



The Lingering Legacy: Impact of Colonialism on Literature, Language and Culture in Post-Colonial Societies

¹Name of Author- Taroob Shabir

¹Designation of Author- Student final year M.A English

¹Name of Department- AMITY Institute of English Studies and Research

¹Name of organization – Amity University Noida

Abstract:

This dissertation explores how colonialism continues to influence language, literature, and culture in post-colonial cultures, concentrating on two important works: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Post-colonial tales that examine the lasting effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures, identities, and social structures are exemplified by these two works. Through an examination of these writings from the perspectives of influential post-colonial theorists like Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, the dissertation investigates how colonialism still shapes how language, identity, and social hierarchies are portrayed in the post-colonial world. Achebe illustrates the conflict between traditional ideals and colonial influences in *Things Fall Apart* by using Okonkwo's experiences to illustrate how Igbo society has been disrupted. Together with Igbo sayings and idioms, the novel's use of English highlights the conflict between colonial dominance and indigenous culture. *The God of Small Things* explores the enduring caste, class, and gender distinctions influenced by British colonialism in post-colonial India. Roy's unusual use of language highlights the intricate relationship between colonial and indigenous identities.

INTRODUCTION

The social and cultural fabric of post-colonial cultures is still marked by the effects of colonialism. Cultural identity, language, and literature have all been profoundly impacted by the trauma, upheaval, and imposition of alien ideologies. In addition to provide a framework for comprehending the effects of colonialism, the chosen works, *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things*, demonstrate how post-colonial authors tackle these subjects. Analysing how these novels portray post-colonial nations' linguistic, cultural, and identity-formation problems is the goal of this dissertation. This dissertation aims to investigate how colonialism continues to influence language, literature, and culture in post-colonial cultures, concentrating on two important works: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. The disruptions brought about by colonialism are discussed in both books, which provide insight into how the establishment of colonial power drastically altered indigenous cultures, identities, and social structures. *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe chronicles the devastation of Igbo society in Nigeria during British colonialism, whereas *The God of Small Things* by Roy explores the sociopolitical intricacies of post-colonial India, with a particular emphasis on the lingering caste, class, and colonial heritage inequalities.

A significant event in human history, colonialism left behind a complicated and frequently traumatic legacy that still has an impact on the post-colonial world. Its impacts show profoundly into the cultural, linguistic,

and literary spheres of cultures that have previously experienced imperial dominance, going much beyond the political and economic spheres. At its most extreme, colonialism was a kind of cultural hegemony that aimed to alter the core of colonised peoples' lives, including their languages, social structures, and artistic expressions. It was not just about military conquest and economic exploitation. Long after the political end of imperial authority, the effects of this colonial dominance are still felt as post-colonial countries struggle to regain their identities.

A vast amount of post-colonial literature has emerged in the wake of colonialism, attempting to both investigate the ongoing fights for independence and cultural reclamation as well as to convey the traumas of colonial domination. The colonised people have found a platform to express their opinions, fight back, and claim their right to shape their own histories and destinies through literature. Through the prisms of language, culture, and identity, the effects of colonialism are examined in literature in one of the most potent ways. In addition to being ruled by foreign powers, colonised nations also experienced a significant shift in their linguistic and cultural structures.

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe are two excellent books that address the long-lasting effects of colonialism on language, culture, and identity. The story of Okonkwo, an Igbo man whose life is permanently changed by the entrance of European missionaries and colonial authority in his community, is told in Achebe's book, which is frequently regarded as the foundational work of African literature. Achebe offers a thorough examination of the terrible consequences of colonialism on traditional African communities through the story of Okonkwo's ascent and decline. Through the Igbo worldview in particular, the novel offers a nuanced and profound reflection on the devastating effects of European cultural and theological imposition. In addition to the violence of colonial intervention, Achebe critiques aspects of Igbo society, especially its gender relations, in order to emphasise the complexities and contradictions of pre-colonial African civilisations. To achieve this, Things Fall Apart offers a nuanced portrayal of the struggle between indigenous African traditions and European colonial powers, highlighting the conflict's enduring consequences.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, set in post-colonial India, explores the impacts of colonialism even though it takes place in a very different historical and cultural context. With a focus on the social institutions that have remained in place since independence, the book examines the subtle and sometimes hidden scars left by British occupation in the state of Kerala. The book interweaves personal and political experiences to explore how colonial rule's effects—through caste, class, and familial ties—continue to impact its protagonists' lives. Roy's work explores the enduring impacts of British colonial rule on India's social structure via the prisms of caste, gender, and the intersection of past and present trauma.

Achebe and Roy both take a deep look at the subject of language. By using Igbo sayings, expressions, and idioms in his writing, Achebe both challenges English's complete domination and affirms the depth of his native tongue. He uses English not just as a concession but as a means of strategic subversion, whereby the colonizer's language is used to express opposition to colonial dominance. Things Fall Apart does this by using language as a tool to critique the colonial forces that imposed it. Post-colonial writers frequently employ the colonial language as a place of conflict, struggle, and creative subversion. The novel's capacity to speak through English while maintaining its indigenous roots is significant.

Despite their different locations and cultures, both writings highlight the profound effects colonisation has had on the societies it has affected. Achebe depicts the breakdown of a whole community and its ideals in Things Fall Apart as a result of European colonial encroachment. The ancient social order is violently disrupted by the entry of Western missionaries and colonial officials in the Igbo community. This disruption results in the loss of political sovereignty as well as the degradation of cultural identity. The terrible demise of Okonkwo, his resistance to colonialism's innovations, and the eventual collapse of the Igbo way of life are all powerful allegories for the extensive cultural devastation colonialism caused to African communities. Texts do not only critique the physical subjugation but rather mental, Cultural and all the abstract ways in which colonialism inferiorated the third world and its power of nativity.

In Conclusion the Post-colonial societies' language, literature, and culture are still influenced by the colonial past. In the countries that were colonised, the imposition of colonial languages, the alteration of literary

traditions, and the cultural upheaval brought about by colonial control have all left permanent scars. Works such as Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* demonstrate how literature may be used as a tool for both resistance and reconciliation with the colonial past. They conclude by highlighting how resilient and adaptive civilisations may be when confronted with historical trauma and the ongoing value of post-colonial literature in comprehending the wider effects of colonialism on the modern world. It is not enough to consider colonialism's effects on post-colonial cultures in terms of its political and economic ramifications. The psychological and cultural fabric of colonised peoples is intricately intertwined with its impacts. Achebe and Roy illustrate in their separate books how colonialism has influenced people's personal lives and identities in addition to the political futures of entire nations. Through examining the effects of colonialism on language, literature, and culture, these works provide important perspectives on how the post-colonial world is still dealing with the effects of imperial dominance. These works are still relevant today because they provide insight into the intricate and continuous processes of identity construction, cultural reclamation, and decolonisation that follow colonialism. Despite the lingering legacy of colonial powers, colonised nations' voices are not only heard but also resound via literature as they work to reclaim their narrative and establish their place in the world.

Literature Review

The emulsification of Nativity, Culture, Language of the Oriental World has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, drawing attention to how colonial and postcolonial narratives depict the profound impacts of imperialism. This literature review examines critical perspectives on Chinua Achebe's *"Things Fall Apart,"* and Arundhati Roy's *"The God of Small Things"* focusing on the impact and affect that Imperialism and Colonialism has left on the identities of the post colonial Societies.

1. Chinua Achebe's "Things fall Apart"

"*Things Fall Apart*" has been celebrated for its authentic representation of African culture and its powerful critique of colonialism. Simon Gikandi, in *"Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in 'Things Fall Apart,'"* highlights Achebe's use of language and narrative techniques to convey the richness of Igbo culture and the devastating impact of colonialism. Gikandi argues that Achebe's novel serves as a counter-narrative to colonial literature, challenging the stereotypes and misconceptions propagated by works like *"Heart of Darkness."*

In *"The World of Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart,'"* Ato Quayson examines the novel's exploration of cultural conflict and the psychological effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples. Quayson emphasizes Achebe's nuanced portrayal of Okonkwo and other characters, illustrating the complexities of identity, tradition, and change in a colonized society. This analysis underscores the psychological violence inflicted by colonialism, which disrupts not only social structures but also individual psyches.

David Carroll contends in *Achebe: The Novelist as Teacher* (1980) that Achebe's book explores the wider destruction caused by colonialism via the tragedy of one man's collapse. The greater breakdown of Igbo culture is mirrored in Okonkwo's fight to preserve his cultural identity, as colonial powers force alien social, political, and religious structures on the native population.

Moses N. Timamy, in *"Things Fall Apart: A Re-Evaluation,"* discusses Achebe's narrative strategy of embedding Igbo proverbs, folktales, and traditions within the text. Timamy argues that this technique not only enhances the novel's cultural authenticity but also serves as a form of resistance against colonial erasure. By foregrounding indigenous knowledge systems, Achebe asserts the value and resilience of African cultures in the face of colonial oppression.

2. Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"

Roy explores how colonialism continues to shape the lives of individuals and communities long after the formal end of British rule, particularly in terms of language, literature, and culture. The novel's narrative structure and thematic concerns allow us to interrogate these legacies as they manifest in the characters' personal struggles, social divisions, and collective memory. The setting of Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel *The God of Small Things* is Kerala, a post-colonial Indian state. Despite taking place some decades after India gained its independence from British domination, the novel's characters' individual and societal consciousnesses are still profoundly impacted by colonialism. The novel examines issues of caste-based prejudice, forbidden love, suppressing desire, and the unsaid traumas of history, all of which are closely related to colonialism and its consequences.

Homi K. Bhabha examines the idea of cultural hybridity in his 1994 article "*The Location of Culture*", highlighting the "third space" in postcolonial countries where identity is neither set nor singular but rather ever-changing. Characters in *The God of Small Things* engage in intricate and frequently agonising negotiations with their postcolonial identities, which can be examined using Bhabha's notion of hybridity. The cultural environment in which Roy's characters live is heavily impacted by both colonial legacies and customs, leading to fractured, hybrid identities that are always changing.

By applying Spivak's theory and her crucial work "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*", to a critical rereading of *The God of Small Things*, one may see how Roy responds to the query of whether the subaltern is capable of speaking. Velutha, the main character of the book, is an untouchable who is routinely excluded from society and denied agency, making her a symbol of the subaltern. A significant act of resistance against the strict caste system that was enforced during and after British colonial control is demonstrated by Velutha's connection with Ammu, a lady from a lower caste but higher social status. Velutha is skilled, intelligent, and capable of loving, but the oppressive systems in his environment silence him.

Shashi Tharoor provides a thoughtful analysis of Roy's book in his review of *The God of Small Things* in *The Elephant and the Elephant Rider* (2002), lauding it for its profound depiction of the complexities of postcolonial identity and its poetic nature. Nonetheless, Roy's portrayal of the sociopolitical landscape of postcolonial India is also criticised by Tharoor. He argues that although Roy does a compelling job of depicting the systemic violence of colonialism, caste, and gender, the book occasionally veers too much towards romanticising tragedy and runs the risk of becoming overly focused on its aesthetic style rather than its political critique.

Moreover, David Lloyd in his writings on postcolonial theory, especially "*The Politics of the Postcolonial*" (2005) explores how postcolonial writers deal with colonialism's trauma and how it impacts both individual and societal identities. Understanding Roy's portrayal of the past and its eerie presence in her characters' lives is made easier by Lloyd's examination of memory and trauma in *The God of Small Things*.

3. Comparative Analysis

Comparing *Things Fall Apart* and *The God of Small Things*, critics examine the ways in which colonialism and its effects impact both society and personal identities. In *The Location of Culture*, academics such as Homi K. Bhabha analyse how Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* delves into the intricate dynamics of colonialism, emphasising identity, hybridity, and the power structures imposed by the colonisers. British missionaries and colonial rule are shown by Achebe as undermining the traditional culture of the Igbo people. In a similar vein, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy explores the legacy of British sovereignty in post-colonial India. Roy tackles the lingering effects of imperialism, especially through the caste system and societal injustices, as critics like Gauri Maithri highlight in *Postcolonial Identity and Resistance*.

The impact of colonialism on Igbo life and identity is a theme that Ngũgĩ explores in "*Decolonising the Mind*", where he argues that the imposition of European languages and systems fundamentally altered African societies' self-perception. In contrast, Roy's *The God of Small Things* emphasises the caste and social discrimination that persist in post-colonial India, perpetuated by colonial influences. Critics like

Rukmini Bhaya Nair in "The Postcolonial and the Personal" highlight Roy's examination of colonialism's psychological scars, arguing that these impacts are embodied in the personal and familial struggles of the characters, demonstrating how societal injustices continue to shape their lives.

Also, Laura Chrisman, in "Postcolonial Contrasts: Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart,'" examines the narrative strategies employed by both authors to critique imperialism. Chrisman suggests that while Conrad uses ambiguity and psychological introspection to explore the moral complexities of colonialism, Achebe employs a more direct and culturally grounded approach to highlight the destructive consequences of colonial rule.

4. Psychological Impact of Colonialism on Identity

Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth" provides a foundational framework for understanding the psychological effects of colonial violence. Fanon's analysis of the mental and emotional trauma experienced by colonized peoples resonates with the themes explored in both "Things Fall Apart" and "The God of Small Things". His concept of the "colonial gaze" and its impact on self-perception and identity is particularly relevant to the study of these texts.

Homi K. Bhabha's "The Location of Culture" further explores the psychological dimensions of colonialism, particularly through his concepts of hybridity and mimicry. Bhabha's theories illuminate the complexities of identity formation in colonized societies, offering a lens through which to analyze the psychological struggles depicted in Achebe's and Roy's Novel.

5. Cultural Eradication

Post-colonial studies places a strong emphasis on the destruction of culture, especially in the context of colonialism, where the destruction of indigenous civilisations' cultures was a key instrument of colonial dominance. The colonisers, who frequently saw their own European standards and conventions as the benchmark for civilisation, intentionally worked to eradicate or diminish the cultural practices, languages, traditions, and belief systems of the colonised people.

Colonial powers imposed their languages, religious doctrines, and social structures on the colonised, resulting in a strong sense of cultural alienation, exile, and loss. This cultural assault was not only physical but also psychological. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" and Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" both explore the long-lasting effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures, emphasising the social and psychological repercussions of cultural disturbance. As seen by Okonkwo's resistance to change and eventual demise, the presence of British missionaries and colonial power in Achebe's book destroys Igbo society. The hybridity that results from colonial contacts is discussed by critics such as Homi K. Bhabha in "The Location of Culture". Achebe illustrates this collision of cultures through Okonkwo's terrible end (Bhabha, 1994).

Roy criticises the caste system and socioeconomic injustices that remain after British empire in post-colonial India in "The God of Small Things". According to academics like Rukmini Bhaya Nair in "The Postcolonial and the Personal", Roy's portrayal of Ammu and Velutha's forbidden love exposes the deeply rooted cultural boundaries brought about by colonial control (Nair, 2002). Both authors emphasise how colonialism's legacies continue to influence identity, social structure, and the cultural psyche in post-colonial cultures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" and Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" in the context of colonialism's lingering consequences demonstrates how colonial control continues to have a significant impact on the social structures, cultural identities, and psychological makeup of post-colonial nations. The broken consequences of colonialism on indigenous populations are depicted in both novels in an excellent manner, showing how colonial intervention not only destroyed customs but also planted the seeds of persistent inequality and division that persisted long after colonial power formally ceased.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes how Igbo society was upended and eventually brought to its knees by the British colonial project. The introduction of European governance, religion, and education caused the Igbo people to become alienated from their own traditions and drastically altered the social structure. Okonkwo's figure personifies the fundamental conflict between the traditional traditions of Igbo society and the Western ideologies that have been imposed upon them. This problem is consistent with Frantz Fanon's idea of colonial violence and the psychological damage that results from it, which maintains that colonised people have to deal with an imposed identity that often conflicts with their own cultural heritage.

A very major issue that is examined in these novels is language as a means of colonial control. The colonial heritage and its ongoing impact on post-colonial societies are symbolised by the usage of English in both Achebe's and Roy's writings. In *Things Fall Apart*, the British colonialists use English as a tool to force their education and ideals on the Igbo people. The conflicts between indigenous culture and colonial imposition are reflected in *The God of Small Things* through the blending of English and Malayalam. According to Homi K. Bhabha's theory, this linguistic hybridity turns into a place where post-colonial identities are created and challenged.

Moreover the long-term harm brought about by colonial power reflects the psychological impact of colonialism, which are further demonstrated by the characters' emotional and mental suffering. Frantz Fanon's theories on the psychological trauma of colonisation are strongly represented in both books, as characters such as Okonkwo and Ammu are severely affected by colonial conventions that erode their sense of identity and self-worth. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's internalised fear of seeming weak or feminine—qualities associated with the colonial inferiority complex—causes his horrible fate. Rahel and Estha's emotional estrangement highlights the suffering that spans generations, and the main characters in *The God of Small Things* are unable to fully break free from the psychological ties of a colonial past that still plagues them.

In summary, colonialism has a wide range of effects on post-colonial nations, affecting everything from language and psychological health to social structures and cultural identities. *The God of Small Things* and *Things Fall Apart* both provide important insights into how colonialism's legacy is ingrained in post-colonial society. The protagonists' continuous battles in both stories show how the trauma of colonial control persists in the intricate conflicts of language, culture, and identity. Achebe and Roy advance a more comprehensive understanding of the post-colonial condition—a state in which the past continuously influences the present and the effects of colonialism are still evident in the day-to-day lives of people residing in formerly colonised societies—by examining the lasting effects of colonialism.

Therefore, these works serve as vital texts in understanding the long-term effects of colonialism and the persistent challenges that post-colonial societies face in their attempts to forge independent, cohesive identities.

Bibliography

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, 1958.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
3. Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 1967.
4. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. James Currey, 1986.
5. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Random House, 1997.
6. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. University of Illinois Press, 1988.
7. Lloyd, D. "The politics of the postcolonial". Oxford University Press, 2009.
8. Tharoor, S. "The elephant and the rider". Penguin Books, 2001.