military caste, the 'Vaishya' refers to the agricultural or the merchant cast, and finally the 'Sudras' which is the laboring caste (3). Later on, a new category was added; the "Dalit". This category stands for the oppressed and broken classes and also known as the untouchables.

In the article that entitled "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples- India: Dalits" (2008), the term "Dalit" is a Hindu term used to refer to the "depressed classes" and officially the "Scheduled Caste". It has become an empowering identity to segregated class of the so-called "untouchable". Particularly, the untouchables are segments from the low Hindu groups who are recognized for "polluting" the Indian caste system. The Dalit can be a reconstruction of the past. Indian legislation was passed for the purpose of forbidding discrimination against the untouchable; anyway, it is still practiced.

*The God of Small Things* is one of the literary works that presents the ruinous of caste system in south India, Kerala. The writer Arundhati Roy, through her work, portrays how awfully cruel such system may be. Furthermore, she depicts the economic struggle between the upper classes and the lower ones. Untouchability, in the novel, is depicted at two levels. Firstly, it represents "the Parvan" or the socially untouchables who are never granted the requisite human rights. Secondly, it represents the metaphoric untouchables in the high classes (Phil 1).

In short, caste system in India is considered as one of the most complex and the most important features that form the Indian social structure. Although it represents a cruel offense to the Indian society, it is still existed and practiced in the community. Even though the Indian caste system has played a major role in determining the roles and the values of the Indian community, it represents the sole basis of inequality and injustice.

This chapter attempted to deliver the historical background of postcolonialism and its effects on the Indian colony that welcomed a set of change at different levels; social, cultural, educational...etc. Utmost it threw light on the strong contribution of postcolonialism on the postcolonial literature which paved the way to the rise of an independent Indian English literature. Additionally, it portrays the movement's effect on the Indian community at diverse levels, namely; culture, religion, education, women status, and caste system. Overall, this genre of writing highlighted numerous issues that the Indian society is suffering from in reference to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.



## **Chapter two**

### **Analyzing Hybridity in *The God of Small Things* (1997)**

After India gained freedom and during post-colonial arena, many new changes and challenges came over Indian life mainly at the cultural level. By the end of colonial era, postcolonial literature appeared to reflect people's experiences after colonialism through touching upon numerous themes. This genre of writing expertly depicts how Indian people became influenced by the British colonial culture, values, and way of life; or, in other technical words, how they became hybrid in nature. Hybridity is a theme that is apparently present in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). Thus, at this stage, the focus will be mainly on Hybridity and its influence in the novel, in addition to highlighting the types of Hybridity reflected in Roy's work.

#### **I. Introduction to the Author and her Work**

##### **1. The Authors' Biography**

Suzanna Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 in Assam to a Syrian-Christian mother. When Roy's parents were divorced, she and her brother were too young. Her mother was forced to return the family home with her children in Ayemenem. At the age of sixteen, Roy moved to Tamil Nadu to attend the Lawrence boarding school at Lovedale. After finishing her school, she returned back to Delhi. Then, she joined the Delhi school of Architecture where she met Gerard Da Cunha, her first husband. After four years of marriage, Roy was divorced from Da Gerard. In Delhi, she worked as a research assistant at the National Institute of Urban Affairs (Tickell 12-15).

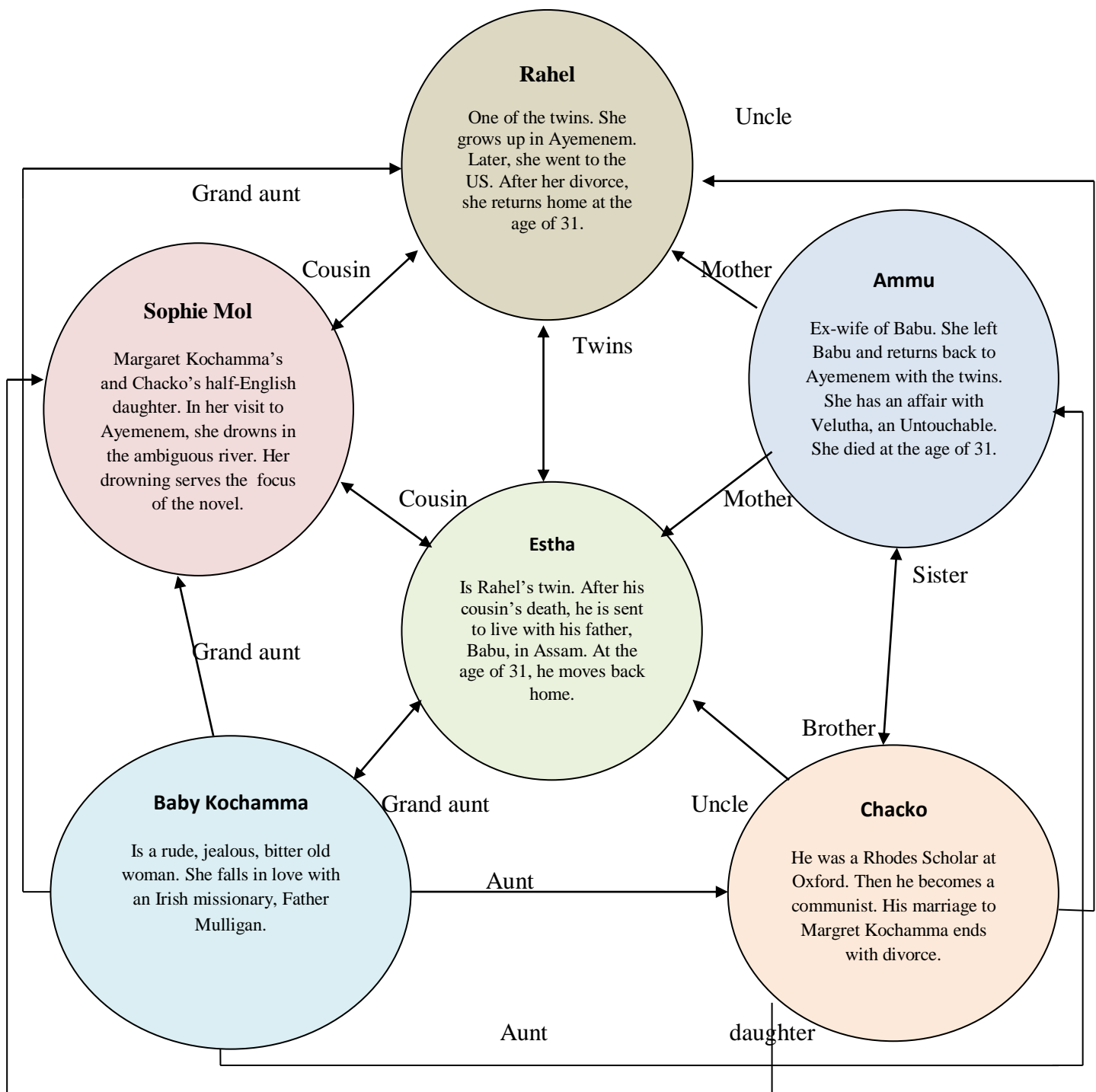
After her return to Delhi, Roy married Pradeep Krishen, film-maker and environmentalist. She started publishing newspaper articles and working on documentary

film commentaries and television screenplays. By the mid 1990's, she started working on her first and only novel *The God of Small Things*. *The God of Small Things* is a postcolonial Anglophone literary work written by the Indian writer Arundhati Roy. It is a semi-autobiographical novel in that it represents real events from the writer's own life. The novel was published in 1997 and later on it was translated in an over than forty distinct languages. It earned Roy the prestigious England's Booker Prize in 1997. Wining the first literary award ranked Roy among the most important writers as Salman Rushdie. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has welcomed a great attention especially when it introduced a non-western culture to western readers (Tickell 15-17).

## **2. Summary of *The God of Small Things***

The events of the story do not move in an array, they are presented in a non chronological order jumping back and forth from 1969 to 1993. The novel centers around the Ipe family who lived in the Ayemenem town; a small state in Kerala, south India. It is a story about childhood memories of pair fraternal twins named Rahel and Estha from the age of 7 to the age of 31, whose lives are affected by being "Syrian Christian-Hindu hybrids". The twins were born from an unsuccessful interfaith marriage. After their parents' divorce, the twins moved to live with their mother Ammu. The focal event of the novel centers around Sophie Mol's visit to Ayemenem, the twin's half-English cousin, who drowns in the river. The drowning of Sophie Mol strongly affected the twins' life negatively because her death resulted in the separation of the twins for twenty-three years. In 1993, the twins are reunited in Ayemenem at the age of 31.

### 3. Characters' Map



## II. Elements of Hybridity in *The God of Small Things*

*The God of Small Things* is a vigorous piece of writing that acutely embraces hybridity which is present in the way Arundhati Roy treats the English language, structure and characters. Hybridity, as being utilized in postcolonial discourse, is defined as the mixture of two distinct cultures. It is the contact zone of two different transcultural forms produced by colonization. Hybridization can take numerous forms; linguistic, cultural, social...etc. Hybridity has been associated with Homi K. Bhabha in his book "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817. *The Location of Culture*" (1994), in which he defines it as;

[ t]he sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal ... It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. (159-160)

The above quotation explores that hybridity is the fruit of colonialism. It breaks down the dominant culture that became contaminated by the cultural differences of the natives, thus creating a new one. To elaborate more,

As its simplest, hybridity ... implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things ... hybridity is a making one of two different things so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of geranium or a rose (Young, 26).

As aforementioned, hybridity refers to the amalgamation of two different things; cultures, languages, and identities...etc, so that it becomes impossible for someone to make a certain classification.

*The God of Small Things* is a work that centers around the constant conflict between the language and culture of the colonizer and the colonized. The fact is that the novel deals with hybridity and its different types. It is evident that Roy does not only hybridize culture and language but also she strongly attempts to hybridize the natives and their identities.

### **1. Hybrid Language**

*The God of Small Things* is setting in Kerala, which is the bridge that links between the different cultures. The novel is hybridized in terms of language, culture and identity. Hybridity is remarkably present in the language that Roy uses. Although she uses English to write her novel, she employs numerous techniques, such as the use of fragmented sentences, construction of words, and more importantly the use of two different languages, in order to help her characters who do not natively speak the language and to show her readers that the characters are uncomfortable with the realm of the English language. It has been noticed that Roy has created a distinctive and authentic language through combining the English language with the stylistic devices such as the Malayalam words, poems and songs (Liddle 5-6).

The effect of intercalating the Malayalam language in Roy's English text reflects the way the characters think and visualize. Roy described her language as "the skin of her thought". Through the use of both languages, Roy depicts how can language affect the characters' life. Moreover, the usage of such specific language throughout Roy's work is an attempt to show the harsh effect of colonialism on the Indian people as well as the feeling of in-betweenness and the lack of belonging. In other words, Arundhati Roy's novel is considered as a hybrid text since it is written in two languages, English and Indian (Stockdale 3).

The use of such language throughout the novel reveals the development of the hybrid conscience. Homi Bhabha, in his book "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" (1990), states that hybridity, in this context, is symbolized by;

[T]he moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and itself open to the trace of language of the other, enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity of the colonial text (22).

The above quotation explores the mutable, plural, and complex nature of language in the postcolonial discourse; the mixture of two distinct languages, that of the colonizer and the colonized. As a prime example for the use of such authentic language, *The God of Small Things* is a postcolonial text that echoes the use of hybrid structure and language. Arundhati Roy, through her work, portrays English from the perspective of the child characters, Estha and Rahel, where words are played with, grammar rules are broken, and Malayalam discourse is included ... etc.

In the novel, the protagonists' education is set up in turning them into hybrids. The twins can speak the English language correctly however they manage to hybridize the language through creating their own (Ali 78). There are numerous examples in the novel where the writer plays with language and breaks down its rules. For instance, the word "Nevertheless" is broken to become "Never.The.Less" (27), "divorced" is split into "die-vorced". Another example where the writer manipulates with the language is when the twins were reading backwards; "A yellow hoarding said BE INDIAN, BUY INDIAN in red. NAIDNI YUB, NAIDNI EB," Estha said." (Roy, 28), "ehT sertanrvdA fo eisuS lerriuuqS. enO gnirps gninrom eisuS lerriuuqS ekow pu." (29). And most importantly, the inclusion of the Malayalam discourse within an English text; "appoi" means father's brother and "amma" means father's sister.

The writer uses such fragmented language and structure to show, through her characters, that she is uncomfortable and unsatisfied with the use of the English language. The above two examples, "Never.The.Less" (27) and "die-vorced" (64), explores the fact that Roy wanted her characters to divorce themselves from the imperial discourse and never use it. She is trying to celebrate her pure native language to the western readers. It also displays her negative attitudes towards the effects of the British colonization. She strongly takes an advantage from the colonizers western codes to give voice to the marginalized India through the use of an untranslated Malayalam words.

The twins' manipulation with the colonial discourse helps in destroying the halo around it and eventually results in the creation of a new hybridized language. Arundhati Roy's employment of this authentic discourse contributed in dislocating the imperial language from its origins and relocating it on the Indian ground. In addition, she used this language to bring some insight on the effect of colonialism on the characters as to situate their hybrid nature. In her work, Arundhati Roy used a numerous innovative techniques,

including the use of the abnormal word order, the unusual capital letters, the use of regional words and sentences ...etc, for the purpose of indigenizing and hybridizing the imposed colonial language (Jadoon, 7).

The protagonists are suffering from their family's admiration for the English language and culture. They are obliged to ignore their own language. For them, using the English language is a sort of obligation. The twin's aunt, Baby Kochamma, who is "in charge of their formal education" (Roy, 29), forces Estha and Rahel to speak the English language all the times and to regret their own. In this context, Roy (1997) narrates;

That whole week Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins' private conversations, and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money. She made them write lines—'impositions' she called them - *I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English*. A hundred times each. When they were done, she scored them with her pen to make sure that old lines were not recycled for new punishments (18).

The above passage portrays the English language as a burden and as an imposition for the twins. It also reflects the children's desire to create their own unique existence, and depicts their discomfort from acting and interacting the way the colonizer does. By the use of the Malayalam discourse, the twins try to escape to their native tongue in order to escape from the Imperial discourse.

From the outset of Roy's novel, Estha and Rahel are conditioned and prepared to restrain their "Indianness". They are obliged to act as westerns and to use English words



and phrases especially after the coming of Sophie Mol to India, the twins' half-English cousin. The Ipe family wanted the twins to speak as most people in the west speak and to interact properly as they do. Simply, they become obsessed with the British people. They become eager to form an exact copy of the British people as a result of their history. However, the way they mimic the British discourse makes them in-between and leads to destruction of their identity; they became hybrid.

Although, Baby Kochamma, the twins' aunt, insists upon the twins' use of the English language, the twins try not to mimic a foreign tongue because they are aware on the fact that they cannot escape their feeling of inferiority, especially when comparing themselves with Sophie Mol (Behbood 1031). The important fact is that the characters' effort to imitate the colonizer makes them a hybrid characters; neither British nor Indian. Arundhati Roy utilizes a hybrid language and structure to present another type of hybridity that exists between the British culture and the Indian culture; the cultural hybridity.

## **2. Hybrid Culture**

Cultural hybridity is one of the focal concerns of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. It is blatantly evident that each character in the novel is affected by the crossing cultural borders which are the result of the profound relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In the novel, Roy explores that her characters has no real cultural home; in which their own unique culture is molded by that of the colonial forces; thus, new alienated culture is formulated.

Cultural hybridity as defined by Bhabha in his collection of essays *The Location of Culture*;

[An] *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of meaning in culture (38).

As quoted above, cultural hybridity is the space of in-betweenness and lack of belonging. It is the inability to become part neither of the colonizer culture nor that of the colonized.

In the novel, most of the Ipe family members appear to have a cultural hybridity since most of them are trying to mimic and internalize the cultures and the values of their colonial masters. They are living "in the penumbral shadows between two worlds, just beyond the grasp of their power" (Roy 22). Chacko considers the Ipe family as Anglophiles; a product of the British colonial legacy. From Chacko's perspective, cultural hybridity is seen as something negative in the fact that it alienates Indians from both cultures (Tickell 138). In this context Roy narrates "We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore" (Roy 26).

In the novel, the twins' cultural hybridity is the fruit of their upbringing in a British-Indian environment. They are "Syrian Christian-Hindu hybrids" (Roy 22); in which Babu, their father, is Hindu and Ammu, their mother, is Syrian Christian. The twins are presented with the British literature as a means of teaching them British morals and values especially by "Baby Kochamma who had been put in charge of their formal education, had read them an abridged version of *The Tempest* by Charles and Mary Lamb." (Roy 29). Thus, the twins' education is used to establish their cultural hybridity.

As it is mentioned previously, the twins are constantly encouraged by their family to use the English discourse in their native country, Ayemenem, though it is not quite welcomed. When Estha arrives at Abhilash Talkies, the cinema in Cochin, with his family to watch *The Sound of Music*, he keeps singing during the movie. Therefore, he has to leave and head for the lobby because he strongly annoys the audience. In the lobby, he continues singing where he again bothers the Orangedrink Lemondrink man who is sleeping in his break time. When Estha's singing wakes up him;

Ay! Eda cherukka!" The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man said, in a gravelly voice thick with sleep. "What the hell d'you think you're doing?" How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand? Estha sang. "Ay!" the Orangedrink said. "Look, this is my Resting Time. Soon I'll have to wake up and work. So I can't have you singing English songs here. Stop it" (Roy 49).

In the above mentioned quote, it is remarkably clear that the man is disturbed because of the cultural hybridity that Estha is portraying. He perceives Estha as hybrid for singing English songs and for the way he is dressing. Estha imitates Elvis, his favorite singer, in his clothing and hairstyle; "Estha was wearing his beige and pointy shoes and his Elvis puff [...] curling his lip like Elvis" (Roy 18). As a consequence, Estha is not respected for acting out of his culture what makes him rejected.

In the same line of thought, Rahel is also rejected by her friends in school; Roy narrates "In each of the schools she went to, the teachers noted that she: (a) Was an extremely polite child. (b) Had no friends." (Roy 9). Rahel is unable to make friends. The reason is that her cultural hybridity can be detected, because of her adapting to the English traits and manners, especially when meeting their native culture.

Rahel is strongly aware on the adversities that she and her family are suffering from because of their cultural hybridity. In this context Roy narrates;

Looking back now, to Rahel it seemed as though this difficulty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than the jam-jelly question. Perhaps Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam, and jelly jelly (Roy 16).

This transgression is demonstrated by the hybrid environment which the Ipe family grew up in. Most of the Ipe family members are seen as "ambiguous" and "unclassifiable" in the fact that they are unable to reconcile the two separate worlds they live in. Rahel and Estha, for instance, are a cultural hybrid characters who cannot be classified neither British nor Indian and neither Hindu nor Syrian Christian; what makes their identity ambiguous.

Chacko is another character who mimics the British despite his awareness on the fact that he is alienated by the western community for his cultural hybridity. The feeling of alienation is primarily established from his divorce when his ex-wife, Margret Kochamma, decided to leave him. In this context Roy narrates;

Margaret told Chacko that she couldn't live with him anymore. She told him that she needed her own space. As though Chacko had been using her shelves for his clothes.

Which, knowing him, he probably had. She asked him for a divorce (Roy 57).

Another reason for his negative feeling is Margret Kochamma' parents who refused to attend their wedding because they hate Indians;

Margaret Kochamma's mother was looking away, out of the photograph, as though she would rather not have been there. Margaret Kochamma's father had refused to attend the wedding. He disliked Indians, he thought of them as sly, dishonest people. He couldn't believe that his daughter was marrying one (Roy 119).

The above two quotations clearly explores the westerns' denunciation of the hybrid Indians. Chacko's refusal by his ex-wife, Margret Kochamma, and her parents makes him strongly believe that being a cultural hybrid man is something negative. Despite his negative feeling, Chacko is still act and behave as a British person. In her novel, Roy depicts the ambivalent nature of Chacko. On the one hand, he contemns himself for his hybrid nature, but on the other hand he kept adhering to his former masters' culture.

Chacko was excited when he knew that his ex-wife and his nine years old daughter Sophie Mol are coming to Ayemenem.

Chacko, who usually wore a mundu, was wearing a funny tight suit and a shining smile. Ammu straightened his tie, which was odd and sideways. It had had its breakfast and was satisfied. Ammu said, "What's happened suddenly to

our Man of the Masses?" But she said it with her dimples,  
because Chacko was so burst. (Roy 67).

In the above quotation, the words "funny", "tight" and "shining smile" explores Chacko's cultural hybridity. Ammu was surprised to see him wearing an unfamiliar dressing because he usually wore a mundu as all Indians did. The important fact is that Chacko is unconscious about his feeling of lack of belonging and in-betweenness. He is aware on his ambivalence towards his native culture and the foreign culture. However, Chacko demonstrates his cultural hybridity by blaming the colonizer who was the responsible for creating the feeling of lack of belonging and for making him and the rest of his family culturally hybrid. In this context, Roy in exploring Chacko's suffering of cultural hybridity narrates that;

[O]ur minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves (Roy 26).

Therefore, the characters' struggling to become part of the superior culture makes them forget about their own. It is clearly stated in the novel that "things can change in a day" (Roy, 16). This quote explores the fact that the arrival of the British colonization has changed every aspect in the life of the colonized. It is the primarily reason for the contamination of the colonized culture and identity as well.

### **3. Hybrid Identity**

Hybrid identity is another important type that Roy portrays in her novel. She strongly highlighted the messy identities that her characters are suffering from. The

creation of hybrid identity becomes one the major concerns of the postcolonial time and literature. Bhabha argues that hybrid identity arrives from the "interweaving of elements of both colonizer and colonized challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity". He also posits it as a form of in-between space which he concepts the third space. According to Bhabha, third space refers to the " in between the designation of identity", which means having a missing link between different identities. To put it simple, hybrid identity is the space where two identities exist across borders and within borders (Meredith 2).

In *The God of Small Things*, the portrayal of hybrid language and culture contributed in the establishment of in-between and hybrid identity. Estha and Rahel are an excellent example for having a hybrid identity. It is clearly stated in the novel that the twins consider themselves as two distinct individuals who are "physically separate, but with joint identities" (Roy 2). The quote symbolizes the close relationship between the two separate worlds; India and Britain, which are amalgamated to create a hybrid identity. Estha and Rahel are Malayalam, but not quit. This confusion of identity makes the twins quest their identity; they are not sure who or what they are (Behbood 13).

In *The God of Small Things*, Chacko is aware on the fact that the whole Ayemenem have been captured by the British colonization and that he himself becomes as "Anglophile" since he comes to love things that belong to the colonizer. He becomes "a person well disposed to the English" (Roy, 25). Chacko's hybrid identity is well confirmed when he married to Margret Kochamma, an English woman. Although his marriage ends with divorce, it was successful to the degree that Chacko became able to cover and ignore his Indian Identity and behave as a real English husband. He strongly adapted the English manners and attitudes; thus, gained a hybrid identity (Behbood 1034).

Velutha Paapen is another important character who appears to have a hybrid identity. Velutha is the family carpenter and an Untouchable Paravan man who has an affair with Ammu, a touchable woman and the twins' mother. Velutha dares across and challenges his social restrictions in order to break away from his identity as an untouchable; first through converting Christianity, and second through building up a relationship with a woman from another caste. Velutha wants to obliterate his identity because he is unable to protest against the colonial domination. He seems to be weaving a new identity that is alienated for him through violating the Indian taboos and laws.

It is hard to classify the characters' real identity because of the linguistic and cultural alteration they are proposed to. Most of them doubt the ambivalent nature of their origins and existence. They lost their real home identity because of displacing themselves from their native country via imitating their colonial masters. They are struggling the feeling of inferiority, alienation and lack of belonging. Despite the different castes and cultures the characters are caring, they stand against the limits and mingled together thus creating new space of identity. They are suffering from an in-betweenness in the fact that they are unable to reunite in either part.; India and Britain.

This chapter focused on discussing the issue of hybridity and its influence on the characters in *The God of Small Things*, who appear to have an Indian hybrid nature with its different levels; thus, they gained including hybrid language, hybrid culture, and hybrid identity. The characters' feeling of inferiority brought by colonization makes them appreciate anything that belongs to the British colonization not because they admire it but because of their inability to take part neither in the British culture nor in the Indian culture.



## **Chapter three**

### **The Issue of Power in *The God of Small Things***

Social class becomes one of the complex and the crucial issues that the Indian society is facing today. India is a country where caste system grows up rapidly. Despite the fact that caste system is a global issue that is present in all human societies, it turns to be a big problem when one social class dominates the other. The problem of social class that follows hierarchical structures of power can be seen through the big distance existing between the powerless and the powerful groups in India. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* strongly incarnates the real life of the Indian society. Through telling the story of the Ipe family, Roy emphasizes on the ugliness of the structure of Indian society and questions the Indian system of powers. Accordingly, on the light of the Marxist theory, this chapter will try to explain the impact of the social caste on Roy's characters.

### **I. Understanding Marxist View on Power in Relation to Caste System**

#### **1. Definition of Marxism**

According to Isa Monal in her article "Marxism: Meaning, Features and Principles", Marxism is strongly associated with Karl Heinrich Marx and Frederic Engels, a German philosophers. It is a concept that refers to the economic and political theories of Karl Marx, among others, that is based on humans' history. The focal interest of his theory is to determine the struggle between the different social classes. Therefore, Marxism is a theory where class struggle is the core factor of social alteration's analysis.

In an article entitled "Marxism", Kenton Will denotes that the term Marxism originated from Karl Marx name. It is a doctrine concerned with the analysis of social conflicts and class relations. According to Marxism, social conflict or class struggle comes to light as a result of the contradiction between the ruling classes and the working ones within a capitalist society. Additionally, it examines the aftermath of capitalism, which is an economical system where the production of goods is owned by private individuals. In more simple words, it deals with class domination where the powerless are exploited and dominated by the powerful.

Subsequently, Marxism is a doctrine that aims at finding out the way in which class power is sprinkled throughout society. According to Karl Marx, the concept of "power" is restricted to a certain group of society who belongs to the ruling class. Under a capitalist society, power is granted to the ruling classes who adopt it to exploit and dominate the working ones. The division of society into classes is seen as the chief responsible for social struggle and class domination. Marxism approaches locate class power as the basis of social struggle (Jessop 2-6).

To put it simple, Marxism is a political and economic movement that seeks to find out the tensity between the different social classes within a capitalist society and to expose its contradictions. It also seeks to analyze the conflict between the powerless and the powerful groups.

## **1. Marxist Theory of Class**

The concept of social class obtains heavy theoritical content concerning class exploitation of the laborers by the capitalists. It represents one of the important Marxist principles. According to Wright and Perrone in their article "Marxist Class Categories and Income Inequality" (1977), Marxists have defined the term "class" as "divisional units

within systems of social stratification". From the Marxist perspective, class refers to decoding the common social positions that people grow up in. It is the individuals' status within a class hierarchy that forms the basis of social stratification (33).

According to Barreman in his book "Race, Caste, and Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification", society is classified when its segments are split into categories of distinct levels of power, wealth, reward and esteem that is determined either by birth which is specified according to race, sex, caste and ethnicity, or by achievements which are specified by education, wealth and power (384-386).

Karl Marx' social structure consists of two major categories; the "Bourgeoisie" and the "Proletariat". Azarkievič denotes that Weber and Marx have defined the concept of social class "as economically determined and genetically conflicting groups, where the presence or absence of property serves as the basis of the separation into these groups" (2). The quote explores the fact that it is due to the individuals' wealth, property and hierarchal features which makes them obtain higher class. The people who belong to the high class or as what Marx termed the "bourgeoisie" are enjoying power because of their good economical status.

Social class is a phenomenon that is present in any society where the classification of the different segments of certain community is based on their wealth, power and their educational level. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a story that explores the social life in Kerala. In the novel's third chapter "Big Man Laltain, Small Man, the Mombatti" Roy is trying to distinguish between the different classes in Ayemenem. She utilizes the term "Laltain" to allude to the high and the elite classes while the term "Mombatti" is utilized to allude to the low and weak classes within the Ayemenem society (Liddle 3).

In short, the Marxists theory of social class mirrors the struggle between different social classes that is based on the social stratification in which each individual or group of individuals is viewed according to their property and power. The notion of "stratification" in its broad meaning represents one of the core concepts that determines the position of people in a certain society.

## **2. Marxist View on Caste System**

It has been demonstrated that the classification of a certain community into different castes shapes one of the major global features of social structure. The English term "caste" is referred to as *Varnas* which means the primary division that is characterized by the various social orders including way of life, region, hierarchal features, property, occupation...etc. according to B eteille, caste can be defined as:

[A] small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system. (46)

In other words, it is a rigid system of segmentations that are governed by certain principles each according to a certain criteria. According to B eteille, the main principles of the caste system are characterized by certain features of hierarchy, Endogamy, which means the forbiddance of interreligious and intercaste marriage, and style of life.

Before embarking to the details, it is worthy to state that despite the interchangeable use of class and caste, they carry different meaning. They present distinct types of social classification. The two concepts are overlapping in which class is a mixture

of numerous castes. In other words, caste system is a hidden class division (Guha 40). From the Marxist standpoint, class is the entire structure of the society while caste is a part of it. As had been alluded in the first chapter, caste system is a form of classification where people in India are socially comprehended through religion, class, gender, region, and language.

The Marxist view on caste has been applied on the Indian society which they consider as the ideal sample for their study of caste system. In India, the social distinction is clear and implicit whereby the Indian population is divided into five major categories. The first highest categories are known as the Varnas and the last category is known as the Dalits or the Untouchable (see chapter one). These castes are stratified according to the degrees of privileges and power. In their analysis, Marxists strongly emphasized on the division of labour which is the responsible for the subordination of the working classes. This social division resulted in the social struggle between the different classes (Guha, 38-40).

Karl Marx is the first philosopher who throws light upon the impact of cast system on the Indian community and its connection to the relation of production. Marx strongly calls for the abolition of caste hierarchy that is based on the exploitation and the oppression of the untouchables (lower castes) by the touchable (higher classes) and which he considers as the chief responsible for the social class struggle. The division of the Indian society into various castes stands up in the way their integrity. According to him, untouchability is the most exploited caste. Therefore, he devoted specific attention to the problem of untouchables as the oppressed and the lower caste (Bandyopadhyaya 1-3).

### **3. The Concept of Power in the Marxist's View**

Béteille in his book "Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in Tanjore Village" argued that class, caste and power are three main factors that are related to the social stratification phenomenon. In his work, he defines power as the chance of having the force to control. The Marxist concern on power is limited particularly to its relationship with social stratification (143).

According to Isaac, the Marxists approach of power claims about the power of the dominant castes and classes. This approach threw light on Marx's analysis of the subordination of the working classes. It also explores the way where craft skills are marginalized and broken down. Therefore, the term Power is invoked by Marxists as a fundamental demonstration of social conflict. The centrality of this approach is to analyze the distribution of power within a capitalist society. From their perspective, power is the motive the major source of the social struggle (130-143)

Marx believed that it is mainly due to power in which societies are stratified into different groups. Under a capitalist society, power is practiced by the rulers and the high classes only. According to Marx, power is one of the Marxist approaches that emphasizes on the relationship between power and class domination and why the oppressed classes; mainly untouchables, seem to welcome their alienation, marginalization and oppression. Segments of this caste are prevented from making any contact with members from the higher castes; they are fundamentally denied (Jessop 1).

## **II. The Impact of Caste System in *The God of Small Things***

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* sheds light on the structures of hierarchy of oppression, and power at distinct levels. Through her novel, Roy depicts the huge

distance between the different castes, and the way the caste system's policies promote exclusion, discrimination and exploitation towards the lower castes. Accordingly, she strongly emphasizes on the effect of the Indian caste system on her untouchable characters as well as on the struggle of power between those of upper and lower castes. In the novel, the lower caste is strongly depicted through Velutha who is an untouchable Paravan, the lowest caste in Ayemenem. This character who belongs to the lower caste becomes a victim of the system of castes.

Velutha Paapen is strongly marginalized and oppressed within his society. He is regarded as an inferior with no rank since he belongs to the lower caste. Velutha's life background makes him belong to the lower social class. His name "Velutha" means White in Malayalam-because he is so black. His poor economical condition clearly signalizes his integration to the lower caste. His social status mirrors the profound suffering of the powerless portion of the society. He was not allowed to enter the Ayemenem house for transporting the coconuts he and his fathers had plucked. Pappachi, the owner of the house, did not allow a Paravan into the house. He was prevented from touching anything people from upper castes touch. Ammu told the twins that:

[W]hen Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. (Roy 35-36)

The aforementioned quote reflects the miserable conditions that members from lower castes are facing. Throughout the novel, Velutha was treated in a bad and cruel way just because he is an untouchable Hindu man. When Velutha was accused of raping Ammu, he was caught by the police men in a very terrible and violent way. They woke him up using their hard shoes. They tried not to touch him because of his lower caste status. The police acted violently towards Velutha even though the charge is not yet proved against him. He is emulated by the touchable Policemen. After the no humanist treatment, Velutha dies in the same night (Roy 76).

Roy's integration of caste in her novel strongly demonstrates the fight against class and caste oppression. Through her characters, Roy attempted to explore the cruelty of the Indian caste system and the way lower classes are repressed and suppressed by the higher ones. Untouchables are prevented from the substantial rights. They are not allowed to enter the upper classes' house, or even use public roads. They are encouraged to go to schools for Untouchables only. In short, they are facing inhuman treatment by the upper class segments. Therefore, Velutha is the best untouchable character who depicts the marginalized reality of the Indian society that is overshadowed by oppression, violence, subjugation and injustice.

*The God of Small Things* strongly emphasized on the huge distance between the different castes in India. It reveals "the deep rooted evil of the untouchability" (Peruvalluthi and Mary 517). Roy questions the Indian caste and class structure where the lower castes and classes have social status as slaves. They are oppressed and alienated in a society which denied their fundamental rights as ordinary humans. Therefore, the Indian class conflict is derived from the clash between the oppressed lower classes and the ruling classes. She strongly depicts the bestowing power to the upper and the ruling class only



while regulating the lower castes to be subjugated. Simply, Roy is trying to echo the voice of the voiceless.

Roy provides her readers with tremendous instances of the sorrowful conditions of the untouchable especially within a Christian community that stand against the diversities in caste and birth. Although Velutha is an educated and highly skillful character, he is disrespected and entirely neglected by members of his society; the authority hold by caste system has not attenuated. The surd belief on caste system overcast all his hard work and talents. He is paid lesser than the other workers as he is prevented from practicing a number of things in his community. Thus, she is harshly attacking the illogical rigid laws of an oppressed social system that suppress and oppress humans just on the basis of their social status and birth. She is wondering whether this caste will ever truly be nullified. Accordingly, she is raising her readers' awareness on the cruelty of a system that has governed their society for many years (Peruvalluthi and Mary 517).

The untouchable Velutha has broken down the laws of the Indian social system, he rebels against the social boundaries that is considered as the Indian taboos. He made a forbidden love relationship with Ammu, the factory owner's daughter and a touchable woman. He converted to Christianity just to gain respect. Despite his marginalization, Velutha appears to have more freedom than the other characters. Through this character, Arundhati Roy stresses on the changes that should be brought against the rigidity of an oppressed caste system. She wanted to free her characters from the subjugation they are undergoing for many years ago. She wanted her characters to free themselves from the constraints of the colonizer and to overcome the colonial period and its consequences as to celebrate their own culture and identity. She is not only criticizing the power that is practiced against the lower caste but also she is inviting Indians through her characters to destroy the halo around the colonial power and thus regain themselves as real Indians.

One of the most significant studies that combines the postcolonial theory with Marxist literary theory is the so called the subaltern studies. From a postcolonial perspective, being part in the lower caste system means being a subaltern. The notion of subaltern designates the subordinate, oppressed and the non elite groups (Young 10). In India, people who belong to the higher castes enjoy more power and wealth than people from the lower caste. Untouchables are those people who belong to the bottom of the caste system. The so called subaltern studies are based on the Marxist theory of castes and classes. Gayatri Spivak explores the diverse ideological systems where patriarchy and colonialism are combined to doubly wipe off women as subalterns (Tickell 83).

Ammu is a subaltern character who strongly challenges the power of caste system and social order through rebelling against it. She breaks the Love Laws that is registered as one of the main Indian taboos and challenges marriage that is considered as a disciplinary institution. She is an untouchable within touchables. At first, Ammu is a Syrian Christian from the upper class, however, her status changed after her marriage. Ammu is doubly marginalized as an untouchable and as a woman. By rebelling against social structure, Ammu is trying to make a change in her life and the life of the untouchable as well. This is the major reason behind her going to the police officer and arguing against the oppression towards untouchable. Therefore, Ammu is a subaltern female character who resists the repression and the power of the Indian caste that is governed by the hierarchal order.

To conclude, the focus of this chapter was on proving the existence of social class and caste within the novel and to analyze its impact on selected characters. At the end, postcolonial theory of the subaltern studies was introduced to read the character Ammu who has different social class; moving from the upper to the lower caste.

## Conclusion

Indian postcolonial literature chiefly concerned itself with investigating the strategic alteration made by the British colonizer and its influence on Indian society even after independence. In the same vein, colonialism has not finished with the end of colonial rule but rather it continues to the present day. This paved the way for the "legacy" of colonial times. The "Legacy" of colonial powers is identified by the colonizers' alteration of the settlement they resisted in, and the integration of the settle government's cultural forms with that of natives. This genre of writing celebrates the uniqueness of the former colonized countries as well as highlighting the effect of the colonial power on the former colonies.

Among the writers who was concerned with echoing the effect of colonialism on the former colonized countries is Arundhati Roy. Roy experienced the oppression and the subjugation within a society governed by the ruins of the British colonialism. These conditions led Roy to write about the reality of Indian society which became in what way Indians with a British taste.

This thesis presents one of the excellent postcolonial Indian works that is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). Roy's master piece served the aim of exemplifying how Indians are being affected and groomed by the British during colonial India through her characters who appear to have a hybrid nature. In her novel, Roy's readers follow the perspective of some characters namely; Estha, Rahel, Chacko, Sophie Mol and Velutha. These characters are suffering from being in-between two different cultures, the Indian culture and the British culture.

Throughout the novel, Roy shows the oppression and the exploitation practiced towards the poor and the members of the lower cast and how power is entirely granted to

the upper class. She explains to her readers the way lower classes are ignored and sorrowfully treated by the upper classes and how they are victimized in a society governed by the structure of hierarchy of power. At the end, Roy expresses the need to break the Indian taboos through rebelling against the hierarchal structure and rules that has governed the Indian society for years.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is a piece of art that can be studied from multiple perspectives. Subalternity, for instance, is a literary study that could be applied on Roy's work to closely read the female characters in the novel namely, Ammu, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma who are doubly marginalized; as being women and victimized by the hierarchal rules.

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## Résumé

La présente étude se concentre sur l'attitude de Roy vis-à-vis de l'héritage colonial Britannique en accordant une attention particulière à l'hybridité et au pouvoir dans son œuvre *Le Dieu des Petites Choses*, un produit littéraire Indien postcolonial-Marxiste. L'objectif principal de cette thèse est de conceptualiser l'hybridité et ses trois types : langage, culture et identité hybride. Il étudie la fusion des personnages entre deux cultures et classes sociales différentes, tout en analysant les conséquences de cette fusion sur la société Indienne. À cet égard, cette étude comprend trois chapitres principaux, ainsi que l'introduction et la conclusion. Le premier chapitre est un aperçu général du postcolonialisme en Inde. Le deuxième chapitre utilise la théorie postcoloniale pour aborder le thème de l'hybridité, tandis que le troisième chapitre utilise la théorie marxiste pour aborder le thème du pouvoir. Par conséquent, les caractères sélectionnés seront analysés à la lumière du terme postcolonial «Hybridité» tel qu'il est perçu par Homi Bhabha. De plus, les personnages sélectionnés seront analysés à la lumière de la notion marxiste de «pouvoir» telle qu'elle est vue par Karl Marx. En conclusion, l'analyse montre que, par le biais des personnages de ce roman, Roy n'est pas satisfaite de l'héritage colonial britannique en Inde, car elle insiste sur la nécessité de changer et de remettre en question la structure hiérarchique et les règles qui régissent la société indienne depuis des années.

**Mots clés:** Postcolonialisme, Hybridité, Héritage, Identité, Marxisme, Caste et Classe.

## ملخص

تركز الدراسة الحالية على موقف " أرند هاتي روي" تجاه الإرث الاستعماري البريطاني وآثاره على المجتمع الهندي والتي تعد "ودلك من خلال تسليط الضوء على التهجين والقوة المنعكسة في تحفتها الأدبية بعنوان "إله الأشياء الصغيرة منتج أدبي هندي ماركسي لما بعد الاستعمار. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة يتمثل في تصوير ما يعرف بالهجانة وأنواعها الثلاث المتداخلة: هجانة اللغة، الثقافة والهوية. كما انها تهدف إلى التحقيق في اندماج الشخصيات بين ثقافتين وطبقتين اجتماعيتين مختلفتين حيث انها تركز على نتائج هذا الاندماج على المجتمع الهندي. في هذا الصدد، تتكون هذه الدراسة من ثلاث فصول رئيسية بالإضافة إلى المقدمة والخاتمة. يمثل الفصل الأول نظرة عامة حول الهند فيما بعد الاستعمار. يستخدم الفصل الثاني نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار لمناقشة موضوع التهجين، وبينما يعتمد الفصل الثالث على النظرية الماركسية لمناقشة موضوع القوة. من خلال ما سبق ذكره، ستحلل بعض الشخصيات على ضوء مصطلح الهجانة " الذي اعتمده "هومي بهابها" كما أن هناك بعض الشخصيات التي ستحلل استنادا على مصطلح "القوة" بمنظور "كارل ماركس". وفي الختام يوضح التحليل من خلال شخصيات هذه الرواية، عدم رضا الكاتبة "روي" عن مخلفات الإرث البريطاني في الهند وتأكيدا على ضرورة تغيير وتحدى الهيكل والقواعد الهرمية التي تحكم المجتمع الهندي لسنوات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** ما بعد الاستعمار، التهجين، الإرث، الهوية، الماركسية، الطبقات، والطبقة.