

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: ANALYZING THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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### **Abstract:**

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* delves into the intricate layers of social stratification, offering a profound analysis through various political perspectives. Set in post-colonial India, the narrative unfolds against a backdrop of deep-rooted societal hierarchies, where caste and class distinctions play a pivotal role in shaping individual destinies. This article seeks to analyze the political perspective in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

**Keyword:** Narrative, Stratification, Hierarchies, Political, Class.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* explores a multitude of themes, blending personal and political narratives against the backdrop of post-colonial India. The novel critically examines the rigid caste system in Kerala and its impact on individuals' lives. It delves into how societal norms and expectations based on caste influence personal relationships, choices, and opportunities. The theme of forbidden love, particularly the love between Ammu and Velutha, challenges societal norms and faces severe consequences due to the social stigma associated with crossing caste boundaries. The narrative explores the tragic consequences of love deemed unacceptable by the rigid caste system.

The novel portrays complex family dynamics, emphasizing the dysfunction within the Ipe family. The family's tumultuous relationships and secrets contribute to the overall tragedy of the narrative. Memory plays a significant role in the novel as the narrative weaves between the past and the present. The characters grapple with traumatic events that continue to haunt them, highlighting the lasting impact of personal and societal wounds. The theme of the loss of innocence is reflected in the experiences of the twin protagonists, Estha and Rahel, as they navigate a world marked by societal expectations, discrimination, and tragic events that disrupt their childhood.

The novel is set against a backdrop of political changes in post-colonial India. It explores the impact of political upheavals, including the Naxalite movement, on the lives of the characters

and the broader societal landscape. The narrative highlights the pervasive gender inequalities and patriarchal norms that restrict the agency of female characters. Ammu, Rahel, and other women in the novel face societal expectations and discrimination based on their gender. The lingering effects of British colonialism are subtly explored, touching upon the cultural and social remnants that shape the characters' identities and the landscape of post-independence India.

The novel incorporates vivid descriptions of the Kerala landscape and uses nature as a powerful symbol. The river, in particular, becomes a metaphor for the flow of time, the inevitability of change, and the interconnectedness of life and death. The theme of language and communication is central to the narrative. The characters navigate linguistic barriers, and the novel explores how language can both connect and separate individuals. Arundhati Roy weaves these themes together in a rich and complex tapestry, creating a narrative that is both intimate and politically charged. *The God of Small Things* is celebrated for its exploration of social, cultural, and political issues through a unique and evocative storytelling style.

### **1. Caste Hierarchies:**

Roy vividly portrays the rigid caste system in Kerala, India, and its profound impact on the characters' lives. The novel critically examines how the caste structure determines societal norms, restricting individuals from forging relationships across caste boundaries. The political perspective here is one of resistance against an oppressive system that marginalizes and exploits certain communities.

### **2. British Imperialism:**

While the novel primarily focuses on the internal dynamics of Indian society, it subtly addresses the aftermath of British imperialism. The legacy of colonial rule is reflected in the socioeconomic disparities, with the upper castes often adopting British values to maintain their status. The political undertone emphasizes the intersectionality of various forms of oppression.

### **3. Communal Politics:**

The narrative also touches upon the communal tensions prevailing in post-independence India. The characters grapple with the political ramifications of religious and caste-based divisions, highlighting how political agendas exploit these fault lines to maintain power. This perspective underscores the interconnectedness of social and political forces in shaping the characters' lives.

### **4. Gender Politics:**

The novel delves into the intersectionality of social stratification, particularly concerning gender. The characters, especially the female protagonists, face the dual challenges of caste and gender-based discrimination. Roy's political lens critiques the patriarchal structures that contribute to the oppression of women within the larger societal framework.

### **5. Resistance and Subversion:**

Throughout the novel, there are instances of resistance and subversion against established social hierarchies. Characters challenge the norms imposed by the dominant political and social forces, often at great personal cost. Roy's political perspective celebrates acts of defiance as a means of disrupting oppressive structures.

### **6. Political Corruption:**

The novel hints at the political corruption that perpetuates social inequalities. The nexus between politics and business further entrenches existing hierarchies, with those in power exploiting their positions for personal gain. This perspective offers a critical commentary on the systemic issues that sustain social stratification.

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy weaves a narrative that not only vividly captures the personal struggles of her characters within the complex web of social stratification but also offers a nuanced political critique of the larger forces at play. The novel serves as a compelling exploration of how political perspectives shape and are shaped by the intricacies of social hierarchies.

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