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Post-Colonial Aspects in Arundhati Roy's *the God of Small Things*

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Abstract: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* intricately weaves post-colonial elements into a captivating narrative set against post-independence India. The novel, situated in Kerala, serves as a microcosm reflecting broader historical and societal shifts. Roy skilfully explores social hierarchies, economic disparities, cultural hybridity, and gender dynamics, unravelling the lasting impact of British colonialism on the nation's psyche. The characters, navigating the remnants of colonial influence, embody the multifaceted repercussions, challenging traditional norms and navigating the clash between tradition and modernity. Through the microcosm of individual lives, Roy mirrors the macrocosm of a society grappling with its colonial legacy. The novel not only captures post-colonial India's spirit but also contributes to a broader discourse on the ongoing relevance of post-colonialism. It serves as a poignant reminder of colonialism's nuanced echoes, urging readers to engage in conversations about the intricate interplay between history, identity, and societal transformation, ultimately inviting contemplation of a nation forging a path toward a more inclusive and equitable future.

Keywords: Post-colonialism, Cultural hybridity, Gender dynamics, Caste system, Colonial legacy

1. Introduction

In *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, a poignant narrative unfolds against the backdrop of post-independence India, exploring the intricate web of post-colonial complexities. The novel, set in the state of Kerala, provides a rich tapestry where personal stories intersect with the broader canvas of historical and societal changes. Against this milieu, Roy weaves a tale that not only delves into the microcosm of individual lives but also serves as a compelling exploration of the macrocosm of a nation emerging from the shadows of colonial rule. As we delve into the various post-colonial elements embedded in the narrative, it becomes evident that the novel is not merely a chronicle of familial tribulations but an insightful commentary on the enduring legacy of colonialism and its multifaceted impact on the socio-cultural fabric of India. This essay seeks to unravel the post-colonial threads woven into the narrative, examining how the characters navigate the remnants of colonial influence and how their stories reflect broader socio-political transformations in a post-independence era. Through this exploration, we aim to understand the nuanced ways in which Arundhati Roy contextualizes the post-colonial perspective within the realm of literature, contributing to a broader discourse on the intersectionality of history, culture, and individual agency.

2. The God of Small Things

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* unfolds against the intricate tapestry of post-independence India, a period marked by the lingering shadows of British colonialism. The novel is meticulously situated in the state of Kerala, providing readers with a lens through which to examine the complexities of a society grappling with the aftermath of colonial rule. The post-independence setting serves as a crucible for the characters, whose lives are profoundly shaped by the historical ruptures and cultural shifts that define this era. Delving deeper, it becomes imperative to explore the lasting impact of British colonization on Indian society, as reflected in the novel. The echoes of colonial policies resonate in the intricate web of social hierarchies and the rigid caste system, both of which find vivid expression in the lives of the characters. From the stratification of society to economic exploitation, the legacy of British rule casts a long shadow over the characters, influencing their socio-economic status and interpersonal dynamics. Through an exploration of the historical backdrop, this essay aims to illuminate the ways in which "The God of Small Things" intricately weaves the consequences of colonial history into the very fabric of its narrative, offering a lens through which to scrutinize the enduring impact of British

colonization on the intricate social tapestry of post-independence India. Needham further observes: In as much as *Small Things* mobilizes 'History' explicitly as the trope through which the existing repressive social and political arrangements are figured forth, reenvisioning and re-writing history is part and parcel of transforming these repressive conditions, and is, arguably, what the novel's retrieval of 'small things' enacts. (382)

At the heart of *The God of Small Things* lies an exploration of the enduring colonial legacy, particularly evident in the intricate social hierarchy and caste system portrayed by Arundhati Roy. It is after all so easy to shatter a story. To break a chain of thought, to ruin a fragment of a dream being carried around carefully like a piece of porcelain. To let it be, to travel with it as Velutha did, is much the harder thing to do" (190) the novel meticulously dissects the influence of British policies on caste dynamics, revealing a complex interplay between historical forces and the characters' lives. The stratification of society, deeply entrenched in the caste system, is not merely a vestige of the past but a living legacy, sculpted by the colonial rulers. The novel unveils the stark reflection of caste discrimination in the characters' lives, demonstrating how historical prejudices persist and shape contemporary relationships. From the untouchability associated with characters like Velutha to the subtle but pervasive discrimination experienced by others, Roy captures the insidious nature of the colonial legacy, illustrating how deeply ingrained social hierarchies continue to impact the lives of individuals. Through an analysis of these elements, this essay seeks to unravel how *The God of Small Things* skillfully navigates the complex terrain of colonial legacies, shedding light on the enduring repercussions of British policies on the intricate tapestry of caste dynamics in post-independence India.

The novel serves as a vivid canvas for the exploration of cultural hybridity, a central theme that underscores the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in post-colonial India. The characters in the novel navigate a delicate balance between traditional Indian values and the encroaching influences of the Western world. This exploration of cultural identity becomes palpable through the characters' struggles, as they grapple with the tension between adherence to established norms and the allure of Western ideals. Roy crafts a narrative where the characters are not merely passive recipients of cultural influence but active participants in the negotiation of their identities. Language emerges as a powerful tool for cultural expression and conflict within the novel. The characters, caught between the linguistic nuances of their heritage and the imposition of a colonial language, engage in a constant battle for self-expression. This essay seeks to unravel how *The God of Small Things* intricately delves into the complexities of cultural hybridity, offering a nuanced portrayal of characters who navigate the blurred boundaries between tradition and modernity, using language as both a bridge and a battleground for the expression of their evolving cultural identities.

In *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of a changing India, grappling with the consequences of Westernization. The novel masterfully portrays the conflicting values that arise when Western and Indian cultures intersect. The characters find themselves entangled in a web of contradictions, torn between the traditional values deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and the allure of modern Western ideals. The clash between tradition and modernity is palpable as characters navigate the shifting landscape of societal expectations. Roy skillfully examines the consequences of this clash, illustrating how the imposition of Western norms disrupts the equilibrium of traditional Indian life. The characters, caught in this cultural tug-of-war, grapple with identity crises and the erosion of age-old customs. This essay aims to dissect the nuanced portrayal of Westernization in *The God of Small Things* exploring how the clash of values between Western and Indian cultures reverberates throughout the narrative, shedding light on the profound consequences of societal transformation in a post-colonial context.

Arundhati Roy, intricately weaves together the themes of gender and post-colonialism, shedding light on the complex intersectionality between the two. The novel serves as a compelling exploration of women's roles in a post-colonial society, where the reverberations of colonial influence echo through the lives of female characters. Roy delves into the multifaceted ways in which colonialism shapes and restrains the agency and autonomy of women. The narrative unveils the societal expectations and norms that confine female characters, reflecting the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures inherited from the colonial past. Through the lens of gender, the novel dissects power dynamics, social constraints, and the struggle for autonomy, offering a nuanced portrayal of how colonial legacies continue to impact and shape the experiences of women in post-independence India. This essay seeks to unravel the intricate tapestry of gender and post-colonialism in *The God of Small Things*, examining how the female characters navigate the complexities of identity, agency, and societal expectations against the backdrop of a nation grappling with its colonial past.

Within the textured narrative of *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, a powerful exploration of gender unfolds as characters defy and challenge traditional norms imposed by the colonial legacy. The novel presents a mosaic of characters who disrupt entrenched gender roles, defying the prescribed expectations of a society

deeply rooted in its colonial past. Roy's characters, particularly the female protagonists, emerge as agents of change, breaking free from the shackles of predetermined roles and asserting their autonomy. The intersectionality of gender, caste, and class becomes a focal point as characters navigate the complex web of societal expectations. The novel poignantly illustrates how colonial influences have not only shaped gender dynamics but also intertwined them with caste and class structures. Through the lens of characters breaking free from traditional gender norms, this essay endeavours to unravel the intricate ways in which *The God of Small Things* scrutinizes the intersection of gender, caste, and class, highlighting the characters' struggles and triumphs as they navigate the challenging terrain of societal expectations in a post-colonial setting.

In retrospect, the novel emerges as a literary tapestry richly interwoven with profound post-colonial elements that illuminate the complex web of historical, cultural, and societal shifts in post-independence India. Throughout the exploration of social hierarchies, economic disparities, cultural hybridity, and gender dynamics, the novel encapsulates the enduring impact of British colonialism on the nation's psyche. The recapitulation of key post-colonial elements reveals how Roy masterfully uses the microcosm of individual lives to mirror the macrocosm of a society grappling with its colonial legacy. From challenging traditional norms to navigating the clash between tradition and modernity, the characters embody the multifaceted repercussions of colonial influence.

3. Conclusion

As we reflect on the intricacies of *The God of Small Things*, it becomes evident that Roy not only captures the zeitgeist of post-colonial India but also contributes to a broader discourse on the relevance of post-colonialism in the contemporary world. The novel serves as a poignant reminder that the echoes of colonialism persist in nuanced ways, urging readers to engage in ongoing conversations about the complex interplay between history, identity, and societal transformation. In emphasizing the continued relevance of post-colonial discourse, *The God of Small Things* invites readers to confront the legacies of the past and contemplate the trajectory of a nation as it grapples with its history while forging a path toward a more inclusive and equitable future. *The God of Small Things*. The creation of the novel was an unusual experience and a revolutionary experiment in postcolonial literature. Trained as an architect, —She structured her book more like a building than a narrative (Fields-Meyer and Fernandez 108).

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