

## Female Existence in Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"

Dr. Sapana Pandey<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor English, Government Girls P.G. College Bindki, Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh. India

Received: 20 Dec 2024    Accepted & Reviewed: 25 Dec 2024,    Published : 31 Dec 2024

### Abstract

Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" received unprecedented popularity and publicity in India. The novel depicts the complexities of Female Life. It throws lights on gender discrimination, caste discrimination, patriarchal society and ofcourse an ideology of communism. Another wave which provides continuity to the novel is the confrontation of society between tradition and modernity. The novel is a story of a shattered family realized from the point of view of a very small seven years old boy Rahel. The story centers round the female character Ammu and her existence in the society. Through techniques of 'flashbacks' and 'flash for wards', the novel creates an interest in the heart of readers. Diction is amazing. Roy's novel because of its theme and manner of presentation touched the heart of each and every reader.

**Key words:** patriarchal, tradition, shattered, existence, diction etc.

### Introduction

Arundhati Roy is popularly known as an Indian Novelist. She won Booker Prize for her novel "The God of Small Things" in London on 14 October 1997. Roy became the first Indian woman awarded with Booker Prize. Roy is concerned with multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-racial problems. Roy's "The God of Small Things" is a very captivating postcolonial text.

The God of Small things undoubtedly received unprecedented popularity, publicity and huge applause in India. Though a group of readers is not in the favour of such huge appreciation stating that a large number of other books contain better themes and those need more attention and popularity. Quite contrary to this, another group of readers found the book very interesting because of the originality of its form, content and true colors. It is a memorable love story having various forms of love which need the attention of every individual and of course of society.

Moreover, The God of Small Things depicts very minutely the complexities of life. Life is not always a bed of roses but mostly contains prickly thorns which shatter the soul of human beings specially of women. The novel throws light on Gender discrimination, caste discrimination, patriarchal society and ofcourse an ideology of communism. Another wave which provides continuity to the novel is the confrontation of society between tradition and modernity.

The novel is a story of a shattered family realized from the point of view of a very small seven years old boy Rahel. The entire family is leading tormented life. Through techniques of 'flashbacks' and 'flash forwards', the novel brings forth the causes of unhappiness of the each and every character. The language used by the novelist plays a vital role to shape the importance of the story. Diction is amazing. Words come out spontaneously as leaves from a tree.

"The God of Small Things" explores the feminine sensibility through female character Ammu. A male dominated patriarchal Society where women are mere puppets in the hands of male figures and caste discrimination also find expression in the novel. Roy's characters are real. There is a very heart touching

depiction of the way, a female suffers because of the gender discrimination in the patriarchal society which provides a inferior position to women and always treats them as second- rate citizens.

Happy married life demands sacrifice, understanding of emotions, self-respect to each other. But in the patriarchal society, decision making and all the rights are reserved in the hands of man, woman serves as a puppet in the hands of man. Her position is like a maid servant for her husband and to all other members in husband's house. Having tears in her eyes, she does her duty. After marriage, she is like an object to satisfy the sexual need of her husband, a decorative piece, and a nurse maid to bring up the children and to bear all the household burdens. William Blackstone, an eminent Law professor at Oxford defined marriage as “civil death” of woman’. In his Commentaries on the English Constitution (1758) and Commentaries on the Laws of England, he states:

“By marriage, the husband and wife is one person in Law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything.”

The story of The God of Small Things center on its female character Ammu who is denied to pursue her studies as her male dominated society doesn't give the right to education to female child. Ammu's father Pappachi considers the education of women as “unnecessary expense”. Ammu has been advised to be efficient in household work, as necessary for marriage. At Ayemenem, she felt like an imprisoned lady, she feels desperate and helpless.

“All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the Clutches of her ill- tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually, one worked Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta.

She was fortunate enough to go to Calcutta to spend the summer with her aunt. In Calcutta, she met a young man who proposed her. A desperate girl saw a ray of hope in the company of that man accepting his proposal-'

“She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Aye menem.”

Ammu's and her mother's (Mammachi) negligence in her family motivated her to marry a Bengali man which later on proved to be wrong decision. Her husband was an alcoholic who failed to fulfill his responsibilities towards his family. The condition became more miserable when her husband suspended from his job for alcoholism, agreed to his English Boss Mr. Hollick's demand of sending his beautiful wife to his bungalow for sexual satisfaction which Ammu refused. Her husband physically and mentally assaulted her and became violent to children also. The heart of a mother awakened, she took a bold decision to break off. The life of a woman having two children, divorced from her husband in our society is more miserable and pitiable one. Helpless Ammu decides to return once again to her parent's house from where, she once had tried to run away:

“Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children. And no mere dreams.”

The novelist succeeds in portraying an important trait of Indian young woman of not succumbing to immortality against her wishes. Ammu and her husband's relationship end by divorce. Her husband was now free but still Ammu was burdened with two children Estha and Rahel living in her parents house without love,

sympathy and compassion. At the age of twenty four only, all her dreams were shattered. She was not living rather existing in hilarious universe erected by male figures. She became “untouchable” in her home, in her family and in so called “society” Mark the statement of Baby kochamma reflecting the philosophy of patriarchal society:

“She subscribed whole heartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter, according to Baby kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love- marriage- Baby kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject.”

The situation becomes worst when this woman Ammu falls in love with a Velutha, a Paravan an untouchable and dares to neglect once again ‘society’ tied in old customs, traditions and values. Velutha the childhood companion of Ammu in such a critical condition gave her solace, respect and love to her children. Velutha made Ammu realize that she was really very beautiful. She had gifts to give him too. They started loving, understanding and finding warmth in each other's arms. In such a hostile society, they promised from each other “Tomorrow?”

The touchable community including Ammu's family decided to do something harsh to these lovers as they made the “unthinkable thinkable”. Ammu was “locked away like the family Lunatic in a medieval household” and Velutha was arrested and charged with the rape of Ammu. Ammu rushed to the police station beg for her lover's life who was not guilty of the crime for which he had been blamed, but got no justice. Police officer having the support of society physically assaulted Ammu by touching her breasts with his baton. This is the harsh reality of our society where a woman is not safe. Ammu's brother Chacko had already threatened her from house. House of both Chacko and Ammu where daughter has been deprived of the property of her parents so where to go? Such situations provoke women sometimes to commit suicide. Who is to be blamed for this? is to be brooded.

Velutha had been beaten so mercilessly that he died. Ammu at the end also died. In her life time, she got no respect and even at her death also, she got no peace, solace, relief and respect. The church refused to bury Ammu on several counts. Chacko and Rahel took her to the electric crematorium where “the whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q498673”. The tragedy of Velutha and Ammu, the price they paid for letting the God of small things enter their life was to serve as “a history lesson for future offenders.”

True love is beyond the ties of caste, creed, society tradition and money. True love celebrates virtues. Ammu - Velutha relationship was pious one based on each other's understanding, respect, true love, emotions etc. “Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man....”

Not only Ammu but a number of females suffer in this way. Tragedy of Ammu represents the tragedy of each and every female. In perpetrating Ammu's tragedy, women like kochamma also act as agents of this society to humiliate another woman. Even women, who have been deprived in their lives, can not disturb the society in the least, but rather select to appear with all the unspent energy of their anguish and frustration on another pitiable woman. Thus, Arundhati Roy depicted all the issues of women with true colors. Her novel touched the heart of each and every reader. It is of course an immortal literary piece.

**References-**

1. Dhawan, R.k. Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary (New Delhi: Prestige, 1999).
2. Roy, Arundhati. The God of Small Things ( India ink, New Delhi, 1997).
3. Millett, kate. Sexual Politics (London: Virago, 1977).
4. Mill, John Stuart. The Subjection of Women: Women's Liberation and Literature. Elaine showalter (ed.). 1869.
5. [https://www.in-common.co.uk>b...](https://www.in-common.co.uk/b...)