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Patriarchal Domination in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things

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ABSTRACT

The Novelist portrays the experience of women who undergo different types of suppression in the hands of patriarchy. She struggles for her existence in the society in various roles against the male dominated patriarchal society. Feminism is often described as a struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. It is a saga of women's eternal suffering in a patriarchal society. Ammu's rebellion against the patriarchy results in her own death when she is sent away after sleeping with Velutha.

Keywords: *patriarchal, society rebellious, disgraceful domination and alienation*

Introduction: Arundhati Roy is an award-winning film-maker and a trained architect. She is the author of 'The God of Small Things' which won the 1997 Booker prize.. She spent her early years of childhood at Ayemenem a few kilometres from Kottayam town in central Kerala. She is a social activist, a campaigning political journalist and writer. She received many awards and prizes. She was awarded Booker Prize for her first novel The God of Small Things in 1997. She is one of the front-ranking novelists of India. She has established herself as a novelist par excellence. The God of Small Things is her epoch-making work and at the top of the best seller list in many Asian and European countries. Arundhati Roy draws a large canvas of characters that belong to five generation. All characters have a story of lost dream to tell. She has carved out a place of her own by presenting a social satire on contemporary society. As novelist Arundhati Roy discusses issues like homeless and hungry, alcoholism, violence, untouchability, urbanisation cultural decadence, marginalisation of women, religious institution, family relation, influence of Gulf money and sexuality.

The God of Small Things presents serious stand of individual and social psychology. Arundhati Roy has created situation in the novel when one is compelled to think and ponder over the psychological aspect of the story. We know that anger and the abusive

language of Ammu is because of her social and educational background. The point has been clarified “ Because Ammu had not had the kind of education, nor read the sorts of people that might have influenced her to think the way she did. She was just that sort of animal” (180) The text portrays the experience of women who undergo different types of suppression in the hands of patriarchy.

Arundhati Roy relieved herself of her complexes, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, desires and disappointments. By transforming the experience into a work of art, she has universalized it and created an appeal even for the matter which is disgusting. These attributes make. *The God of Small Things*, a remarkable achievement in Indian fiction in English. Arundhati Roy portrays the rebellion of women against the male dominated society

The novel is set in a small town Ayemenem in Kerala. The family living in Ayemenem House is Syrian Christian convert; with the old woman Mammachi, wife of the late Pappachi an ambitious entomologist presiding over it. Pappachi dies heartbroken because his discovery of a so-far unknown species of tufted moth has been stolen by a worthless scientist and named after him. Ammu runs away from her parent's home, goes to Calcutta, meets and marries an assistant manager in a tea Estate. Soon disillusioned children are Rahel and Estha. She faces neglect, sour reception, and depthless loneliness- sees Velutha and establishes sexual liaison with him. Her brother Chako is an undergraduate from Delhi University who goes to Oxford as Rhodes Scholar, meets a Cafe waitress Margaret Kochamma and marries her but Margaret finds him despicable, divorces and marries Joe, a biologist. Margaret Kochamma's marriage with Chako produces Sophie Mol a daughter whom Chako loves greatly. Dejected, he returns home to take over the Paradise Pickles and Preserves Factory initially started by Mammachi. Chako is a Marxist and in touch with K.N.M Pillai, the local Communist leader Velutha is a young man, a Paravan which is an untouchable caste. He is very enterprising and intelligent, master of many trades, but chiefly a carpenter.

Meanwhile Joe dies in an accident. Margaret comes to Kerala with Sophie Mol on a visit. Sophie dies in the river Meenachal while rowing on a night with Estha and Rahel. Velutha is implicated in the tragic incident. But before that Ammu's liaison with him horrifies the Ayemenem family whose fury breaks on the head of both Ammu and Velutha is hunted down in the History House by a posse of Kottayam policemen and

tortured to death. Ammu is expelled from her home while Estha is sent away to Madras. The Paradise Pickles Business collapse and is finished. Ammu dies a miserable and lonely death in room in Bharat Lodge and cremated unconventionally in electric crematorium, at the age 81.

Similarly, the social and cultural isolation of Syrian Christian in Kerala, it creates frustration and otherness in the minds of some of our characters in the novel as. Chacko says to the twins that the family was, “pointed in wrong direction trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away”. The novel has traumatic experience because of terrifying incidents and experience. The need of care and regard in social group is very energetic. The need is felt in a child the moment he develops sense of ‘self’. The leads of frustration and anxiety which is expressed in deviant behaviour, it is protest or rebellion. The second factor of a rude shock which shakes life out of self kills the ego of the man. This violent emotional blow is followed generally by withdrawal from life’s reality and the sufferer tries to overcome the shocking experience.

Non-recognition of Papachi’s discovery converts him into an embittered, Disappointed, quarrelsome frustrated man. Ammu on the other hand is, victim of her father’s wrath which creates a sense of security which compels her to so for marriage of convenience only to be humiliated by her Bengali husband. This lack of proper social grooming makes her life miserable. Once again it is the guilty conscience that makes Estha completely silent. Not only he stopped talking but mentally became suspicious and hollow who avoided every chance of meeting or talking to any one as if neither he was interested in present nor he wanted to talk of the past. It is all because of child abuse that he suffers for over psychologically. Estha is always passive whereas Rahel is always active. Though Rahel’s failure in love turns her into a incestuous complex represented by author in totally a different way. In fact the twins are neglected and even denigrated after the arrival of Sophie Mol. In their attitude they withdrew themselves from society instead of being extrovert they become introvert and develop philosophic attitude of difference towards world around them.

Mishra commented that: “She focuses particularly and specifically on the predicament of social injustice and torture meted out to women in their domestic and familial situations. She assails in the novel the cruelty and unkindness shown to women

irrespective of any consideration of their physical weakness, mental timidity and imbecility” (Patel,120) *The God of Small Things* is a saga of women's eternal suffering in a patriarchal society.

The Booker citation declares that in her novel, Roy funnels the history of South India through the eyes of a seven-year –old twin. The novel contains a good deal of autobiographical matter from the lives of Arundhati Roy and other members of the family as well as her grandparents. The plot and characterisation of the novel reveal psychological causes and consequences. The novel discloses that there is needed one Velutha in her aunt's place, but her daughter is not speaking of him but of someone else. This may mean that there was real person on the mind of the author. But was he really an untouchable? It is quite possible that, in order to capture the modern trend as regards the caste antagonisms. Roy transformed the prototype into an untouchable in order to make the story piquant and romantic. The Syrian Christians must feel that the book maligns the community and particularly its womanhood. The explicit reference to an untouchable youth is clearly obscene.

Roy also deals with the sex life of Ammu and her love affair with Velutha, including a detailed account of their love-making. “ in the toilet of Abhilash Talkies Rahel watches Baby Kochamma urinating, her breasts are like melon and the urine coming out of her is like a yellow brook bubbling through a mountain pass” (95) However, where as Amina in her nakedness is disgusting, Ammu is represented as beautiful, attractive and lovable woman. Her children love her deeply and she is full of care for them- intimate mother-child situations are a special feature of *The God* and their source lies, most probably, not in any book, but in the author's personal experience. Ammu is shown to be a victim of custom and narrow-mindedness and a vigorous female starved of love and sex yet, on the whole, the portrayal is a negative one, as that of Rushdie.

Ammu started facing hardship at very young age, right from the age of twenty four, when she should have been enjoying all the pleasures of life, her life came to a screeching halt: “ She spoke to none. She spent hours on the river bank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tangerine .she smoked cigarettes and had midnight swim” (44). She comes, a virtual social outcaste alienated from family and society. Baby Kochamma who was the most biased and was always against Ammu says: “A married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter

from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from in intercommunity is love marriage. Baby Kochamma chose to remain silent (45-46) The ironical condition in the novel bring women put up against women. A woman herself undergone a lot of stress and strain yet she does not show any kind of sympathy towards them. This show the perverted mentality of a human being that if his own past is not happy he does not let other is happy, this is what happens to Baby Kochamma; who does not let Ammu breathe free.

Another concern of the novel appears to be separation of people from one another and from society it may be regarded as a depiction of alienation, class division and casteism oppression also account for a good deal of the subject-matter. It may be added that feminist rebellion against patriarchy and political satire against Marxist can also be claimed to be the two important theme of the novel. One might also claim that novel's chief concern in the decay of Syrian Christian family a kind of family saga. The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy depicts the inner lives and hardships women in a patriarchal society face.

Ammu grew tired of their propriety handling of her. She wanted to her body back. It was hers. She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she is had enough them. She sat up and twisted her hair into a knot the nape of her neck. Then she swung her legs of the bed, walked to window and drew back the curtains. Ammu's rebellion against it has anticipated Rahel's rejection of patriarchal repression. The feminist in. Ammu has metamorphosed into the female in Rahel.

“ slanting afternoon light flooded the room and brightened two children on the bed. The twins heard the lock turning in Ammu's bathroom door and the spectre of her future appeared in it to mock her. Pickled, Grey, Rheumy eyed. Cross-stitch roses on a slack, sunken cheek. Withered breasts that hung like weighted socks. Dry as a bone between her legs, the hair feather white. Spare. As brittle as passed fern. Skin that flaked and shed like snow. Ammu shivered”

Social and historical realism in *The God of Small Things* does not in any way run counter to the thematic objectives of the novel. It appears to have been a part of Roy's intention to cover the bare bones of the story with details of social and historical setting and scenario in order to give the reader a feel of patterns of living and daily routine, ritual,

and sartorial habits, , etc. Another interesting feature of realistic writing is the description of amusing stock characters and activities found in certain social setting. One such character is the ubiquitous old lady who came to help at Sophie Mol's funeral. Masquerading as a distant relative, she often surfaced next to bodies at funerals. She “ put cologne on a wad of cotton wool and with a devout and gently challenging air, dubbed it on Sophie Mol's forehead”

According to R.S Sharma and S. B Talwar, “Baby Kochamma herself is something of a stock character with fixed habits and mannerism. Another interesting example is Murlidharan, the level –crossing lunatic. He was often seen perched cross-legged on the milestone with an embarrassing posture”. (Mohanty, 62) it is a social movement which wants to dismantle the hierarchies. (Based on gender, class, race, nature) created by the dominant patriarchal.

However, in spite of the author's sympathy for the poor and dispossessed and identification with them, her portrayal is fragmentary and superficial. It is deflected from its true course by a bourgeois decadent romantic theme. The orientation is given to the narrative moves away from the true intents of the novel of social realism. There are unmistakable clue in the text itself which suggest that the readers pay some attention to the psychological aspects of the narrative. The plot and characterisations reveal psychological causes and consequences. In the sense, the novel presents a study of individual and social psychology. It is informed that Ammu's outbursts of vulgarity were astonishing and a short psychological observation is added.

“ Because Ammu had not the kind of education, nor read the sorts of books, nor met the sort of people that might have influenced her to think the way she did . She was just that sort of animal” (180) In *The God of Small Things*, Estha is struck silent as a consequence of the sense of guilt. He has not only stopped talking; his mind also appears to have become emptied of any consciousness of the past and the present. This, as we have hinted earlier, offered the author an opportunity for representing Estha's mind in terms of stream of consciousness as Faulkner has done to tremendous effect when he presents what is going on in mind of Benji. Arundhati Roy, however, does not avail herself of this opportunity.

One more way of looking at this relationship is to suppose that in depicting Estha and Rahel, the author is actually representing the two selves within herself. “A hot twin and a cold one. He and She. We and Us” (122). One active and other passive, if we interpret the two selves in term of autoeroticism or androgyny, then they correspond to editorial and vaginal, elements. In this proportion, the seeming discrepancy of the roles can be satisfactory explained by reference to dream mechanism, which is shared by literature. In this case, Estha represents the vaginal element and this attribution is strengthened by the fact that in the case of child abuse, his reaction is like that of a girl suffering from what may be called virginity neurosis. He is generally quiet and passive whereas Rahel plays and active role, “Then she sat up and put her arms around him. Drew him down beside her”

The God of Small Things, in its final analysis is a profound and moving tragedy. It approaches the classical counterparts in drama which show the operation of ruthless determinist forces of God and history in crushing the spirit of the individual who follow natural human instincts. Rightly perceived to be an attack on patriarchy, the novel refuses to look at patriarchy in isolation, but sees it in relation to the issues of class and caste.

Arundhati Roy has beautifully and effectively projected the plight of women in Indian Society. It may be because we have patriarchal family system in most part of India that the women in India are treated as a second rate citizen. She faces injustice and oppression in andocentric society. From the very birth woman is under control and strict supervision of mother, father, brother during her childhood in parent's house, then under her son as a widow, out of house as a worker in the factory or an employee in the office. Arundhati Roy has shown in their pitiable condition in the character of Ammu who fails to find her own identity. She is always under pressure and control. Her struggle for economic freedom and from sexual abuse lend her into self security, no rights in her own family at Ayemenem where she has no locus-standi.

Arundhati Roy has successfully displayed falsehood conventional attitudes through Rahel's symbolic actions who manage to survive in Delhi and New York among the male dominated society. The height of male dominance and authority over women has been the Bengali husband who offers his wife to his boss just for an ordinary favour. Arundhati Roy has taken up the issue of feminism to fight for their identity and



economic and sexual freedom. But Ammu and Rahel, both because of the circumstances avoid feminists struggle for self respect and liberty. They surrender to low, sexual pleasure and loneliness.

Conclusion: Arundhati Roy puts under focus the deliberately constructed agencies of cruelty that work against women's interest. It expresses little sympathy for Ammu's lonely life, her tragic marital circumstances and her anxiety about her children. The social structures are so formed as to sanctify women's victimization. Arundhati Roy's depiction of the miserable lives of women in this novel critiques in unmistakable terms the perpetuation of these exploitative forces. Feminist scholars argue that disparity in writing is one of their chief means to cross-examine patriarchal ascendancy.

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