



Haunting The Colonized Mind: Postcolonial Echoes In *The God Of Small Things* And *Beloved*

Monika Gupta

Student

Amity university noida

Abstract

The researchers examined how people keep their memories about slavery and colonialism once all actual proof of these events has vanished from their physical surroundings. The characters in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy show how historical events from earlier times still impact contemporary society. In *Beloved*, the ghost symbolizes the lasting burden of slavery, while Roy's novel shows how colonialism and caste silently shape relationships and social boundaries. Both texts highlight generational trauma and suggest that healing begins when individuals confront painful histories and reclaim their personal narratives as resistance against oppression.

Keywords:-Postcolonialism, Haunting, Trauma, Memory, Identity, Colonial Legacy, Slavery ,Caste System, Historical Impact

Introduction

Alienation is a recurring motif in literature, representing a profound disconnection from self, society, and purpose. This disconnection is often intensified in contexts of diaspora and cultural upheaval, where rootlessness fragments the human spirit. The theme is particularly salient during periods of historical transition, as individuals confront shifting paradigms, such as the movement from divine certainties to secular doubts and from communal bonds to isolated individualism. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Renaissance tensions are evident in Hamlet's moral paralysis amid skepticism, as he is torn between introspection and action. In the Victorian era, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* examine individualism within the context of increasing industrial pressures and rigid class structures. Victor Frankenstein's hubris and Heathcliff's vengeful outsider status exemplify profound isolation. Modernism further intensifies these divisions, as seen in Franz

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, where Gregor Samsa's transformation reveals the commodification of existence, and in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, which depicts Esther Greenwood's psychic suffocation under postwar gender expectations.

Collectively, these texts document the evolution of modernity from theological collapse to existential void, with each work representing a pivotal moment in the portrayal of estrangement. This study offers a comparative analysis of alienation across these literary works, contending that literature not only renders philosophical abstractions accessible but also serves as a critical indicator of shifting social norms, ideas, and emotions. Rather than undermining modern identity, otherness becomes a catalyst for agency, blending estrangement with the resilience that characterizes the modern human condition. Through the integration of philosophical perspectives and close textual analysis, this paper positions the literary outsider as a valuable lens for understanding how disconnection paradoxically fosters resilient subjectivities.

Literature Review

The postcolonial studies field studies the supernatural theme through its examination of Morrison's *Beloved* and Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The novels demonstrate that contemporary social ties and personal identity development still draw upon the enduring legacies of slavery and colonialism which emerged from their historical origins. The authors created their literary works to maintain visibility of historical facts throughout the current time period. *The God of Small Things* novel shows how colonizers maintain control over human existence even after people achieved freedom from British imperial rule. The researchers demonstrate how Roy develops her character through linguistic elements and societal customs and British cultural special treatment which reveal British colonial rule still influences modern Indian society. The colonial belief system causes characters to develop negative self-perceptions which results in their tendency to judge other characters negatively.

This study explores how the past continues to live in the present through memory, trauma, and haunting in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. Both novels show that even when slavery and colonialism officially end, their emotional and psychological effects remain deeply rooted in people's lives. The past does not simply disappear; it continues to shape identity, relationships, and social structures.

Similarly, in *Beloved*, Morrison portrays slavery as a haunting presence that refuses to be forgotten. The character *Beloved* is more than a ghost; she represents the painful history of slavery and the emotional wounds carried by Sethe and her family. Through disrupted storytelling and shifting memories, Morrison shows how trauma lives in the body, mind, and relationships. The novel highlights the suffering of enslaved women, especially the struggles of motherhood under slavery experiences that history often ignored or erased.

The study also connects these novels to important postcolonial and trauma theories. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak questions whether marginalized voices can truly be heard. Jacques Derrida explains how the past "haunts" the present. Avery Gordon links haunting to unresolved social injustice, while Cathy Caruth describes how trauma returns through fragmented memory. Overall, both novels suggest that healing begins only when individuals confront painful histories and reclaim their silenced stories. By remembering and retelling the past, characters and societies can resist oppression and move toward emotional freedom.

Research Findings

The scholars who study the works of Toni Morrison and Arundhati Roy have analyzed both *Beloved* and *The God of Small Things* because these works show strong connections between slavery and colonialism and caste discrimination and the formation of cultural memory and personal identity. The research studies these two novels as individual entities instead of studying their combined impact. The analysis of *Beloved* focuses on the African American experience while studying how slavery trauma affected people throughout their existence. *The God of Small Things* analysis examines political elements of Indian postcolonialism and the particular impacts of caste oppression and gender-based discrimination.

The two novels show that past events continue to exist in the present. The continuous presence of memories about particular events stays with each individual throughout their entire life. The research shows how fewer studies exist which draw postcolonial theory into their analysis of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon and Cathy Caruth. The shared theoretical framework unites the theories from multiple authors to reveal how social injustice elements create silence which transforms into spectral memory, which leads to fragmented storytelling in both novels. The research fills a gap by comparing the works of Morrison and Roy. The investigation demonstrates how emotional responses to African American slavery differ from those related to Indian colonialism, resulting in distinct historical developments. The psychological and social phenomenon of haunting continues to affect people because it shows how individuals lose their identity through ongoing past influences after they achieve freedom from colonial control.

Conclusion

In the books *Beloved* and *The God of Small Things* Toni Morrison and Arundhati Roy show how slavery and caste discrimination and patriarchy and colonialism continue to affect people in their everyday activities. Historical events exist as verified facts but people experience them through their emotional states and their social connections and their comprehension of societal norms. The characters depend on their past experiences which established their present conditions. Their family legacy and their social surroundings and their hidden feelings block them from experiencing love and fear and self-awareness.

Beloved creates an experience which compels individuals to deal with their historical background because it creates a situation which they must face. Morrison's nonlinear storytelling presents a chaotic structure which suits the story because Sethe experiences emotional battles over her memories which appear unexpectedly throughout her life. Her healing process develops through a series of gradual yet interrupted steps. The process requires her to accept pain as part of her existence while she begins to comprehend its role in her life.

The three elements of healing and resistance and identity show their interconnected nature through their narratives. Trauma disrupts thought and emotion and memory which alters the ways characters interact with their surroundings and with one another. Characters demonstrate their resistance against oppression through two methods which include active opposition and the quiet exhibition of their determination to be independent.

References:-

1. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
2. Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
3. Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage International, 1987.
4. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Harper Perennial, 1997.
5. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.
6. Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980*. Virago, 1985.

