STUDYING HYBRIDITY IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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KAJIAN HIBRIDITI DALAM NOVEL ARUNDHITI ROY

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

ABSTRAK

Dengan berakhirnya zaman kolonial, aspek budaya yang mendasari kemerdekaan mulai mendapat perhatian. Ramai sarjana dan penulis sastera mula menghasilkan karya sastera dan teori-teori yang mencerminkan pengalaman masyarakat sebelum, semasa dan selepas zaman kolonial. Fenomena ini, yang dikenali sebagai 'sastera pascakolonial,' menyentuh beberapa isu dan tema.

Hibriditi merupakan satu persoalan yang hangat dan menjadi tumpuan para penulis kesusasteraan pascakolonial dan kritikan. Persoalan ini boleh dikesani dalam karya penulis seperti Salman Rushdie, Jean Rhys, Sara Suleri dan Arundhati Roy, yang memperlihatkan kesedaran pelbagai budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat mereka.

Kajian ini memfokuskan pada novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) oleh Arundhati Roy. Ia berkisar pada keadaan India sebelum merdeka. Novel ini berjaya mempamerkan hibriditi dan ketegangan yang tercetus daripada tiga perspektif yang berhubungan iaitu; budaya, sosial, dan individu.

Melalui penggabungan teori yang disarankan oleh Homi Bhabha dan Mikhail Bakhtin, kajian ini meneliti hibriditi dan ketegangan yang terlihat dalam novel yang literiti. Kajian ini juga mengeksplotasikan kemungkinan penggabungan di antara budaya, kasta sosial dan individu serta cuba meramalkan perkara yang berlaku selepas itu.

STUDYING HYBRIDITY IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

ABSTRACT

By termination of colonial times, an underlying aspect of independence gained attention: cultural. Many literary scholars and authors began to produce literature and theories which aimed to reflect the experiences of the people before, during, and after colonies. This phenomenon, often called 'postcolonial literature' touches upon several issues and themes.

Hybridity is a purportedly hot commodity and a cynosure for many a man of letter in postcolonial literature and criticism. Traces of this outlook could be found in writers such as Salman Rushdie, Jean Rhys, Sara Suleri, and Arundhati Roy whose work responds to the multicultural awareness of their societies.

This study focuses mainly on Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel, *The God of Small Things*. A pre-independence Indian saga, it adeptly conceptualizes hybridity and the tension it precipitates from three interrelated perspectives: cultural, social, and individual.

Marrying theoretical propositions by Bhabha and Bakhtin, the current study intends to research into the life of peoples as reflected in the novel. It will exploit the possibilities of fusion between cultures, social castes, and individuals and will try to determine what occurs afterwards.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to identify and analyze the elements of hybridity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The setting of the novel is Ayemenem, a village in the Kerala state of India. This setting plays a very important role in this novel; therefore, I think it is most pertinent to take an early step to explain the significance of the setting. At this stage, a short, general introduction to colonialism and its aftermaths in India is to be provided. A short disclaimer: the generalities used in this research are based on the histories, mostly written by Westerners. However, this study will also refer to works by Indian scholars.

1.2 A Brief History of Colonialism in India

Following the two precursors (Spain and Portugal), Britain also gradually embarked on her first attempt to establish colonies in North Carolina in the late sixteenth century, circa 1587. With this, Britain carried on extending its empire over countries and regions as varied as India, the Americas, Bermuda, Honduras and Jamaica. The British colonizers wanted to perform two major colonial tasks: one was economic and the other one was sociocultural. In what follows, these two objectives and their effects on the Indian society will be explained.

1.2.1 The Economic Effects of Colonialism in India

The British colonizers knew that in order to best control a territory, it was crucial to keep their physical presence. Therefore, they administered offices in these overseas domains and appointed a number of governors from *home* to control anything that concerned their benefits *abroad*. A prominent example of such an attitude was the establishment of the British East India Company, beginning in Surat (Gujarat) in 1612. The Indian history scholar, Stanley Wolpert, claims in his famous book *India* (2005) that the very act of founding the Company was the cause of almost two hundred years of colonization afterwards (46).

The British East India Company soon became a center for the British as traders and merchants from England rushed to India to do business there. Wolpert writes that the permission to their business was given by Elizabeth I. In fact, the Company did benefit from the imperial patronage and thereby expanded its commercial trading operations.

In *The Worlds of the East India Company* (2006) Bowen et al. comment on the natural sources of India of the time. A country long well-known for its abundant mines of gold and the British rule had become aware of this important fact. In 1655, they made London the main European market for uncut diamonds (99). That is why, within a short period of time, they controlled the economy of India and managed to "export precious bullions" abroad.

Of course, the British agents did not allow any local and native company to market these products and instead, these so-called "humble merchants" monopolized the Indian economy (Wolpert 46). The effects of this monopoly were detrimental since this policy gradually sapped India's national workforce and marketing vitality.

The British Empire knew that in order to keep their foothold in India, they need some sort of pact with the local rulers. Dietmar Rothermund writes in his *An Economic History of India* (1993) that the Company in due course formed a subsidiary alliance with local rulers including Hindu Maharajas and Muslim Nawabs (16). This was done especially in Cochin (1791), Jaipur (1794), Travancore (1795), Hyderabad (1798), and Mysore (1799). This highly effective and organized practice of dominion over India, starting around 1857, came to be known as "The British Raj" and lasted until the Independence in 1947. With the aid of the native Rajas, the Company generated a lot of profits by mining the natural resources, utilizing the labor forces, and dominating the markets of these territories.

1.2.2 The Sociocultural Effects of Colonialism in India

I have earlier discussed how the British government saw that it had to serve two major functions, i.e. the economic and sociocultural. To fulfill their first objective, they established the British Raj and helped the East India Company develop. However, there was another, yet important, aspect of colonialism which should not be neglected. The other major impact the British government had on its colonies was sociocultural.

The British knew very well that domination is not complete without influencing a peoples' culture. India was a country of different cultural rites, customs, and traditions. In order to have a better control over the Indians, the British criticized the local practices and stated bitter things about them. They thought that Indians' conventions are primitive and trivial. Conversely, they tried to convince the natives that the British culture is progressive and rational. So they had to do something in order to restraint their colony.

By mid 19th century, the Company appointed Thomas Macauly to the establishment of bilingual education in India. Himself a historian, Macauly suggested in his *Minute on Education* (1834) that in order for India to progress, it should adopt English as the medium of instruction in higher education. He writes:

> All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude…

According to the Indian historian, Kumar Das in *A History of Indian Literature* (1991), Macauly eventually persuaded the Governor-General of India that the "intellectual improvement" of the Indian society is to be sought through English education. As a result of his support, the original "Sanscrit" medium was discarded (86). When the native culture was discarded, it was time for the introduction of the English language as the primary language to be taught and spoken throughout all the territories.

The British, actually, introduced their language to places as varied as India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, Malaysia as well as the islands of the Pacific. Therefore, the English language was the means of presenting the British culture and shrugging the native culture of these colonies. As a result, the British East India Company, along with the assistance of the British Raj succeeded in dominating the vast county of India.

As one looks more closely at the relations between the Company and the British Raj, one should not forget the fact that the British rule had a strong alliance among British merchants, governors, and social thinkers who supported the whole system. In what follows a few remarks by noted figures will show the degree of arrogance towards and lack of understanding of the natives.

Basically, it was claimed that the British government had a right to control India and its natural resources. John Ruskin asserted in his *Inaugural Lecture* (1870) that the English "blood" was the result of the mingling of all the best races and has a "thousand years of noble history" (qtd. in Boehmer 17-18). In his argument, this gave the British the right to dominate other lands and nations. On another occasion and in his book *The Two Paths* (1858), Ruskin commented on the Indian art and tradition with equal contempt:

> ..the Indian will not draw a form of nature but an amalgamation of monstrous objects. To all facts and forms of nature it wilfuly and resolutely opposes itself; it will not draw a man but an eight armed monster, it will not draw a flower but only a spiral or a zig zag (9).

Ruskin concluded that the British are a superior people vis-à-vis the Indians whom he considered to be primitive in their lifestyle and art.

English historians were also so critical of the Indian culture and history. For instance, in his third volume of the *Ideologies of the Raj* (1997), Thomas Metcalf quotes William Jones, an 18th century scholar of ancient India saying that "in beholding the Hindus of the present day, we are beholding the Hindus of many ages past" (30). Therefore, the English rule considered the Indians as a nation who have stagnated and stuck in time, while the British at that time were leading the world industrialization and democratic governance.

In another example, British historian David Armitage mentions in the introduction of *The Free Sea* (2004) that Richard Hakluyt and John Dee were economic advisors and consultants to the Queen Elizabeth and the British East India Company. Originally written about International Law in Dutch (1609), Hakluyt translated the book into English to enable British colonizers to use it as propaganda in India, thereby helping the British government to intervene in the territories of India.

As a third and final example, in his *The Other Empire* (2004), John Marriot argues that the British philosopher John Stuart Mill did scorn the Indian culture. In point of fact, it was Mill who mauled and distorted the history, character, religion, literature, and arts of India in his *The History of British India* (1818):

> A duly qualified man can obtain more knowledge of India in one year in his closet in England than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India (133).

Apart from writer and social thinkers, British governors also left many notes and remarks that described Indians in highly prejudiced words. In another example, General Mayo (the fourth British viceroy of India) was similarly arrogant towards the natives of India. In 1870, he wrote a letter to one of his Lt. Governors

> "teach your subordinates that we are all British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race" (qtd. in Luthra 106).

The foregoing argument describes the establishment of the British Raj and the East India Company. Since the latter had monopolized the Indian economy, the British rule saw this as total domination of the country. In their eyes, India was a territory owned by England "by right of conquest". Therefore, they believed that they had the prerogative to subdue the natives, mine their natural resources and export and monopolize their trade in minerals. In short, to the British the nation of India and its people were inferior, primitive, and in need of being civilized. And as discussed before, the British had strong support from their social thinkers and economic advisors.

1.3 Pre- and Post-Independent India

I have earlier suggested that the English governors, merchants, philosophers, and politicians advocated the dominance of Great Britain over other nations. This arrogant support prompted inhumane treatment of the Indians. This in turn increased Indian discontent with their colonizers and paved the way for independence movements.

In his much-praised collection of essays, *Decolonization*, Prasenjit Duara argues that decolonization varied significantly from country to country. However, in India intellectual collaborators also worked and fought alongside the pre-independence revolutionaries. So, the Indian intellectuals and men of letters like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi tried hard to express their dissatisfaction with their condition under the British rule. Gandhi writes,

> Just as a man would not cherish living in a body other than his own, so do nations not like to live under other nations, however noble and great the latter may be ("Mohandas Gandhi Quotes").

Gandhi believed that India would not nurture to its full potential if it was subject to the sovereignty of another nation, no matter how advanced and culturally developed it might be. This was his basis for a national movement to overthrow the authority and hegemony of the British rule.

By the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Gandhi and his allies, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mualana Azad in particular, had gradually developed an Indian nationalistic identity. Their movement could inspire the Indian nation to value their own identity and speak up against the British colonizers. Gandhi formulated a policy of nonviolent resistance and called it "Satyagraha". It was in fact a kind of civil disobedience which sought to

peacefully frustrate the opponent without engaging in any act of violence. To him, it would be India's only effective technique of engaging in a nationalist struggle against Great Britain (Tidrick 224). On that account, *The Quit India Movement*, initiated by Gandhi in 1942 was the most definitive campaign for immediate independence of India; by early 1944, the foundations of the British rule had already been shaken. On August 15, 1947 India obtained its independence which marked the era of decolonization.

Along with political independence, many literary and theoretical works were produced. This was the beginning of postcolonial literature. As an impressive trend in contemporary world of literature, postcolonial literature is often placed in a major category of "Cultural Studies". It concerns itself with the political and cultural independence of a people "formerly subjugated in colonial empires, and the literary expression of this extensive phenomenon" (Bressler 235-6). Furthermore, the study of colonial discourse – which is termed as "postcolonial criticism" – analyzes the cultural dimension of colonialism/imperialism (Gholamhosseinzadeh 71).

In India, many writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Amit Chaudhuri, and Arundhati Roy began their careers by portraying different aspects of colonialism and postcolonialism in their works, as did literary critics and essayists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and V.S. Naipaul.

This study aims at identifying the concept of hybridity in Roy's *The God of Small Things* and examining how this phenomenon influences the life of and the relationships between its characters.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

As I have alluded to before, postcolonial literature chiefly concerns itself with the social, political, and especially the cultural aspects of colonialism and the literary expression of this extensive experience.

Before abandoning their settlements, which was definitely against their will, the colonizers made a strategic alteration. Even though they physically left their colonies, they managed to continue to influence the natives long after they had gone. In his *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said suggests that direct colonialism has largely ended. However, he argues that imperialism "still lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general *cultural sphere*…" (8). Therefore, whereas economic and political aspects of colonialism have almost vanished, the colonizers have left in their colonies an underlying, yet important legacy. This is an aspect of colonialism which Said terms "cultural imperialism".

In truth, cultural imperialism is one of the most significant façades of colonialism. It has a dual involvement since it deals with the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized. This duality of involvement makes it a very intricate and complex phenomenon, something like a tightrope walking. For one thing, the native culture tries to articulate its identity and provide a balance on this tightrope. For another, it constantly makes efforts to challenge the colonial culture, to "write and ride back". However, problems show up when a former colony wants to articulate an identity of its own.

As stated earlier, the colonizers modified the linguistic structures of the natives and commanded them with their own language. A similar policy was taken up concerning

the settler culture. Before abandoning their settlements, the colonizers modified the language and culture of the natives. This in turn changed the identity of the colonized as well. After independence, the former colonies found themselves left with a culture which sounded like their previous culture and yet now *combined* with that of the colonial rule. Therefore, to try to establish a *pure* identity is not plausible. But, how could we understand this phenomenon?

According to Said, no culture is ever self-standing or self-existing. Rather, any certain culture has bits and parts from another culture which makes it a highly versatile entity. Looking at the colonial era, Said argues that because of or resulting from the cultural legacy of colonialism, "any cultural form is radically, quintessentially hybrid". That is why by the termination of colonial rule in the world, former colonies could not readily fulfill their dream of a fully pure identity of their own. Instead of building up their identity again, they faced difficulties they had not thought about before. One major problem was that they had been mixed with the colonial culture and eventually produced a *hybrid* culture. This hybrid culture has been a very popular subject of so many studies in postcolonial literature and is often referred to as "hybridity". There are a good number of noted literary and cultural studies scholars who have been discoursing about hybridity ever since its debut in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In what follows, I will have a brief look at some of the scholars who have defined and set the boundaries of this concept.

In his essay *Signs Taken for Wonder*, Homi K. Bhabha suggests a counter argument to the "traditional discourses on authority" (112). Whereas, in the past the settler or colonial culture was considered to be separate from the native culture, he argues that there is a deep connection between them. This connection results from the fact that

the settler and native cultures have been intermingled with one another. So, the nature of their relationship is not one-sided; on the contrary, it is two sided or "ambivalent". Based on this ambivalence, Bhabha maintains that hybridity is a process that "reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority" (112). With hybridity at work, settler and native cultures find a moment when the one-sidedness of the colonial discourses loses its credibility. Consequently, the colonizer would not be able to speak condescendingly to the colonized and the "ambivalence" that exists between them provides a chance for hybridity. As the two cultures find an equal opportunity, they could present their own culture and come to mutual understanding. However, it is crucial to understand how this mutual, two-sided relation would affect cultural relations.

I mentioned before that hybridity makes room for both the colonial and especially the native culture to appear next to each other in a rather equal manner. In addition, it helps provide opportunities for the colonizer and the colonized which have diverse cultures. As a result, hybridity is an important means by which cultures begin to present their own culture, traditions, and customs. It encourages the mingling of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial cultures. It is with hybridity that the postcolonial writer and critic are able to "trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text" (qtd. in Young 22).

What Young is implying here is that postcolonial authors believe that hybridity makes cultural diversity possible and even to larger degree fruitful. Whereas in the past, there was a top-down relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, now there is variety. This variety, according to Young, has a moderation role meaning that it can strike a balance between a powerful colonizer and a weaker colonized. In short, hybridity

makes use of "alterity" to "disarm" the colonizer and helps the natives to stand a chance. This is what lies at the heart of the concept of hybridity.

To summarize the discussion thus far, it could be said that colonialism has not yet ended with termination of colonial rule. It continues to this day, in a new form which Said terms as "cultural imperialism". Why this practice has lasted long after colonial rule has come to an end owes much to an important "legacy" bequeathed to the natives.

The "legacy" of colonial powers included two major parts. On the one hand, the colonizers had modified the linguistic structures of each settlement they resided in. One example of this could be introducing English as the official language of the colonial times in British-ruled countries such as India. On the other, the settle government intermingled its own cultural forms with those of the natives. These two elements account for what Said calls the "legacy" of colonial times. Nevertheless, with decolonization things changed drastically.

Ever since decolonization, former colonies have found a chance to probe into the sites of discrepancies between the colonizers and themselves - between "Us" and "Them". Hybridity is that opportunity through which dissimilarities are investigated. But there is a pivotal question to be addressed: where does hybridity happen?

Hybridity takes places in these sites of diversity and opposition where the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized after a *time* of separation come together in a single *place*. When these two cultures meet up, the interaction between them gives birth to a new culture which is an amalgamation of the two. The new form also indicates a sort of hidden affinity between the colonizer and the colonized and suggests that they are quite interrelated. A fuller discussion of this will follow in the Literature Review section.

To conclude the discussion, I would state that every culture is conventionally hybrid and neither self-existing nor homogenous. Rather, it exists in combination with other cultures. This, in turn, complicates the experience of the formerly colonized and makes difficult their attempt of articulating an identity of their own. Therefore, cultural hybridity has been a controversial issue in the words and works of the postcolonial scholars. It aims at understanding the depth of these communications, their hidden basis for affinity, and what the concept does for culture as a whole.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has become exemplary in postcolonial *narrativization* and has received much literary attention. To date, different readings and studies using various approaches and models such as postcolonial feminist, socio-political, deconstructive, stylistics, and Marxist have been applied to this book (Dodiya and Chakravarty v-vii).

M. Dasan writes of the novel in his *Arundhati Roy Hits the Socio-Political Ball* that "part of the fame and success of the novel is because of its preoccupation with matters related to Kerala – its society, politics, culture, economy, environment, caste questions and soon" (25).

In her *Aesthetics of Post-Colonial Feminism* and as a postcolonial feminist writes Pillai on the novel: "The problems of patriarchal dominion and female subalternity and the clash between the two are rooted in the specific geocultural reality of Ayemenem" (88). More particularly and when it comes to hybridity, some have critiqued the novel rather extensively. For instance, Anna Clarke analyzes the novel with having the linguistic aspect of the concept of hybridity in mind. In her *Language, Hybridity, and Dialogism in The God of Small Things*, she states that "the linguistic playfulness and the

lack of narrative certainty in Roy's novel can be read as a radical literary strategy… that challenges and evades society's monologic tendency to control narrative meaning and structure of our perception through forms of linguistic order" (132).

However, what this study contributes to the existing body of literature and readings on this novel is of a different nature. I will trace hybridity back to its inception (Bakhtin and Bhabha) and have a parallel investigation to find the similarities and differences between these two theorists. After that, I shall demonstrate that there is, yet, another important scholar (Epstein) whose ideas are quite compelling in furthering those of Bakhtin and Bhabha. Based on these premises, a new look at the concept of hybridity follows by bifurcating it into two major categories: cultural hybridity and social hybridity, and with a special attention to the geographical setting of the novel. These two categories will be followed by a third, minor, yet pretty important discussion which I have named *individual hybridity*. Therefore, the body of analysis rests heavily upon a triangular relationship between culture, society and individuals. A more comprehensive discussion of these three issues may be found in chapters three and four, dedicated to the theoretical methodology and analysis, respectively.

In the meantime, it is pertinent to begin a brief statement of what exactly are the problems and issues regarding the novel and its special setting.

In an interview, Arundhati Roy said that one of the things that brought her back to her childhood village of Ayemenem was the cultural diversity. When religions, cultures, and castes clash in Ayemenem, the results can vary from minor disruptions to major acts of violence. Yet there is also a certain beauty to such a *kaleidoscopic* range of people,

which Roy suggests is worth the struggle for overall cultural cohesion (Thokkadam par. 1).

The clashes in *The God of Small Things* might well be generally divided into two types: cultural and social class.

There are some characters in the novel who have either taken their education in the Western tradition or have for some time lived in the West. Rahel, Baby Kochamma, Margaret, Sophie Mol and Chacko belong to this group. When we look closely at these characters, we find them to be neither purely Indian nor purely British. Also, none of them have renounced their own culture. As years go by, they all return to Ayemenem, reunited in their childhood village to redeem their past. They do so in spite of the fact that after living abroad for some time a personal and cultural transformation has occurred that creates unprecedented experiences for them back home.

Second, from a social viewpoint, the novel comprises two major social castes in India: the *Touchables* and the *Untouchables*. Rahel, Estha, and Ammu belong to the first caste while Velutha, Vellya Paapen, and Kuttappen belong to the latter one. The physical borderline between these two groups is a river which separates them. From a social point of view, that river is meant to prevent any transgression from either side. Regardless of what Indian social caste system requires, we can observe that both the *Touchables* and the *Untouchables* overturn this ban and transgress into each other's territories. It appears as though there is a sort of inevitable, invisible force that flows between the two groups and makes them hybrid. One instance of such social caste transgression could be the hidden love affair between a Touchable Ammu and an Untouchable Velutha. In point of

fact, these crossovers cause several problems in the lives of every other character in the novel and build much tension among them.

In addition to these two categories, the novel includes a minor subcategory that emanates the elements of hybridity. As we peruse the plot, we are exposed to a special connection between Rahel and Estha, the twins of the novel. Even though they are related by blood, they exhibit almost opposite personalities in terms of speculation and action. And yet, they would take some moments to *hybridize* themselves into a firmer oneness: they make love to each other somewhere near the end of the novel. Alas, this casts a putative *twin tension* which foreshadows much to happen, to last, and to terminate. Since the plot makes recurring rotational moves around these two people, dilemmas are created in the lives of all the other personages that are related to them in some way.

In conclusion, we might address the concept of hybridity and the clashes it precipitates on three levels: first on the borderlines of two different cultures, second between two major social castes, and third on the unclear line of definition and division shared by the twin characters of the novel. Thus, there is still room for further readings of and reflections upon this district of Kerala in the state of India. This study involves an investigatory research into a possible site of hybridization, into the very locale of this saga, Ayemenem, a village "Visible Out Unseen".

Before anything, it is crucial to get familiar with some key terms that will be recurring throughout this study. A good grasp on these key terms will help us to have a better understanding of the discussions and analyses in the following sections.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Colonialism: "…almost always a consequence of imperialism, it is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 8). It is mainly a political, social, and economic rule and its direct practice in today's world has largely ended. Yet, it continues to indirectly affect former colonies in the form of cultural imperialism.

- Subaltern: It generally refers to the peoples who are culturally, socially, or even individually marginalized and placed outside a certain hegemonic power structure. In other words, subaltern is any class void of choice-making and agency. However, in a more specific, postcolonial sense, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that subaltern is not only "a classy word for the oppressed, the Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie". Rather, she reasons that the term is more about "a space of difference" where certain people have "no or limited access to cultural imperialism" (Spivak, Interview).

- Hybridity: For Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity is "the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized (the *Other*) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new" (Papastergiadis 257). Bhabha contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized, challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity. This way, hybridity is "positioned as antidote to essentialism" (Meredith 2). Important to be noticed, this study will endeavor to

expose what hybridity does to people in a society as multifarious as India on three levels: cultural, social, and individual.

- Third Space: Taken from Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, this term has been used by Bhabha when referring to the territory of hybridity. Bhabha urges that we recognize *Third Space* as an interstitial or "in-between" territory that avoids "policy of polarity", or "Us" and "Them" (*The Location of Culture* 36-9). With this approach, Bhabha assumes that hybridity will allow individuals to mark out a new sense of racial or ethnic identity (Rutherford 211). This notion has undeniable semblance to the following one.

- Chronotope: In Bakhtin's conception, there are "points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 7). Therefore, chronotope becomes a site of hybridized experiences, narratives, genres, etc. An important point to understand is that neither time nor space is privileged by Bakhtin, and he sees them as two interdependent and interrelated phenomena.

1.6 A Brief Review of Related Literature

A look at the key terms that are going to be discussed at length in the coming two chapters reveals that the major focus of this study is upon the complexities people suffer due to hybridity. Let me touch upon a concise reading of these concepts.

The Palestinian-American scholar Edward Wadie Said's *Oriestalism* (1978) was the beginning point of what later became to be known as cultural studies. *Orientalism* sharply critiques the Western image of the Oriental as "irrational, depraved (fallen), child-like, different," which has, in contrast, allowed the West to define itself as "rational, virtuous, mature, normal" (40). In his next work on the same subject, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he introduced his concept of "contrapuntality". It is a kind of "reading back" which seeks to demonstrate "the complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history" (Chowdhry 104).

In fact, what Said bequeaths to the future theorists and authors lends time and space for much discussion and development in cultural studies. Therefore, at present there are a good number of critics and cultural studies academics who probe into this new area of research and theorization. Examples abound: Mikhail Bakhtin, Mikhail Epstein, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy represent works that respond to the increasing multicultural awareness of the early 1990's. In the following, a few of these critics and

their ideas concerning postcolonial literature in general and hybridity in specific will be introduced.

The Indian literary critic and theorist, Gayatri Spivak, is probably best known for her book *Can the Subaltern Speak?* which was first published in 1988. The book is believed to be a founding text in postcolonial theory after Said. In it, Spivak argues that the subordinate should be given a "voice" or a chance to write back. This "voice" is not a simple counternarrative, because it also deconstructs the concept of history which has been developed by the West and dictated to the East. In Spivak's opinion, the "Subaltern" connotes a people that should and would narrate "history from below" (Fox 888). This means the subaltern must be given a chance to write back, to rewrite histories from their own vantage point. This, consequently, enables them to demand what they have long been deprived of. Impacts of this notion are vivid throughout Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* where Velutha, a member of the *Untouchables*, enters the territory of the *Touchables* to speak out with the voice of the people he seems to represent.

Moreover, the term "Othering" Spivak coined in *Can the Subaltern Speak* contributes to the critique of the practices of colonialism and imperialism shatters the "assumption of authority, voice, and controlling the means of interpretation and communication" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, The Empire 97). Spivak notes that "Otherization" makes multiple forms and interpretations possible on the side of the subaltern. This is not desirable for the colonizers at all, as it refers to something that lies at the very heart of imperialism: a fear of ambivalence and perhaps even of hybridity. In

this sense, resistance becomes a means by which the colonized people try to loosen the power grip imposed on them by the colonizers.

This use of ambivalence by the subaltern to undo the hegemonic authority of the colonizer is reminiscent of what well-known literary theorists Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin suggest in their influential collection of essays, *The Empire Writes Back*. The book was first published in 1989 and in 2002 a second edition of it was published.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, the authors attempt to explain the fact that resistance of the colonized against the colonizers' hegemony and power grip creates a sort of hybridity, a combination of one culture trying to modify the other and vice versa. Borrowing the title of the book from Salman Rushdie, they proclaim that there are four types of critical models of postcolonial literatures:

> First: national or regional models which emphasize the distinctive features of the particular national or regional culture. Second: race-based models which identify certain shared characteristics across various national literatures such as the African diaspora addressed by the 'Black writing' model. Third: comparative models which seek to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more postcolonial literatures. Fourth: "…more comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybridity and syncreticity … (15).

Therefore, these theorists believe that the models of hybridity constitute elements of all postcolonial literatures. They argue that any discussion concerning postcolonial writing may be categorized under one of these four critical models. Based on these four types of models, and drawing particular attention to Harris's *The Womb of Space (1983)*, they argue that:

> Although, on the surface, postcolonial texts may deal with divisions of race and culture… [they] contains the seeds of community… (35).

They suggest that as postcolonial texts "germinate" and grow in the mind of the reader, they further come up with a history that has a new logical base. This new dialectic in the form of hybridity struggles to free itself from "a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the pure over its threatening opposite, the composite" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 36). While in the past there was one viewpoint regarded as pure, at present, there is no such thing; instead, combination is favorably appraised. Therefore, hybridity is considered a valuable commodity in these times.

Mikhail Bakhtin, who happened to grow up in Vilnius and Odessa, "two cosmopolitan border towns that offered an unusually heterogeneous mix of disparate languages and cultures" (Zappen par. 1), is another important theoretician who analyzed how cultures would interact to produce hybrid forms. In *Response to a Question*, Bakhtin explains that the "dialogic interrelations" that shape individual utterances also shape whole cultures. He believes that any culture may be looked at only from the standpoint of another culture: "In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that a certain culture reveals itself fully and profoundly" (7, Zappen par. 11).

The postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha and his *The Location of Culture* (1994) is perhaps the most noted scholar in the field who continues to discourse about how culture is affected due to colonial experience. He argues that culture is neither monolithic

nor temporal: culture does not pertain to a single portion of time. Instead, it is an entity that goes beyond routine divisions. In a similar way, he argues that the location of culture is also beyond conventional borderlines since it runs through time and is not dividable into separate parts. So, Bhabha proposes that when two cultures strive, clash, and combine, time and space are also intermixed. In this process, each culture continuously endeavors to change the other. Thereafter, something that he calls "hybridity" takes place. However, the site of this "negotiation and translation" is not in each or either one but somewhere *else*. Rather similar to Bakhtin's "chronotope", Bhabha goes on to call this space a "Third Space of enunciation". It is an "in-between" where the dual nature of the two cultures "translate" and "transfer" to each other to create a hybrid form of discourse in the end (2, 28, 37-8, Shcueller 166).

With regard to the idea of negotiation hybridity and the dual nature of cultures proposed by Bhabha, Haitian postcolonial scholar Peter Hallward suggests in his book *Absolutely Postcolonial* that "hybridity is a difference 'within' a difference without binary terms" (24). He points to the fact that once binaries such as "West-East" and "Us-Them" are shattered, cultures tend to clash and then combine with each other. This is due to the fact that every particular culture has a double nature that, despite being different from another, allows it to produce a hybrid culture in the end. Hallward suggests that culture is not a source of conflict by nature, but because of discriminatory practices on the side of the colonizers, conflict becomes a product of differentiation. Nonetheless, he

believes that cultures develop only if they avoid bias and degradation, and he thus calls for a negotiative understanding of cultures.

To sum up the discussion so far, Bakhtin and Bhabha both presume that cultural understanding a culture is possible only when it is viewed from the standpoint of another. They both stress that cultures should avoid negation and instead should enjoy negotiation. If this is done, then each culture would have an opportunity to express itself at the negotiation table.

Several postcolonial novels contain the concept of hybridity as discussed above. Examples are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Wilson Harris's *The Womb of Space*, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

1.7 Methodology

The God of Small Things is truly an excellent example of a postcolonial novel, with is a *hybrid* storytelling, mixed-breed characters, with cultures and social castes living next to each other in a small village. With the concept of hybridity as the cynosure, this study will looks at the events from three aspects:

a. Cultural Hybridity

b. Social Hybridity

c. Individual Hybridity