

Tribhuvan University

Estrangement from the Centre: A Postcolonial Gothic Reading of *The God of Small Things*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

This thesis entitled “Estrangement from the Centre: A Postcolonial Gothic Reading of *The God of Small Things*” by Kapil Baral has been completed under my supervision. I recommend it for acceptance and examination.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Estrangement from the Centre: A Postcolonial Gothic Reading of *The God of Small Things*” submitted to the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Kapil Baral has been approved by the under designed members of the research committee.

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation seeks to read the novel *The God of Small Things* from the critical perspective of gothicism. The narrative that is woven with gothic elements, such as haunted house, obsession for something uncanny and fearful delineation of the events has the subversive potentiality. The gothic is located in the familial house, gender and caste relationship, political situation and the everyday interactions amongst family members. Seen from the lens of gothicism, the present research argues that gothic turns out to be strategic trope in order to foreground the signs of colonialism and the alienation and estrangement of the people from the establishment. Overwhelmed by colonial legacy, the Kerala government founded on communism fails to secure freedom and pursuit of happiness for which native people have fought so far. The communism practiced in Kerala cannot resolve the problem of caste system. Rather communist leader like Comrade Pillai stretches the discourse of caste in order to exploit the untouchables like Velutha and tightens bond with Baby Kochamma, the traditional elitist woman, to win the consent of the upper class and caste. Pappachi's inability to gain the public honour of the British administration is metaphorically extended to the moth, which is then cast into the intimate sphere to bring about destruction to Rahel and Estha. Pappachi's moth becomes a family curse that visits itself upon each subsequent generation of the family. His failure to obtain recognition shadows the entire novel and shows how the postcolonial rulers attempt to imitate the colonial policy. Therefore, gothicism has deliberately been employed to highlight the malfunction of communism to address the vexed issues related to caste and gender. Besides, gothic narrative subverts the teleology of the grand narrative of colonialism/nationalism and native people's traditional values and belief-system regarding self and family.

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